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Analysis of Russia's Implementation of Soft Power in  
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## Table of Contents

Analysis of Russia’s Implementation of Soft Power in Estonia.....	0
Abstract.....	0
1. Introduction .....	1
2. Literature Review .....	4
3. Research Methodology .....	14
3.1. Russian Foreign Policy.....	15
3.2. Social Media and Media Coverage.....	26
3.3. Language and Education Questions.....	30
3.4. History Propaganda .....	34
3.5. Recent Events.....	36
4. Discussion of Results.....	41
4.1. Challenges and Limitations .....	44
4.2. Recommendations for Further Research.....	45
6. Bibliography .....	47

## Abstract

*The aim of current paper is to analyse Russia's interpretation of soft power and how it has been implemented in Estonia. As Russia's understanding of the concept does not necessarily align with the definition proposed by Joseph Nye, Russian Foreign Policy will be examined along with the Compatriot Policies that are at the centre of Russia's soft power approach. The study will also assess the language and education questions in Estonia that are relevant to the Russian minority issue and thus have become integral part for the Russian Compatriot Policy as well as review the events over the recent years.*

## 1. Introduction

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the resulting re-independence of the Baltic States, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have faced several challenges over the past two and a half decades in becoming globally recognized, functioning and *self-confident* states. Significant events to secure the stability of the recovered independence since have been becoming members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in March 2004 and the European Union (EU) in the same year just a few months later. Memberships with NATO & EU have helped to notably reduce the imminent threat of military attack on the Baltics from Russia and to maintain such risk on a low level as well as to increase their residents' perceived sense of safety. While military interference by Russia is not considered amongst the likely scenarios for the Baltic States, the mitigation of such a risk has been especially important following the annexation of Crimea as the fear and uncertainty within the population regarding Russian aggression has become more relevant topic once again. Factors such as the geographic location neighbouring Russian border and the events in Georgia and Crimea tend to bring back the peoples' memories of not so distant experiences of annexation. Such concerns have concurrently led the Baltic states to triple their military spending over the recent years and to begin the acquiring of new defence capabilities since 2014, becoming among the few states that are actually spending over 2% of their GDP in defence as per NATO's requirement.<sup>1</sup> Estonian defence expenditure to be precise, met the NATO conditions already in 2012 and by 2017, it had reached 2,2% of the country's GDP.<sup>2</sup> Regardless of the speculations and fear in the Baltic States, an attack on any NATO member state would trigger the Article 5 of collective defence, based on the principle that 'an attack on any Ally is considered an attack against all Allies', explaining one of the core reasons why an explicit military intervention from Russia remains unlikely.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> World News (2016). Baltics, Fearing Russia, To Triple Military Spending by 2018: Report, *Reuters*, [Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-baltics-military/baltics-fearing-russia-to-triple-military-spending-by-2018-report-idUSKCN12J2S4>]

<sup>2</sup> Adamowski, J. (2017). Fear Factor: As Russia Looms Large, Baltics up Military Capacity, *Defense News*, [Available at: <https://www.defensenews.com/smr/european-balance-of-power/2017/08/28/fear-factor-as-russia-looms-large-baltics-up-military-capacity/>]

<sup>3</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization (2018). Collective defence – Article 5, [Available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_110496.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_110496.htm)]

However, Russia continuously seeks opportunities of widening its influence in world politics also by other measures and continues to do so within the Baltic region as well. Even though Putin has shown both willingness and ability to use hard power incentives to achieve his foreign policy goals, doing so within NATO member states would be implausible and quite likely counterproductive too.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, taking advantage of the use of available and less controversial techniques such as soft power would arguably lead to more effective results and neither would these be subject to international countermeasures. Considering that NATO forces are just next door to Russia, having friendly relationships with its neighbours is also a prerequisite for its own security.<sup>5</sup> For Putin as well as for most of the Russia's foreign policy elite Russia is seen as a great power which requires both stability and a generally secure environment to create basis for exercising its role in the world.<sup>6</sup> That in mind, considering the additional concurrent supervision, Russia was not at all pleased with NATO's decision to increase the presence of troops in NATO's North-Eastern member states in 2016 as it would decrease Russia's influence within the Baltic States. Such events caused considerable annoyance to Russian politicians that lead to propaganda campaign aiming to demonstrate the attitudes against NATO in Estonia but failed to find wider resonance among the local public.<sup>7</sup> Thus, we can see another reason why Russia has started putting more emphasis on increasing the profile of Russian culture, language and worldview abroad.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Russian policy documents have also begun incorporating more soft power measures within its foreign policy already since 2007.<sup>9</sup> This paper will set its focus on Russia's interests in Estonia and the primary objective is to analyse the ends means and ways how Russia exercises its soft power in this Baltic country. While the main aim for the

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<sup>4</sup> German, T. (2016). Russia and the Use of Force. *Research from the Defence Studies Department*, King's College London, Defence in Depth [Available at: <https://defenceindepth.co/2016/10/10/russia-and-the-use-of-force/>]

<sup>5</sup> Averre, D. (2009). Competing Rationalities: Russia, the EU and the 'Shared Neighbourhood', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 61:10, pp. 1689-1713.

<sup>6</sup> Zakem, V., Saunders, P., and Antoun, D. (2015). Mobilizing Compatriots: Russia's Strategy, Tactics and Influence in the Former Soviet Union, The CNA Corporation [Available at: [https://www.cna.org/cna\\_files/pdf/DOP-2015-U-011689-1Rev.pdf](https://www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/DOP-2015-U-011689-1Rev.pdf)]

<sup>7</sup> Organizing Committee of the Peace March in Tallinn (2017). *For Peace in Estonia and in All Europe*. [Available at: <http://rodina.ee/obchestvo/978-za-mir-v-estonii-i-vo-vsej-evrope>]; Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2016). Kaitsepolitsei ameti Aastaraamat 2016, *Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook* [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-väljaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

<sup>8</sup> Feklyunina, V. (2008). Battle for Perceptions: Projecting Russia in the West, *Europe-Asia Studies* 60:4, pp. 605–629.

<sup>9</sup> Hudson, V. (2015). Forced to Friendship? Russian (Mis-)Understandings of Soft Power and the Implications for Audience Attraction in Ukraine, *Politics*, 35:3-4, pp. 330-346.

study at hand is examining how Russia has implemented its soft power or a mixture of influence tools in Estonia, many of the approaches towards the other two Baltic countries would overlap as for various factors Russia's take on the Baltic States is somewhat similar. Furthermore, the Baltics themselves have been more incorporated in EU and NATO politics from their re-independence in the beginning of 1990s making them distinct from the other post-Soviet countries and more alike to each other. Russia continuously and somewhat in a hidden manner interferes in democratic western states' decision-making processes. It is especially so in those EU member states where the elections are held in 2018 as Kremlin believes that creating confusion in the west increases Russia's influence as well as guarantees greater freedom for action.<sup>10</sup> As attentively noted in the Kremlin playbook, "a disunited Europe and the weakening democratic institutions in EU and NATO member states seriously erode the West's credibility and hinder the ability of the transatlantic alliance to globally promote liberal democratic values".<sup>11</sup>

The main topics of Russian soft power goals towards the Baltics for a long period have been accusations against violation of rights of the Russian population in giving them citizenship and right to vote; the status of Russian language and questions about education in Russian as well as the 'falsification' of history by which is meant the "re-writing of history in the Second World War and the heroism of Nazism" within those countries. These topics will be further examined within the scope of this paper to give insight to the extent of the existing issues within Estonia. It is noteworthy how contextually so different fields are dealt with under the same umbrella, in the same events, and same banners. For example, the violation of human rights of the Russian population is being described as "etnocultural genocide" and the form of expression for neo-Nazism'. Strength-wise the third main topic in 2016 was the presence of NATO's troops in the region. The rhetoric in this topic is contradicting as on the one hand Russian media often claims that NATO provokes Russia or even prepares for an intrusion, whereas on the other hand the Baltics are pictured as non-important small states with historic complexes whose incited war panic does not allow the larger states to meet

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<sup>10</sup> Välisluureamet, Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service (2018). Eesti Rahvusvahelises Julgeolekukeskkonnas 2018, p. 46 [Available at: <https://www.valisluureamet.ee/hinnang.html>]

<sup>11</sup> Conley, A., Mina, J. Stefanov, R., and Vladimirov, M. (2016). The Kremlin Playbook: Understanding Russian Influence in Central and Eastern Europe, *Center for Strategic and International Studies*; Report of the CSIS Europe programm and CSD Economic Program, October 2016, *Executive Summary*

any consensuses.<sup>12</sup> On the same note, Winnerstig has observed that central pieces of Russian soft power strategy in the Baltics are: “the Russian Compatriots policy, which would support all Russian speaking people outside of Russia; campaign which would undermine the self-confidence of the Baltic States as independent political entities; and; substantial interference in the domestic political affairs of the Baltic States”.<sup>13</sup> However, as previous studies have also shown the scepticism from Estonian society as a whole in trustworthiness towards Russian intentions gives no reason to fear Russia’s psychological and information and psychological operations success.<sup>14</sup> Current paper will seek to analyse the extent to which such mechanisms have been exercised and the issues it has caused within Estonian society.

## 2. Literature Review

Soft power is a term coined by Joseph Nye, which instead of using coercive military and economic means, focuses on persuasion and rests on the attractiveness and legitimacy of ideas, political culture and economic and social models.<sup>15</sup> Later, Nye explained the soft power as “the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment”.<sup>16</sup> A country's soft power is based on its resources of culture, values, and policies.<sup>17</sup> Current research will review the term which Nye first introduced in the 1980s, and analyse whether the benefits of co-optiveness and attraction that are at the core of the concept can also fit within the context of Russia instead of using

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<sup>12</sup> Teabeamet. Estonian Information Board (2017). Eesti Rahvusvahelises Julgeolekukeskkonnas 2017, p. 20 [Available at: <https://www.valisluureamet.ee/hinnang.html>]

<sup>13</sup> Winnerstig, M. (ed.) (2014). Tools of Destabilization: Russian Soft Power and Non-military Influence in the Baltic States, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> Bulakh, A., Tupay, J., Kaas, K., Tuohy, E., Visnapuu, K and Kivirähk, J. (2014). Russian Soft Power and Non-Military Influence: The View from Estonia, *International Centre for Defence Studies*, Tallinn, p. 70. in Winnerstig, M. (ed.) (2014). Tools of Destabilization: Russian Soft Power and Non-military Influence in the Baltic States

<sup>15</sup> Nye, J. S. Jr. (2004). *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Perseus Books Group, Public Affairs, US; Tulmets, E. (2008). ‘A “Soft Power” with Civilian Means: Can the EU Bridge its Capability – Expectations Gap in the ENP?’, in Delcour, L. & Tulmets, E. (eds) (2008).

<sup>16</sup> Nye, J. S. Jr. (2008). *The Powers to Lead*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>17</sup> Nye, J. S. Jr. (2006). *Public Diplomacy and Soft Power*, *American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*

coercion or whether it is just a part of Russia's toolbox.<sup>18</sup> Nye has emphasized, that countries such as Russia and China would fail to become attractive to their targeted audiences despite proclaiming adherence to the soft power concept. Their basic mistake in the approach was the failure in realizing that "the development of soft power need not be a zero-sum game. All countries can gain from finding each other attractive."<sup>19</sup> Instead, many soft power initiatives in these two countries are often pursuing more pragmatic and interest-based goals without aiming to taking into account the interests of their international partners and thus, can be met with suspicion or hostility rather than being welcomed.<sup>20</sup> Sergunin and Karabeshkin have noted, that several prominent Russian analysts have linked the soft power concept with more broader notion of security by believing that security consists of in addition to hard power dimensions also from soft dimensions, such as economic, political, societal, environmental, human and information aspects. From such understanding a much broader definition can be concluded, that includes all non-military instruments and resources that are available for international players. Furthermore, the interpretation distances from Nye's original definition as coercion and economically driven influence or *payment*, have here been included with soft power.<sup>21</sup> Hence, Russia would more likely to be portrayed as a country using smart power, which is a strategy combining hard and soft power resources together. While the term soft power originally referred to the power of attraction, Russia reinterprets it also with the possibility of wielding power against other actors in order to gain influence or to engage in non-military warfare.<sup>22</sup> From historical perspective, the soft power concept is a relatively new one for Russia, especially so within its immediate neighbourhood, where the occurred problems were traditionally solved by force. Consequently, the Russian authorities have had the tendency to find the term soft synonymous to weak, as "the strength of the state and its ideology is measured by

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<sup>18</sup> Nye, J. S. Jr. (2004). *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Perseus Books Group, Public Affairs, US

<sup>19</sup> Nye, J. S. Jr. (2013). What China and Russia Don't Get About Soft Power, *Foreign Policy*, [Available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/04/29/what-china-and-russia-dont-get-about-soft-power/>]

<sup>20</sup> Sergunin, A. and Karabeshkin, L. (2015). Understanding Russia's Soft Power Strategy, *Politics*, 35:3-4, pp. 347-363.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 20

<sup>22</sup> Winnerstig, M. (ed.) (2014). *Tools of Destabilization: Russian Soft Power and Non-military Influence in the Baltic States*

the readiness and volume of hard power instruments that can support its point of view.”<sup>23</sup> Even though Russia has implemented soft power in the past, there has been a shift in its foreign policy since 2010 which marks the first time the term was officially used in Russian national policy document by Medvedev. Furthermore, the next version of Russian foreign policy document in 2013 also defined the term as a toolkit allowing to achieve foreign policy objectives with the means of civil society potential, information, cultural and other methods and technologies that alternate to the traditional view of diplomacy.<sup>24</sup>

When analysing soft power, Nye also addresses the concept of public diplomacy, which in his words “has a long history as a means of promoting a country's soft power and was essential in winning the Cold War”.<sup>25</sup> In the use of smart power, Nye believes that the tool of public diplomacy brings a key to success, although it requires a thorough understanding of the importance of credibility, self-criticism, and civil society in order to generate soft power. The soft power of a country is heavily reliant on three factors: the culture – in the places where it is considered attractive to others; the political values of that country – in instances when it also lives up to them both at home as well as abroad; and the foreign policies of the country – in instances when they are seen as legitimate in addition to having moral authority. While the reputation in world politics has always been crucial, the role of credibility becomes even more important due to the ‘paradox of plenty’. When setting this into the context of Russian Estonian relations, perhaps the importance of credibility becomes relevant because of the skepticism of the target audience and as already brought up – the recent history that has left memorable scars to the Estonian society. In soft power terms, Russia also establishes networks which are bonded by mutual interest to promote its objectives, yet unlike the traditional definition of soft power, Russia’s influence does not display the emphasis on legitimacy and moral authority stipulated by Nye. Russia’s use of soft power in the Baltics is best exemplified by the creation, maintenance and support of

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<sup>23</sup> Korejba, J. (2015). *Will Russia Ever Be Soft?* In Rostoks, T. and Spruds, A. (2015). *The Different Faces of Soft Power: the Baltic States and Eastern Neighbourhood Between Russia and the EU*.

<sup>24</sup> Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (Approved by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on 12 February 2013) [Available at: [http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/official\\_documents/-/asset\\_publisher/CptlCkBgBZ29/content/id/122186](http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptlCkBgBZ29/content/id/122186)]; Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (approved by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on November 30, 2016) [Available at: [http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/official\\_documents/-/asset\\_publisher/CptlCkBgBZ29/content/id/2542248](http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptlCkBgBZ29/content/id/2542248)]

<sup>25</sup> Nye, J. S. Jr. (2006). *Public Diplomacy and Soft Power*, *American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*

Kremlin-friendly networks of influence in the cultural, economic and political sectors, while from the original concept there could be left more room for mutual benefit.<sup>26</sup>

Nye also emphasizes the difference between mere propaganda and public diplomacy and underlines that the mere propaganda itself often tends to lack credibility and can be considered counterproductive to public diplomacy due to simply not being as thought out as public diplomacy would. Thus, a 'good public diplomacy would have to go beyond propaganda' and would enable long standing relationships which allow sustainable government policies. Whether Russia has indeed been able to achieve that will be investigated further in the following sections below. However, before it would be important to bring out the three different dimensions of public diplomacy. The first dimension of public diplomacy would make the foreign press as their important target. At this stage, the key role is preparation for handling crisis situations and on capability for rapid response, meaning that all false charges or misleading information can be answered immediately. The second stage would be the strategic communication stage where a set of simple themes are developed similarly to a political or advertising campaign. Such campaign would plan symbolic events and communications over the course of a consecutive year in aims to reinforce central themes or in order to advance a particular policy of the government. Moving on to a third dimension of public diplomacy, which would then be the creation and development of sustainable relationships with key individuals over several years which is done via issuing scholarships, student exchanges, trainings, seminars, conferences, and of course access to media channels.<sup>27</sup>

Approaching the power topic from a different angle, Walker describes, that as an unexpected turn of events following the Cold War, the authoritarian regimes including Russia have turned the tables on democracies.<sup>28</sup> More specifically, instead of similarly going through with the reforms to become more open the policies and practices that these authoritarian regimes have developed are aimed at blocking the advancement of democracies instead. Therefore, by starting to exploit the opportunities that have become

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<sup>26</sup> Grigas, A. (2012). Legacies, Coercion and Soft Power: Russian Influence in the Baltic States, *Chatham House: Briefing Paper*

<sup>27</sup> Nye, J. S. Jr. (2006). Public Diplomacy and Soft Power, *American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*

<sup>28</sup> Walker, C. (2016). The Hijacking of 'Soft Power', Project Muse, *Journal of Democracy*, 27:1, pp. 49-63.

available by globalization, the authoritarian trendsetters have created a modern 'antidemocratic toolkit' that in many ways serves as the mirror image of democratic soft power. This for example would include the government-organized nongovernmental organizations or the GONGOs, the "zombie" election monitoring (as could arguably be seen with recent presidential elections in Russia in 2018), foreign aid and investment, and both traditional- and new-media enterprises. The leading authoritarian governments would also have established a wide constellation of regime-friendly GONGOs, which would be including think tanks and policy institutes that operate both at home and abroad. He argues, that while some of such groups are insignificant, the others operate with the aim of subverting an authentic debate, either by spreading regime messages in a nontransparent way or by crowding out authentic voices. This would mean, that the authoritarian 'toolkit' enables the regime to project the influence into democratic regimes in a variety of ways, on occasions even allowing for these regimes to coopt their Western partners and induce the self-censorship, hence resetting the norms of free expression through what is essentially viewed as economic coercion.

"To further influence the domestic political environment, Russia has launched a systemic "war on information" campaign that is designed to confuse, paralyze, and disable its opponents and obscure the truth behind its actions."<sup>29</sup>

As the term influence is also being used sparingly when Russian Foreign policy topics are being examined in this paper, a definition from Sherr will be used in the purposes of this study, who has defined influence as: "the ability to persuade or induce others to respect or defer to one's wishes without resort to force or explicit threats".<sup>30</sup> From Russian leadership, the terms have also been defined within the speeches: In 2012, Putin, defined the term soft power as: "instruments and methods to achieve foreign policy objectives without the use of weapons – information and other levers of influence".<sup>31</sup> However, a year later, he also took

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<sup>29</sup> Conley, A., Mina, J. Stefanov, R., and Vladimirov, M. (2016). *The Kremlin Playbook: Understanding Russian Influence in Central and Eastern Europe*, *Center for Strategic and International Studies*; Report of the CSIS Europe program and CSD Economic Program, October 2016, p.28

<sup>30</sup> Sherr, J. (2013). *Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion: Russia's Influence Abroad*, London, Chatham House, p. 12

<sup>31</sup> Putin, V. (2012). 'Rossiia i meniaiuchshiiis mir', *Moskovskie novosti*, 27 February, [*Available at: <http://www.mn.ru/politics/20120227/312306749.html>*]

a significantly softer approach and described the same term as: “the strengthening of the Russian language, the active promotion of a positive image of Russia abroad, the ability to integrate into global information flows”.<sup>32</sup> Russia is able to exercise authority considering its size and has not only a bigger economy but also much larger energy reserves that it can use to assert influence when necessary.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, Russia’s great advantage for using soft power is the shared history with the Baltic countries and the large percentage of Russian minorities within these states. For example, in Estonia, the Russian minority comprises 24,8% of the Estonian population according to the population census which was held in 2011.<sup>34</sup> Due to the ethnic similarities and thus ability to identify with the Russian ethnic minority group, the cultural and language background is something that Russia continuously uses as an excuse to engage and interfere with Estonian internal politics. The concept Russian influence, however should not be regarded as merely a domestic governance challenge for the EU and NATO members, but rather a wider national security concern, that the members should collectively stand up against.<sup>35</sup> It is noteworthy, that Russian soft power strategists consider the Soviet Union’s experience in international propaganda useful. For example, Lukyanov recognized that its experience proved efficient and easily re-installable when provided with sufficient resources and Kosachev, the former leader of Rossotrudnichestvo, believed that Soviet Union’s international reputation was high due to actively utilizing the soft power tools, and the agency was the logical successor using the practical skills and traditions from the past.<sup>36</sup> Rossotrudnichestvo, is among the agencies created to spread the Russian influence among Russian speakers and ethnic Russians throughout the post-Soviet space and has over 90 representations in 80 countries.<sup>37</sup> While Rossotrudnichestvo is primarily focused towards the CIS countries, along with Russkiy Mir

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<sup>32</sup> Putin, V. (2013). ‘Vstrecha s sotrudnikami MID Rossii’, [Available at: <http://news.kremlin.ru/news/17490>]

<sup>33</sup> Tafuro, E. (2014). ‘Fatal Attraction? Russia’s Soft Power in Its Neighbourhood’, FRIDE Policy Brief 181, pp. 1–6.

<sup>34</sup> Eesti Statistika (2011). RL0424: Rahvastik kodakondsuse, rahvuse, soo, vanuserühma ja maakonna järgi, 31. detsember 2011, *Estonian Statistics*, [Available at:

<http://andmebaas.stat.ee/Index.aspx?lang=et&DataSetCode=RL0424#>]

<sup>35</sup> Conley, A., Mina, J. Stefanov, R., and Vladimirov, M. (2016). The Kremlin Playbook: Understanding Russian Influence in Central and Eastern Europe, *Center for Strategic and International Studies*; Report of the CSIS Europe program and CSD Economic Program, October 2016, *Executive Summary*

<sup>36</sup> Lukyanov, F. (2013). ‘Depardye Protiv Progressa’, *Gazeta.ru*, [Available at:

<http://www.gazeta.ru/column/lukyanov/4929549.shtml>]; Kosachev, K. (2012). ‘V mire Slozhlis Prezumptsiya Vinovnosti Rossii’, *Kommersant*

<sup>37</sup> Rutland, P. and Kazantsev, A. (2016). The Limits of Russia’s ‘soft power’, *Journal of Political Power*, 9:3, pp. 395-413.

these are the main organizations responsible for the nation-branding and foreign cultural relations.<sup>38</sup>

Nye has emphasized, that sometimes it is easier to achieve the desired outcomes without commanding them, and likewise, Russian focus on its compatriots abroad as well as the huge emphasis on its cultural and historical values is an effective way of doing so.<sup>39</sup> Due to failures at coercion, Russia's better hope at influencing Estonia would be through shaping public perspectives via portraying themselves as an 'attractive alternative to the current political order'.<sup>40</sup> Recent embodiment of soft power in the policy documents by Russia has also been noted by Hudson, who brings out the importance that has been put on Russian culture and history.<sup>41</sup> Key players in the implementation of the soft power have been the Russkii Mir Foundation, the Russian Orthodox Church, and policy documents along with public speeches of the leaders of Russia.<sup>42</sup> These players represent what the 'Russian world' stands for with its emphasis on more traditional and conservative worldview, offering an alternative to western values.<sup>43</sup> Existing literature on soft power in the Baltics frequently addresses the compatriot policy as it is easier to find compassion among the population who shares the same language, ethnic history and potentially a common identity, of which Russia attempts to make full use of.<sup>44</sup> In addition, the deeply rooted social and economic ties with its neighbours allow to influence the politics of their governments as well as to potentially destabilize the Baltic countries.<sup>45</sup> Some of the examples are the education policies, and ensuring the representation of Russian minorities which in the case of Estonia has been done by supporting the views of the Centre Party that will be further discussed

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<sup>38</sup> Panova, V. (2015). Russia's „Soft“ Policies towards the Baltic States, In Rostoks, T. and Spruds, A. (2015). The Different Faces of Soft Power: the Baltic States and Eastern Neighbourhood Between Russia and the EU.

<sup>39</sup> Nye, J. S. Jr. (2004). Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics, Perseus Books Group, Public Affairs, US, p. 2

<sup>40</sup> Nielsen. K. and Paabo, H. (2015). How Russian Soft Power Fails in Estonia: Or Why the Russophone Minorities Remain Quiescent, *Journal on Baltic Security*, 1:2.

<sup>41</sup> Hudson, V. (2015). Forced to Friendship? Russian (Mis-)Understandings of Soft Power and the Implications for Audience Attraction in Ukraine

<sup>42</sup> Russkii Mir Foundation (2019). (also known as the Russian World) [Available at: <http://rusскиymir.ru>]

<sup>43</sup> Kudors, op. cit. (2010); Lukyanov, op. cit. (2009). 55 Kirill (2009) 'Vystuplenie Sviateishego Patriarkha Kirilla na torzhestvennom otkrytii III, 55 Assamblei Russogo mira', p. 3 November; Sherr, op. cit. (2013), p. 89.

<sup>44</sup> Tafuro, E. (2014). Fatal Attraction? Russia's Soft Power in Its Neighbourhood, FRIDE Policy Brief 181, pp. 1–6.

<sup>45</sup> Saari, S. (2014). Russia's Post-Orange Revolution strategies to increase its influence in Former Soviet Republics: Public diplomacy po russkii. *Finnish Institute of International Affairs*, 66:1; Winnerstig, M. (2014). Tools of Destabilization: Russian Soft Power and Non-Military Influence in the Baltic States; Persson, G. (2014). Russian influence and soft power in the Baltic States: the view from Moscow. in Winnerstig, M. (ed.) (2014).

below.<sup>46</sup> However, still sensitive and remembering of its history as an occupied member state of the Soviet Union, Estonian population, on whom the current research will be concentrating on, is continuously wary and pessimistic about the foreign propaganda. Thus, the creation of positive image of Russia and emphasizing the shared values between Estonia and its Eastern neighbour is crucial in 'attempts to attract' for Russia. Kremlin's goal presumably is not only a propaganda to create a perception of Russia that offers an alternative to the west in order to mobilise its sympathisers but also a genuine and legitimate concern for the values that the west represents (democracy, freedom of speech, freedom of entrepreneurship and free competition, economically ensured, informed and brave citizens, lack of fear against criminals, dictators and real aggressors).<sup>47</sup> Averre, describes Russia as traditionalist country in the sense that it is seen as attempting to maintain or recreate the realist 'sphere of influence' by exploiting its structural power in the post-Soviet arena.<sup>48</sup> The latter would also suggest that Russia does not use simply the soft power techniques, although the ends it tries to achieve are the creation of friendly states in the neighbourhood. Kremlin's interest is of course maximizing its economic benefits as well by engaging with its sphere of interest outside of Russia and weakening the credibility, desirability of the memberships of NATO and EU and the moral authority of the US.<sup>49</sup>

"Through authoritarian learning and by exploiting the opportunities presented by globalization, authoritarian trendsetters have created a modern antidemocratic toolkit that in many ways serves as the mirror image of democratic soft power".<sup>50</sup>

One of the easiest and perhaps most apparent methods for Russia to project its influence that has been in the centre of academic research is the compatriot policies as Russian

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<sup>46</sup> Winnerstig, M. (2014). Tools of Destabilization: Russian Soft Power and Non-Military Influence in the Baltic States.; Bulakh, A., Tupay, J., Kaas, K., Tuohy, E., Visnapuu, K and Kivirähk, J. (2014). Russian Soft Power and Non- Military Influence: The View from Estonia, International Centre for Defence Studies, Tallinn, in Winnerstig, M. (ed.) (2014).

<sup>47</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2016). Kaitsepolitseiameti Aastaraamat 2016, *Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook*, p. 8. [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamat-väljaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

<sup>48</sup> Averre, D. (2009). Competing Rationalities: Russia, the EU and the 'Shared Neighbourhood', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 61:10, pp. 1689-1713.

<sup>49</sup> Conley, A., Mina, J. Stefanov, R., Vladimirov, M. The Kremlin Playbook: Understanding Russian Influence in Central and Eastern Europe, CSIS- Center for Strategic and International Studies; Report of the CSIS Europe programm and CSD Economic Program October 2016 pg 2

<sup>50</sup> Walker, C. (2016). The Hijacking of 'Soft Power', Project Muse, *Journal of Democracy*, 27:1, pp. 49-63, p. 50.

compatriots in Estonia have been and will be an obvious target group, although Russian soft power in Estonia is exercised in many other forms as well. Estonian Internal Security Service (KAPO) has brought out, that the highest and most serious danger on Estonian constitutional order is posed by Russian aggressive foreign policy goals and such threats are illustrated by attempts to weaken the EU by trying to disunite the societies of the member states by creating or triggering already existing tensions.<sup>51</sup> It is also noteworthy that the strong ethnic divide between the Estonian and Russian ethnic groups has always created debates and tensions within the society and as already brought out, the Russophone minorities are naturally more susceptible to Russian soft power on the basis of culture and language.<sup>52</sup> The hot topics, that are quite characteristic in Russian influence politics that KAPO observed in 2017 coming from Russia were ‘manipulating with the younger population, attempts to ‘tense up’ the public space and continuous effort to legitimize the annexation of Crimea’. Examples cover both the historical propaganda as well as the soft power operations, where one of the foreign policy tools is Russian controlled media.<sup>53</sup> Ageeva and Zeleneva have similarly noted that one of the successful means of incorporating soft power in the Baltics has been via Russian centrally controlled media.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, projecting its influence on a country or region is often more effective when using the combination of hard and soft power, known as the implementation of so called ‘smart power’ in order to address occurring challenges. As in recent years the Russian separation politics has increasingly been targeted towards the youth, Russia seems to hope that with the work of multi-organizations with Estonian Russian speaking youth would become offering help to warm up the Estonian-Russian relations in the upcoming years and hence it is unlikely for the propagandistic behaviour to reduce in the near future. Kremlin’s strategy

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<sup>51</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2017). Kaitsepolitseiameti Aastaraamat 2017, *Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook*, p. 4. [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-väljaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

<sup>52</sup> Nielsen, K. And Paabo, H. (2015). How Russian Soft Power Fails in Estonia: Or Why the Russophone Minorities Remain Quiescent, *Journal on Baltic Security*, Vol 1, Issue 2.

<sup>53</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2017). Kaitsepolitseiameti Aastaraamat 2017, *Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook*, p. 4. [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-väljaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

<sup>54</sup> Ageeva, V. and Zeleneva, I. (2017). Russia’s Soft Power in the Baltics: Media, Education and Russian World Narratives, *Media Education*. No 4

to involve the youth is based on hope that the younger generations would also take part in the future in influencing Estonian politics.<sup>55</sup>

From the political perspective, it is notable that within Estonian political landscape, the Centre Party (Keskerakond) has been the most active in making better relations with Russia their foreign policy priority in the past.<sup>56</sup> That is the party which is also the most popular party among the ethnic Russians claiming the votes of over 68% of this minority (statistics acquired as of June 2017).<sup>57</sup> However, as the long-time major of Tallinn and the former head of the Centre Party, Edgar Savisaar, has been under the investigation of corruption since June 2014 the party has elected a new leader and a new major for the capital. The Centre Party has since arguably undergone some structural changes that may have distanced them from the same ties with Russia as it had previously.<sup>58</sup> This, however, could be up to debate as despite changes in its management, the much-expected reforms in the party along with the transformations are yet to be completed. The Centre Party has often been the subject of criticism for its suspected ties with Russia and its members for example ex-politicians like Villu Reiljan have been accused of receiving bribes in the past.<sup>59</sup> In Grigas' opinion, in both Estonian and Latvian political landscape, the Russian minorities would gain politically more influence and become more engaged in decision-making processes as the most popular parties among the Russian minorities who are dominant in the capitals, Tallinn and Riga consequently.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2017). Kaitsepolitseiameti Aastaraamat 2017, *Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook*, [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-valjaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

<sup>56</sup> Nielsen, K. and Paabo, H. (2015). How Russian Soft Power Fails in Estonia: Or Why the Russophone Minorities Remain Quiescent, *Journal on Baltic Security*, 1:2.

<sup>57</sup> ERR (2017). EKRE Toetus Langes, Keskerakond Kaotas Venekeelseid Valijaid, Eesti Rahvusringhääling [Available at: <https://www.err.ee/601089/ekre-toetus-langes-keskerakond-kaotas-venekeelseid-valijaid>]

<sup>58</sup> Tagel, L (2015). *Mida me teame praegu Savisaare skandaalist?*, *Postimees*, [Available at: <https://arvamus.postimees.ee/3337063/mida-me-teame-praegu-savisaare-skandaalist>]

<sup>59</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2017). Kaitsepolitseiameti Aastaraamat 2017, *Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook*, [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-valjaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

<sup>60</sup> Grigas, A. (2012). Legacies, Coercion and Soft Power: Russian Influence in the Baltic States, *Chatham House: Briefing Paper*

### 3. Research Methodology

In examining the influence that Russia aims to exercise within Estonia and similarly in other Baltic States, the Russian Foreign policy documents were reviewed to see how the messages of 'spreading the influence' have been conveyed to the public. The following sections will analyse the terminology used by the authorities in the documents and their speeches. The methodology to examine the case study of Estonia will also include a discourse analysis from few of the outstanding speeches relevant to the Russian influence in the Baltic Region that Russian authorities have held over the recent years prior to 2018. The documents such as Foreign Policy Concept, Russian Federal Law Concerning the Russian Compatriots Abroad and Russian National Security Strategy will be consulted. Some conclusions on Russian activity were also made by analysing the annual documents published by the Estonian Internal Security Service – KAPO (2011, 2016 and 2017 yearbooks) and the Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service – Välisluureamet (previously known as Estonian Information Board – Teabeamet; 2016, 2017 and 2018 yearbooks), although it should be noted that the information published by these government agencies is often summarized and based on gathered intelligence which is not made available to the public. Estonian Internal Security Service yearbooks as well as the Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service yearbooks have both been published in Estonian language only, and the information gathered from these documents has been translated to English language by the author who is a native Estonian speaker. The analysis part will begin with the Russian foreign policy section, that begins to look at the common terminology and moves on to look at the documentation and speeches; then will continue with a paragraph examining the topics of social media and the media coverage from Russian state-controlled media with some overview of the structure and funding for these media channels; then the focus will move on to the section about education and the language questions covering the problems that Russia constantly raises on the topic and then to historic monuments and history propaganda which is also currently on the Russian influence politics agenda. Finally, the methodology section will talk about a few of the outstanding events that have occurred over the past few years in Estonia.

As the aim of current research is to further assess the impact on Russian soft power in Estonia, an initial approach of doing was carrying out surveys in order to assess the media influence in those high school students in the high schools in Tallinn where the teaching language is either Russian or which follow the 60-40 language rule (further explained in 3.3. Language and Education).<sup>61</sup> The reason for having chosen such target group is because language issues are integral parts of Russian Compatriot Policies, high schools students belong to a concentrated age group and the ones attending Russian speaking high schools are generally from the Russian minority group within Estonia toward whom the Russian soft power is targeted towards. However, unfortunately, it was not possible to proceed with the surveys in high schools for two reasons. First, getting responses from the relevant high schools regarding participating in the research project was complicated as the school representatives seemed reluctant to reply and due to time constraints in conducting the research as the end of the school-year exam period for the high school students was approaching; and secondly having consulted such methods with the researchers from an Estonian think tank, it was advised that Russian speaking high schools in Estonia are generally reluctant in participating in any kinds of studies that have even remote ties with ethnic background. Therefore, available data on such topics was collected from Estonian public databases and more focus drawn towards the use of language and terminology in the official documents of the Russian Federation and authorities.

### 3.1. Russian Foreign Policy

From Russian foreign policy towards Russian compatriots abroad trends can be noticed based on how the messages are being conveyed from the Russian authorities. When looking at the terminology used, first it should be noted how the Russian government has consciously attempted defining the Russian identity by distinctions between the ethnic and civic Russians.<sup>62</sup> This can be seen from the official Kremlin website where the residents have

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<sup>61</sup> Haridus ja Teadusministeerium (2015). Vene õppekeele kool, *Estonian Ministry of Education and Research*, [Available at: <https://www.hm.ee/et/tegevused/alus-pohi-ja-keskharidus/vene-oppekeele-ga-kool>]

<sup>62</sup> Tiido, A. (2018). Analysis. The Russian Language as a Soft Power Tool: The Construction of National Identity by the Kremlin. *International Centre for Defence and Security* [Available at: <https://icds.ee/wp->

been described as *Russkie* (Русские) – ethnic Russians; and *Rossijane* (Россияне) – citizens of Russia.<sup>63</sup> Tiido also brings out that the authorities claim Russians are all part of the wider Russian World, regardless of whether they live in Russia or not, whereas all the nationalities within Russia are among the “all-Russia nation”. Secondly, it should be analysed how the Russian authorities have defined the term *compatriots*. As the protection of and the support for compatriot populations is at the core of Russia’s foreign policy goals, it is not surprising the term has been defined loosely by not only incorporating the ethnic Russians and Russian speakers abroad but also their families. Furthermore, the term can also be used to describe all others who may have cultural or some other connections to Russia. Thus, it includes all persons demonstrating “commonality of language, history, cultural heritage, traditions and customs (with the Russian state) and their direct relatives,” persons “living beyond the borders of the Russian Federation having spiritual, cultural, and legal connections with (Russia),” or “persons whose direct relatives lived on the territory of the Russian Federation or the Soviet Union.”<sup>64</sup> Such broad terminology makes it possible to interpret various topics in Estonian media and political landscape as targeting the national security of Russian Federation either when it becomes convenient or necessary for its authorities to do so. Third, the term *russophobia* should be looked at. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines it as the “fear or dislike of Russia or Russian policy”.<sup>65</sup> The founder of the concept, however, is considered to be the French travel-author Marquis de Custine, who moved to Russia in 1839 and based on his observations throughout the stay published a book *La Russie en 1839*. Due to its shocking content, the publication was shortly banned in Russia and only became available in 1996. The reason why the author was labelled as the founder of *russophobia*, is because his writings mentioned the Russian’s habits to deceive the visitors, to alternate the reality as well as the conclusion that professional misleading is

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[content/uploads/2018/10/The-Russian-language-as-a-soft-power-tool-featured-Anna-Tiido-2018-10-web.pdf](#)]

<sup>63</sup> Kremlin.ru (2018). *Official Internet Resources of the President of Russia* [Available at: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news>]

<sup>64</sup> Russian Federation. Federal Law: “On the State Policy of the Russian Federation Regarding Compatriots Abroad” of 05/24/1999 (Федеральный закон о государственной политике Российской Федерации в отношении соотечественников за рубежом) [Available at: [http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons\\_doc\\_LAW\\_23178/](http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_23178/)]

<sup>65</sup> Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2018). [Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Russophobia>]

known only in Russia.<sup>66</sup> To bring out the relevance of the term, we can look at the events in June 2018, when 20 Estonian citizens were labelled as Russophobes and therefore given the entry ban to Russia, amongst them a few researchers from the International Centre of Defence and Security (ICDS), Estonian former President as well as several politicians.<sup>67</sup> Previously, similar list concerning Estonians was brought out in 2015. On the other hand, the term *Russophobe*, is only used to describe Russian-speaking person(s), and sometimes also “the category of people whose cultural background is associated with Russian language regardless of ethnic and territorial distinctions.”<sup>68</sup> Finally, another term that should be considered relevant when looking at the Russian foreign policy is *disinformation*. While disinformation is not mentioned in the documents *per se*, it is the tactic which draws on from the approaches. The term initially appeared in the Soviet Union’s encyclopaedia in 1952 and was defined as false information spread in the media that aims to create public opinion accompanied with claims that the West is using such tactics against the Soviet Union.<sup>69</sup> In western dictionaries the term emerged only at the 1980s, meaning the opposite and was a direct derivative from the Russian word. In English language the term can be compared to misinformation, both of which describe the distribution of false information.<sup>70</sup> The distinction between the two, however, is that disinformation is the dissemination of spreading the misleading information knowingly, whereas in case of misinformation it is not being done deliberately. An ICDS researcher Riina Kaljurand explains, that disinformation can have two distinct aims: first one being the goal of influencing people to think and therefore to also behave in a specific manner; and the second one being to create a passive and apolitical information consumer, who does not believe anything the media is telling

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<sup>66</sup> Mihkelson, M. (2017). Desinformatsioon: Venemaa Vana ja Tõhus Mõjutusrelv, Disinformation: Russia’s Old and Effective Weapon of Influence, *Diplomaatia, International Centre for Defence and Security, Tallinn* [Available at: <https://diplomaatia.ee/desinformatsioon-venemaa-vana-ja-tohus-mojutusrelv/>]

<sup>67</sup> Reisenbuk, K. (2018). Pooled “russofoobid” andsid endast teada, *Postimees*, [Available at: <https://www.postimees.ee/4501139/pooled-russofoobid-andsid-endast-teada>]

<sup>68</sup> English Oxford Dictionary (2018). [Available at: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/russophone>]; Definitions (2018). The Web’s Largest Resource for Definitions and Translations [Available at: <https://www.definitions.net/definition/Russophone>]

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 66

<sup>70</sup> Proprastop (2018). Propaganda dictionary – disinformation. [Available at: <https://www.propastop.org/eng/2018/10/30/propaganda-dictionary-disinformation/>]

them.<sup>71</sup> What has become increasingly relevant in the case of Estonia, is its more and more passive Russian speaking population.

Ethnic discrimination towards the Russian minorities as well as the increase of NATO's forces at its doorstep are both seen as reasons to use countermeasures from Russian point of view, while from the Estonian perspective can appear as the foreign policy goal for Russia would be to undermine the resonance of local policies and its legitimacy within the EU and also NATO.<sup>72</sup> From Estonian Internal Security Service point of view it seems that Russia does so by questioning the affairs of the Union and undermining the separate countries' societies as well as by attempting to change the general attitudes more favourable towards Kremlin.<sup>73</sup> While the Baltic States are vital in achieving its interests for Russia, they are not being looked at nor treated in the same way as the Commonwealth of Independent States due to their NATO and EU memberships. Baltics are rather viewed as the less important part of the EU due to their smaller size and arguably less influence and voice within the EU politics than some larger countries, which makes Russia treat them with greater carelessness and less discretion than when communicating with other, larger western states.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, the Baltic States are useful in Russia's geopolitical approach in asserting pressure to both NATO and the EU since they are neighbouring Russia, yet, so is Kaliningrad which allows to create trouble in the area.<sup>75</sup> As Russia largely fails to master the 'power of attraction' and spreading soft power in asserting influence, Moscow uses pressure

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<sup>71</sup> Kaljurand, R. (2017). Arvamused: Desinformatsioon: Venemaa Vana ja Tõhus Mõjutusrelv, Opinions: Disinformation: Russia's Old and Effective Weapon of Influence, *Diplomaatia, International Centre for Defence and Security, Tallinn* [Available at: <https://diplomaatia.ee/desinformatsioon-venemaa-vana-ja-tohus-mojutusrelv/>]

<sup>72</sup> Rostoks, T. and Potjomkina, D. (2015). *Soft Power of the EU and Russia in the Eastern Europe: Soft Power vs (not so) Soft Manipulation?* In Rostoks, T. and Spruds, A. (2015). *The Different Faces of Soft Power: the Baltic States and Eastern Neighbourhood Between Russia and the EU*; Dougherty, J., and Kaljurand, R. (2015). *Analysis. Estonia's "Virtual Russian World": The Influence of Russian Media on Estonia's Russian Speakers.* International Centre for Defence and Security, Tallinn [Available at: [http://www.icds.ee/fileadmin/media/icds.ee/failid/Jill\\_Dougherty\\_Riina\\_Kaljurand\\_-\\_Estonia\\_s\\_Virtual\\_Russian\\_World\\_.pdf](http://www.icds.ee/fileadmin/media/icds.ee/failid/Jill_Dougherty_Riina_Kaljurand_-_Estonia_s_Virtual_Russian_World_.pdf)]

<sup>73</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2016). *Kaitsepolitsei ameti Aastaraamat 2016, Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook*, pp. 6-11. [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-valjaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

<sup>74</sup> Teabeamet. Estonian Information Board (2016). *Eesti Rahvusvahelises Julgeolekukeskkonnas 2016*, p. 9. [Available at: <https://www.valisluureamet.ee/hinnang.html>]

<sup>75</sup> Tamm, M. (2018). *Mark Galeotti: Putinil on igav ja ta on väsinud. Järgmise paari aasta jooksul tutvustab ta maailmale oma mantlipärijat.* Intervjuu. *Eesti Päevaleht* [Available at: <http://epl.delfi.ee/news/estegi-galeotti-putinil-on-igav-ja-ta-on-vasinud-jargmise-paari-aasta-jooksul-tutvustab-ta-maailmale-oma-mantliparijat?id=81397991>]

tools that can often be unpredictable and aggressive in order to achieve its goals in the international relations and especially in its imaginary sphere of influence. Unpredictability can be generated from a variety of incidents and therefore, the poisoning of Sergei Skripal, the former Russian military intelligence officer, from a recent example, has generated a lot of polemics also in Estonia, because Estonia has similarly exchanged agents with Russia on multiple occasions.<sup>76</sup> Based on such events, Estonian member of the Parliament, Eerik-Niiles Kross, instantly alerted that these kinds of incidents should be taken as warning signs for Estonian Security Services, therefore proving that the aim of spreading confusion is working for the most part.<sup>77</sup>

While Russia's relations with the western states are not the warmest, in obtaining wider international recognition, Russia seeks support from allies that are often more critical towards the west.<sup>78</sup> Russian administration seems to be convinced that the west's including the Baltics' and particularly the US's hidden goal is to overthrow the current Russian government. In an interview, Sergey Alexandrovich Karaganov, an advisor to Vladimir Putin's presidential administration and deacon of the elite Moscow college National Research University Higher School of Economics, said that we would need to understand that Russia is very sensitive about defence and conveyed the message that Russia has to be prepared for everything, partially hinting on the message as if the west is on the verge of an attack.<sup>79</sup> Additionally, the recent cooperation with NATO and the Baltics in his words was explained as provocation rather than 'NATO's symbolic help of the Baltic States'. Therefore, this is one of the reasons why many western actions are being perceived as interference into Russian internal politics or as threats to Russian national security. Such misconceptions can cause un-proportionally harsh reactions to present social processes both in Russia and abroad.

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<sup>76</sup> ERR (2015). Fotod ja video: Eston Kohver vahetati Aleksei Dresseni vastu välja [Available at: <https://www.err.ee/546159/fotod-ja-video-eston-kohver-vahetati-aleksei-dresseni-vastu-valja>]; The Guardian (2015). Russia frees Estonian officer in cold war-style spy swap [Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/27/russia-frees-estonian-officer-spy-swap>]

<sup>77</sup> Tamm, M. (2018). Mark Galeotti: Putinil on igav ja ta on väsinud. Järgmise paari aasta jooksul tutvustab ta maailmale oma mantlipärijat. Intervjuu. *Eesti Päevaleht* [Available at: <http://epl.delfi.ee/news/estni/galeotti-putinil-on-igav-ja-ta-on-vasinud-jargmise-paari-aasta-jooksul-tutvustab-ta-maailmale-oma-mantliparijat?id=81397991>]

<sup>78</sup> Teabeamet. Estonian Information Board (2016). Eesti Rahvusvahelises Julgeolekukeskkonnas 2016, p. 9. [Available at: <https://www.valisluureamet.ee/hinnang.html>]

<sup>79</sup> Neef, C. (2016). Russian Foreign Policy: 'We Are Smarter, Stronger and More Determined', *Spiegel Online*, [Available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/interview-with-putin-foreign-policy-advisor-sergey-karaganov-a-1102629.html>]

Due to these assumptions, Kremlin believes that it can only protect its interests from the power position which includes constant demonstration of military threat.<sup>80</sup> Russian Federation's National Security Strategy defines Russian national interests and strategic national priorities, objectives, tasks, and measures in the sphere of domestic and foreign policy which is aimed at strengthening Russia's national security.<sup>81</sup> When the document covers the main concepts, the security strategy addresses the main threats to national security as: "the set of conditions and factors creating a direct or indirect possibility of harm to national interests", that would have to be safeguarded by organs of state power listing them in a very broad manner. The document refers that an integral part of ensuring the national security would be in the sphere of culture via 'preservation and augmentation of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values' and perhaps what could be seen more relevant towards international arena are the 'preservation and development of the common Russian identity of the Russian peoples'; and 'the enhancement of Russia's role in the world humanitarian and cultural area'.<sup>82</sup> It clearly demonstrates how these strategic aims can be used as an excuse for widening its influence within the Baltics and in Estonia specifically.

One of the turning points of the Russian foreign policy is perhaps the 7<sup>th</sup> of May 2012, when Putin issued the decree no. 605, where he called the diplomats to take a more active stance as well as take into consideration the new technologies such as soft power.<sup>83</sup> He defined the term few months later on his speech by describing it as:

"The promotion of one's own interests and approaches through persuasion and attraction of empathy towards one's own country, based on its achievements not only in the material spheres of intellect and culture. ... Russia's image abroad is not formed by us, because it is often distorted and does not represent the real situation in our country nor our contribution

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<sup>80</sup> Teabeamet. Estonian Information Board (2016). Eesti Rahvusvahelises Julgeolekukeskkonnas 2016, p. 9. [Available at: <https://www.valisluureamet.ee/hinnang.html>]

<sup>81</sup> Russian National Security Strategy, December 2015 – [Available at: <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/ru/l8iXkR8XLAtxeilX7JK3XXy6Y0AsHD5v.pdf> (In Russian)]; [Available at: <http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/2016/Russian-National-Security-Strategy-31Dec2015.pdf> (in English)]

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. 81.

<sup>83</sup> Rutland, P. and Kazantsev, A. (2016). The Limits of Russia's 'soft power', *Journal of Political Power*, 9:3, pp. 395-413.

to global civilization, science, culture, and the position of our country in international affairs. Those who are shooting and sending out rocket attacks left, and right are praised, while those who warn about the need for a restrained dialog are somehow guilty. And we are guilty for having failed to have explained our position.”<sup>84</sup>

With the above speech, Putin had brought back the importance of diplomatic presence, that had not been apparent in Russian Federation. Later, the term was included in the Russian Federation’s Foreign Policy Concept, which addresses soft power as a “comprehensive toolkit for achieving foreign policy objectives building on civil society potential, information, cultural and other methods and technologies alternative to traditional diplomacy (which) is becoming an indispensable component of modern international relations.”<sup>85</sup> However, the concept also mentions that the “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, manipulate public opinion, including under the pretext of financing cultural and human rights projects abroad.”<sup>86</sup> While theoretically, the need for the use of soft power existed, its components were merely supplementary to the hard power until the realization after the Baltic States had joined the EU and NATO that it could be spread via TV channels and social media as well.<sup>87</sup> The institution responsible for the coordination and supervision of the soft power efforts of the country is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.<sup>88</sup> Recently it has become common practice for Russia to continuously spread the message that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania do not respect the human rights of their Russian speaking minorities and are ‘forging’ the history. The goal of such accusations seems to be the attaching of stigma to the eyes of western countries and international organizations about the Baltics, to make them

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<sup>84</sup> Putin, V. (2012). Soveshchanie poslov i postoyannykh predstavitelei Rossii. (Meeting of ambassadors and permanent representatives of Russia), 9 July. [Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/15902>]

<sup>85</sup> Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (approved by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on November 30, 2016) [Available at: [http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/official\\_documents/-/asset\\_publisher/CptlCkBgBZ29/content/id/2542248](http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptlCkBgBZ29/content/id/2542248)]

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. 85

<sup>87</sup> Korejba, J. (2015). *Will Russia Ever Be Soft?* In Rostoks, T. and Spruds, A. (2015). *The Different Faces of Soft Power: the Baltic States and Eastern Neighbourhood Between Russia and the EU.*

<sup>88</sup> Panova, V. (2015). *Russia’s „Soft“ Policies towards the Baltic States,* In Rostoks, T. and Spruds, A. (2015). *The Different Faces of Soft Power: the Baltic States and Eastern Neighbourhood Between Russia and the EU.*

to be perceived as immoral and problematic partners in order to weaken their relations with their allies and to lessen their international role in forming Russian focused politics. Kremlin attempts to pressure the relations between the Russian minorities within the Baltics and other ethnicities in these states in order to prevent the integration into local societies and plant distrust to the local governments. Simultaneously the belief that only Russia is able to stand for their rights is constantly being instilled.<sup>89</sup> To make sure all the issues with Estonian Russian residents with non-citizen status are ‘appropriately taken care of’, the ‘Russian Ombudsman’ project was restored in 2010 after a vote held at the conference at the Russian School in Estonia, where the lawyer and human rights activist Sergei Seredenko accepted a proposal to lead the office.<sup>90</sup>

Russian increasingly aggressive foreign policy was threatening towards both Estonian and the wider European security in 2016 caused by contradictive views with the west. KAPO yearbook brought out that again, the west has been portrayed as an enemy or at least a threat to Russian national interests in the controlled Russian media. These interests are no longer being clearly nor openly defined, but in essence that can be described as politics trying to sustain the Soviet Union’s legacy of sphere of influence, the basis of which were already defined in the ‘Karaganov’s doctrine’ 1992.<sup>91</sup> The term ‘near-abroad’, derives from that document, addressing neighbouring countries who are not meant to have independent politics – be it internal, external or security concerns. The doctrine is also a starting point for Russian aim to use other countries’ Russian minorities as means for political manipulation.<sup>92</sup> Compatriots are one of the main tools for Russia to manipulate with, and by emphasizing on

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<sup>89</sup> Teabeamet. Estonian Information Board (2017). Eesti Rahvusvahelises Julgeolekukeskkonnas 2017, p. 19. [Available at: <https://www.valisluureamet.ee/hinnang.html>]

<sup>90</sup> Dolgov, K. (2014). Russian Ombudsman Condemns Unprecedented Non-Citizen Status of People in East Europe, *Sputnik* [Available at: [http://voiceofrussia.com/news/2014\\_01\\_27/Dolgov-condemns-unprecedented-non-citizen-status-of-people-in-East-Europe-8289](http://voiceofrussia.com/news/2014_01_27/Dolgov-condemns-unprecedented-non-citizen-status-of-people-in-East-Europe-8289)]

<sup>91</sup> Spiegel Online (2016). Russian Foreign Policy: „We are smarter, stronger and more determined“, Interview with Putin Foreign Policy Advisor Sergey Karaganov, *Spiegel Online* [Available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/interview-with-putin-foreign-policy-advisor-sergey-karaganov-a-1102629.html>]; Karaganov, S. (2017). Mutual Assured Deterrence, *Project Syndicate* [Available at: <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/russia-role-in-new-world-order-by-sergei-karaganov-2017-02>]; Stuttaford, A. (2014). Meet Sergey Karaganov, *National Review* [Available at: <https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/meet-sergey-karaganov-andrew-stuttaford/>]

<sup>92</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2016). Kaitsepolitsei ameti Aastaraamat 2016, *Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook*, pp. 6-11. [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-väljaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

representing and protecting the interests of the compatriots, Russia makes it possible to ensure its presence and influence in its neighbouring states both now and in the future. Hence, Russian officials seem worried that the manipulation is being suppressed by the fact that Kremlin's segregation politics is not very attractive for Estonian Russian speaking youth and the activists of this politics are mostly the older generations with scarce capabilities and limited popularity. Another concern for Russia is that the local Russian speaking youth is already better integrated into Estonian society.<sup>93</sup>

Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov announced on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2017 on the annual conference which was titled: "100 Years of the Russian Revolution: Unity for the Future Moscow" that all preconditions are currently available for creating the network for young compatriots abroad.<sup>94</sup> While he started the speech by saying that Russia is not forcing anything on anyone, he also referred to the department's readiness to create such network for the young compatriots who are abroad. Lavrov also spoke how the compatriots have managed to become respected members of the society in the countries they are currently residents at, but more importantly, they have managed to preserve their national identity, language, culture, values and religion. Above all, such statement should be seen in the context of events occurring in 2017 and were targeted to Russians and Russian compatriot youth.<sup>95</sup> There are also a number of events organized for compatriots abroad. The aim of the events that are happening in the umbrella of entertainment is to spread the message with foreign policy aims, find loyal youth and to involve them in Russia's sphere of influence. The main topics that are usually covered are the concept of Russia in the Second World War and the cultivation of the myth of Red Army as having been the liberator within history as well as justifying Russian foreign policy goals. Throughout 2017, such events have also

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<sup>93</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2017). Kaitsepolitseiameti Aastaraamat 2017, *Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook*, [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-väljaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

<sup>94</sup> Russkiy Mir Foundation (2017). Hundred Years of Russian Revolution: Unity for the Future Conference Opened in Moscow [Available at: <https://russkiymir.ru/en/news/232686/>]

<sup>95</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2017). Kaitsepolitseiameti Aastaraamat 2017, *Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook*, [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-väljaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]; Embassy of The Russian Federation in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (2017). *Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks at the global themed conference titled 100 Years of the Russian Revolution: Unity for the Future Moscow*, October 31, 2017 [Available at: [https://pakistan.mid.ru/web/pakistan\\_en/-/foreign-minister-sergey-lavrov-s-remarks-at-the-global-themed-conference-titled-100-years-of-the-russian-revolution-unity-for-the-future-moscow-octobe?inheritRedirect=true](https://pakistan.mid.ru/web/pakistan_en/-/foreign-minister-sergey-lavrov-s-remarks-at-the-global-themed-conference-titled-100-years-of-the-russian-revolution-unity-for-the-future-moscow-octobe?inheritRedirect=true)]

conveyed a message inviting everyone to cooperate with Russia in their fight against terrorism and to appeal against the sanctions towards Russia which were placed unjustly on Russia post the hostilities that have been taking place in Ukraine.<sup>96</sup> One could look at such approach as Russia's wish to hinder the integration of Russian speaking youth into Estonian culture space or the efforts to ensure the undergrowth of the promoters of Russian soft power in Estonia. In doing so, the organizers of the 'compatriot' events and Russian authorities are gathering the personal data of the participants and their family members. In other words, Russia wishes to use the youth as a tool with whom to manipulate and thus achieve its foreign policy goals abroad including in Estonia as the youth is a convenient vulnerable target group.<sup>97</sup>

In achieving its goals on a lower level, Russia actively uses influence agents in their propaganda work as well. Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service Report has explained the work of these agents as below: "Russia funds, expands and uses its influence agents' network to actively influence and disturb European decision-making processes. Usually these agents are ready to be mobilized also in order to support Kremlin's interior politics for its home public. Usually the 'influence agent' is hired in Russian soil and generally it is preceded by an invitation from a Russian politician or a businessman associated with Kremlin. Active 'influence agents' can visit Russia on a regular basis and such visits would be explained with variety of reasons such as public events or meetings with State Duma Committee or just with diplomats, United Russia politicians or for example the representatives of Radical Liberal Democratic Party. Visits to Russia are normally compensated in cash, and often the compensation would be fairly modest as it should not be overly motivating. 'Influence agents' in the European system are described as activists or administrators residing in Europe, who have gained Kremlin's trust without having to obtain Russian citizenship. Generally, these agents communicate with Russia via persons residing in Europe whose goals are to mediate the tasks from Moscow to the west and who also offer compensation. Having regular tasks at hand creates a situation for the agents where they

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<sup>96</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2017). Kaitsepolitseiameti Aastaraamat 2017, *Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook*, [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-väljaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

<sup>97</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2017). Kaitsepolitseiameti Aastaraamat 2017, *Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook*, [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-väljaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

are already motivated in earning 'easy money' and offer projects to Moscow to themselves. Moscow is especially interested in cooperation with forthcoming European Parliament ambassadors, but also with lower level politicians on the government level as well as local authority politicians. In addition to hiring of individuals, Moscow's goal is to gain influence and change in parties' attitude towards Russia and in doing so both the management and single members of parties who are believed to become opinion leaders. They are invited to high level meetings both in Moscow and Sochi".<sup>98</sup> From a more transparent perspective, Russia is represented by Rossotrudnichestvo and Russkiy Mir. The former has the tasks to formulate objective views of modern Russia; enhance humanitarian cooperation and organization of cultural events; promote Russian language and educational exchange; cooperate with Russian compatriots abroad; provide international development aid; and to preserve the Russian historical legacy along with intellectual and spiritual memorials.<sup>99</sup> Russkiy Mir Foundation, that was established on the Presidential order in 2007, is similarly tasked with the objective formulation and promotion of the positive image of Russia abroad; supporting both the national and international organizations as well as unions of the teachers of the Russian language and literature; and the preservation of the Russian cultural identity.<sup>100</sup> It is noteworthy, however, that both of these agencies are often seen as the organizations undertaking espionage and sabotage.<sup>101</sup>

Finally, it should be brought out that in 2018, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are all celebrating their 100 years of independence and attempts of the Russian propaganda machine trying to lessen and smear the celebrations can be clearly seen. Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service has thus noted that Russia would likely be interested in engaging with

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<sup>98</sup> Välisluureamet, Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service (2018). Eesti Rahvusvahelises Julgeolekukeskkonnas 2018, p. 47 [Available at: <https://www.valisluureamet.ee/hinnang.html>]; Conley, A., Mina, J. Stefanov, R., and Vladimirov, M. (2016). The Kremlin Playbook: Understanding Russian Influence in Central and Eastern Europe, *Center for Strategic and International Studies*; Report of the CSIS Europe program and CSD Economic Program, October 2016

<sup>99</sup> Rossotrudnichestvo (2019). Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation [Available at: <http://rs.gov.ru/en/about>]

<sup>100</sup> Russkiy Mir Foundation (2019). [Available at: <https://russkiymir.ru/en/fund/index.php>]

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. 88

the parliamentary elections in Latvia, and that information attacks against NATO allies in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania will continue similarly to 2017.<sup>102</sup>

### 3.2. Social Media and Media Coverage

In 2016, one of the topics that became current was the development and thus the impact of social media and how Russia conveys fake news via social media. One of such examples that continues to be brought up is the harassment of Russian minorities in Estonia. However, the facts prove quite the opposite as a significant number of Russian citizens have moved to Estonia on a yearly basis to live and work.<sup>103</sup> Estonian Internal Security Service has also noted, that increased reliance on social media to assert influence and soft power has been the result of the lack of financial resources rather than an attempt to keep up with changing times.<sup>104</sup> Russian compatriot coordination council members get their main share from Russian governmental support. The best way to obtain support is to share their funds with Russian officials and diplomats in a resident country. Characteristic example would be the funding of Baltiskii Mir, that many activists in Estonia are involved in. It was noted, that in 2016, the Russian Embassy paid 30, 000 USD to publish the journal, whereas it was never actually published.<sup>105</sup> Another one of the Russian media projects is Baltnews.ee and Baltija.eu. Baltnews is targeted towards the Russian population within the Baltic States and its activity is coordinated by many Rossija Segodnja (Russia Today) employees who control the work of the whole portal as well as the covered topics. For example, under the tax-free shadow companies Aleksandr Kornilov is being paid monthly 11, 400 EUR. The coordinators of the journal forward the recommended topics also to the formal sub-branch of Russia

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<sup>102</sup> Välisluureamet, Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service (2018). Eesti Rahvusvahelises Julgeolekukeskkonnas 2018, p. 47 [Available at: <https://www.valisluureamet.ee/hinnang.html>]

<sup>103</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2016). Kaitsepolitseiameti Aastaraamat 2016, *Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook*, [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-valjaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

<sup>104</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2016). Kaitsepolitseiameti Aastaraamat 2016, *Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook*, [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-valjaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

<sup>105</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2016). Kaitsepolitseiameti Aastaraamat 2016, *Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook*, [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-valjaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

Today, Sputnik on a regular basis. Thus, it is possible to coordinate and forward all messages coming from Russia. Additionally, Russia Today's Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Baltnews portals are obligated to cooperate with Sputnik agencies and support and duplicate their published news.<sup>106</sup> Estonian blog Proprastop, administered by the members of Estonian Defence League brings out the publications regarding the *Peace March (Rahu Marss)*, covered by both Baltnews and Sputnik who urged the citizens to participate in demonstrations against NATO in the streets of Tallinn, as an excellent illustration of the types of news these media channels cover.<sup>107</sup> The event was organized by people charged with actions against Estonia during the Bronze night in 2007, and was the continuation of a similar march that was held the year before. On both occasions, the call for action included references to supporting parties from various countries across Europe and the emblem was Picasso's Dove of Peace.<sup>108</sup> Some of the more recent examples of the types of news covered by Sputnik are how Estonian member of the European Parliament Urmas Paet has urged Estonian Russian population not to vote in Russian elections held in March 2018; how claims about Russian aggression towards the Baltics have been groundless; that current Estonian-Russian cooperation in the field of entrepreneurship and culture will become the basis of constructive relationship for the politicians from both governments in the future according to Estonian member of the Parliament, Olga Ivanova who has close ties with Russia.<sup>109</sup> These are just a few illustrations of the propagandistic media coverage from Russian funded news channels that find its way to Estonian media. However, it should be noted that the above are only the examples of the articles that were published in Estonian language and the 'news' articles published in Russian are likely to be more scandalous. To explain further why many Russian media channels would be considered as propagandistic, Proprastop has

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<sup>106</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2016). Kaitsepolitseiameti Aastaraamat 2016, *Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook*, p. 10. [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-väljaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

<sup>107</sup> Proprastop (2017). Rahumarss kui Trooja Hobune, *Peace March as the Trojan Horse*, [Available at: <https://www.propastop.org/2017/09/21/rahumarss-kui-trooja-hobune/>]

<sup>108</sup> Organizing Committee of the Peace March in Tallinn (2017). *For Peace in Estonia and in All Europe*. [Available at: <http://rodina.ee/obchestvo/978-za-mir-v-estonii-i-vo-vsej-evrope>]

<sup>109</sup> Sputnik News (2018). Suursaadik: Paeti soovitus Venemaa presidendivalimisi eirata ei maksa mitte midagi, *Sputnik*, [Available at: [https://sputnik-news.ee/estonian\\_news/20180314/9731152/suursaadik-paeti-venemaa-presidendivalimisi-eirata.html](https://sputnik-news.ee/estonian_news/20180314/9731152/suursaadik-paeti-venemaa-presidendivalimisi-eirata.html)]; Sputnik News (2018). NATO teatas olematust Vene agressioonist Baltimaade suhtes, *Sputnik*, [Available at: <https://sputnik-news.ee/politics/20180308/9653275/nato-olematust-vene-agressioonist-baltimaade.html>]; Sputnik News (2018). Ivanova Peterburi foorumil: ettevõtlus ja kultuur ühendavad, *Sputnik*, [Available at: <https://sputnik-news.ee/politics/20180526/10849036/ivanova-peterburi-foorumil-ettevotlus-kultuur-uhendavad.html>]

sorted them as follows: the owners of the channel have close ties with Russian authorities; the content of the channel has brought examples of forwarding propaganda; or the channel has been sanctioned by other countries.<sup>110</sup> From the list of TV channels some of the examples can be seen below: Pervõi, which is also the most watched channel within Russia is partially state-owned and forwards the information favouring the Russian government. PBK (Pervõi Baltiski Kanal – First Baltic Channel), however, was considered as propagandistic since it was sanctioned by Lithuania for a period due to denying the Soviet Union’s crimes during the re-independence of Lithuania. TV channels Rossija, Rossija 1, Rossija 24, RTR Planeta, RTR Planeta Baltic were considered as propagandistic based on their ownership as they are 100% state-owned and RTR Planeta was also sanctioned in Lithuania on the basis of spreading hate and war propaganda. REN TV, Ren TV Baltic, REN TV Eesti are all privately owned TV channels by National Media Group, however, these have been labelled as propagandistic due to their content and by being sanctioned in Lithuania. RT, the former Russia Today, as well as Sputnik are funded by state-owned TV-Novosti and these are also accused of covering disinformation, several examples from the articles of Sputnik were brought out above. In order to bring out the public’s perspective on the topic of propaganda it can be noted that in April 2018 an Estonian newspaper Eesti Päevaleht held an interview with a former Russian activist, Konstantin Tšadin, who had changed his views and hence moved to Estonia. One of his main observations that he had noticed in Estonia was the significance of the presence of Russian propaganda and the greatness of Russian portrayal in the country.<sup>111</sup>

While the language and education related questions will be examined in the following chapter, it should be noted here that the Estonian population is comprised of people living in completely different information spaces, which content can often be contrasting as the

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<sup>110</sup> Proprastop (2016). Propagandakanalite välimääraja: osa 1, Identifying Propaganda Channels: Part 1, [Available at: <https://www.propastop.org/2016/04/28/propagandakanalite-valimaaraja-osa-1/>]; Proprastop (2017). Propagandakanalite välimääraja: osa 2, Identifying Propaganda Channels: Part 2, [Available at: <https://www.propastop.org/2017/02/06/propagandakanalite-valimaaraja-osa-2/>]

<sup>111</sup> Tuul, M. (2018). Endise noorputinlase lugu. Kuidas Kremli abilisest Konstantin Tšadlinist sai Eestis elav põgenik. *Eesti Päevaleht*, p. 2-3 [Available at: <http://epl.delfi.ee/news/eesti/endise-noorputinlase-lugu-kuidas-kremli-abilisest-konstantin-tsadlinist-sai-eestis-elav-pogenik?id=81700979>]; Tuul, M. (2018). Intervjuu. Konstantin Tšadlin: nii kõva Vene propagandat kui Eestis pole ma näinudki. *Eesti Päevaleht*, p. 4-5. [Available at: <http://epl.delfi.ee/news/eesti/konstantin-tsadlin-nii-kova-vene-propagandat-kui-eestis-pole-ma-nainudki?id=81701033>]

sources where the information is received among ethnic Estonians and ethnic Russians varies based on the language they read the news in, listen to the radio, or watch the television. For the Russian population in Estonia, there are opportunities to obtain the information from the Russian television channels, some of which, as already mentioned, directly subordinate to Kremlin and can be used as tools of influence. Interestingly, to offer an alternative source of information from the TV, the Estonian National Television, ETV, only launched their all-Russian language TV channel ETV+, as late as on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September 2015.<sup>112</sup> In a research by Kantar Emor carried out a year later, in which shows the ratings of the channels from October 2015 to November 2017 the most popular Russian TV channel however, was still the PBK followed by RTR Planeta and NTV Mir. Then, ETV+ was the second least popular channel after the CTC.<sup>113</sup> The other 2 channels, that remained in the middle in their popularity, were Ren TV Estonia and TV3+. Out of the above-mentioned channels, the PBK which is believed to be under Kremlin's control, cooperates also with the Centre Party in Estonia. Centre Party, more conservative left-wing party, is the most prominent political party within the Russophone electorate, and allegedly the Centre Party's funding and demand for promotional adverts during elections is part of the reason for one of its members', Mihhail Kõlvart's, success during the recent elections.<sup>114</sup> The other more popular TV channels are also originating from Russia, however with the difference that while, the RTR-Planeta is a state-owned broadcaster by Russia, the NTV Mir is controlled by Gazprom Media instead. Regarding the funding of various media channels, the Re:Baltica has also put together a graph showing how the Baltic Media Alliance, located in Latvia, is an umbrella organization controlling and funding the many allied media channels within the Baltics.<sup>115</sup> The interesting fact regarding the Baltic Media Alliance is that it is also directly linked to Estonian Centre Party and its' member, Lev Vaino, who turns out to be one of the most influential people of Estonia's Russian language politics.

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<sup>112</sup> Nielsen, K. And Paabo, H. (2015). How Russian Soft Power Fails in Estonia: Or Why the Russophone Minorities Remain Quiescent, *Journal on Baltic Security*, 1:2.

<sup>113</sup> Delfi (2016). Graafik: Vaata, millised on venekeelsete telekanalite reitingud Eestis viimase aasta jooksul, *Delfi* [Available at: <http://www.delfi.ee/news/paevauudised/eesti/graafik-vaata-millised-on-venekeelsete-telekanalite-reitingud-eestis-viimase-aasta-jooksul?id=76264759>]

<sup>114</sup> Herkel, A. (2018). Andres Herkel: PBK kui julgeolekurisk ja Keskerakonna käepikendus, *Eesti Päevaleht* [Available at: <http://epl.delfi.ee/news/arvamus/andres-herkel-pbk-kui-julgeolekurisk-ja-keskerakonna-kaepikendus?id=81528297>]

<sup>115</sup> Salu, M. and Springe, I. (2012). Who is the Puppet and who is the Master?, *Money from Russia, Re:Baltica* [Available at: <https://en.rebaltica.lv/2012/04/who-is-the-puppet-and-who-is-the-master/>]

### 3.3. Language and Education Questions

Another topic at the center of focus of Russian foreign policy, that is closely linked to the Russian centrally controlled media, is the one of education – more specifically, the language questions in Estonian schools for Russian speaking students. As Russian language is an important tool of influence for Russia, and the sphere of integration policy is partially securitized and the cause for tensions due to conflicting aims between the Russian Compatriot policy and Estonian Integration goals so hence it should be examined more closely.<sup>116</sup> Generally, the teaching language in Estonian schools is Estonian, however, since there is a significant Russian population in Estonia – 330 000 Russians out of 1,3 million people as of 2017 – there are several schools where the teaching language is Russian at a primary school level, or which follow the 60-40 language rule at high school level.<sup>117</sup> In November 2007, Estonian Government established an obligation for gradual transition to Estonian language based education with the aim to increase the social cohesion, improve the quality of education and raise the competitive ability among the Russian speaking youth within the society.<sup>118</sup> With the result of such reforms, this means, that at the primary school level, some schools can still have the primary teaching language as Russian and Estonian language would have to be taught as the second compulsory language from the first schoolyear onwards. From the high school level, on the other hand 60% of the minimum required courses, which is at least 57 courses of the study load, would have to be taught in Estonian language. These include classes such as Estonian Literature, Estonian History, Social Sciences, Music and Geography. Exceptions for studies to be carried out in Russian would

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<sup>116</sup> Jakobson, M. L. (2014). Integration Policy Instruments in Estonia, INTERACT Research Report 2014/21 [Available at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/45684686.pdf>]

<sup>117</sup> Haridus ja Teadusministeerium (2015). Vene õppekeele kool, *Estonian Ministry of Education and Research*, [Available at: <https://www.hm.ee/et/tegevused/alus-pohi-ja-keskharidus/vene-oppekeele-ga-kool>]; Eesti Statistika (2017). Rahvaarv rahvuse järgi, 1. jaanuar, aasta, *Estonian Statistics* [Available at: <https://www.stat.ee/34267>]

<sup>118</sup> Haridus ja Teadusministeerium (2015). Analüüs ja ettepanekud eesti keele õppe tõhustamiseks põhikoolis, *Estonian Ministry of Education and Research* [Available at: [https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/analuus\\_ja\\_ettepanekud\\_eesti\\_keeles\\_oppe\\_tohustamiseks\\_pohikoolis.pdf](https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/analuus_ja_ettepanekud_eesti_keeles_oppe_tohustamiseks_pohikoolis.pdf)]

have to be approved by Estonian Government based on applications by municipality administrations or city councils.<sup>119</sup> Estonian constitution designates the Estonian language as the official state language, however, it also provides protections for the minority languages as well, which in turn diminishes somewhat the authority for language use to local government.<sup>120</sup> The citizenship law requires proficiency from the applicants in demonstrating the Estonian state language, whereas by 2014, only 21% of the native Russians in Estonia were fluent in Estonian language.<sup>121</sup> As the Russian language is an important soft power tool, both, the education and language policies, have become notable tools for the Russian Compatriot Policies in Estonia. For the citizenship requirement, Estonia has often been under the criticism of Russia for violating the human rights and mistreating parts of Estonian population.<sup>122</sup> This has become especially notable following the mentioned reforms, and the parents' or guardians' concerns of the quality of their children's education has often been taken advantage of by those politicians who are advocates of these Compatriot Policies in Estonia.<sup>123</sup>

While enabling the education for everyone in their native language is not necessarily something the government should be fighting against, the gradual changes are encouraged from the viewpoint that the availability of Estonian language education does create better options for employability for the youth seeking employment and increase opportunities for further study in Estonia following high school. From the integration monitoring into Estonian society held in 2017, the distressful findings were that people from different ethnic backgrounds operate in different linguistic spaces: only one tenth of Estonian population converses with other nationalities on daily basis during their free time (it should be noted,

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<sup>119</sup> Haridus ja Teadusministeerium (2015). Vene õppekeele kool, *Estonian Ministry of Education and Research*,

[Available at: <https://www.hm.ee/et/tegevused/alus-pohi-ja-keskharidus/vene-oppekeele-ga-kool>]

<sup>120</sup> Riigi Teataja. (1992). The Constitution of the Republic of Estonia. *Ch 1. Section 52*, [Available at: <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/530102013003/consolide>]

<sup>121</sup> Zakem, V., Saunders, P., and Antoun, D. (2015). Mobilizing Compatriots: Russia's Strategy, Tactics and Influence in the Former Soviet Union, The CNA Corporation, p. 8 [Available at: [https://www.cna.org/cna\\_files/pdf/DOP-2015-U-011689-1Rev.pdf](https://www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/DOP-2015-U-011689-1Rev.pdf)]

<sup>122</sup> Feldman, G. (2005). Culture, State and Security in Europe: The Case of Citizenship and Integration Policy in Estonia, *American Ethnologist*, 32, In Crandall, M. (2014). Soft Security Threats and Small States: the Case of Estonia, *Defence Studies*, 14:1, pp. 30-55.

<sup>123</sup> Bulakh, A., Tupay, J., Kaas, K., Tuohy, E., Visnapuu, K and Kivirähk, J. (2014). Russian Soft Power and Non-Military Influence: The View from Estonia, *International Centre for Defence Studies*, Tallinn, in Winnerstig, M. (ed.) (2014). Tools of Destabilization: Russian Soft Power and Non-military Influence in the Baltic States

that ethnic Russians comprised 26,8% of Estonian population at the time of the study).<sup>124</sup> Another notable finding from the study was that people from other ethnic backgrounds have lower trust in the government institutions than native Estonians, most notably the President, defence forces and the police.

Therefore, it should also be considered that higher proficiency enhances the integration into the society and would allow to increase the above mentioned social cohesiveness as currently native Estonian and native Russian students are often taught at separate high schools whereas with reformed system the interaction with students from different backgrounds would improve and help to break the social divide. Regardless, the preservation of Russian language is one of the key parts of Russian Compatriots Policy and while the parents' concerns should also be understandable, campaigning against promoting Estonian language or towards preserving a foreign language within Estonia imposes a risk at undermining the position of Estonian as the official language in a such small country.<sup>125</sup> It is noteworthy, that following the supposed implementation of the gradual transition to Estonian language in the high school level in 2011, the Estonian politician, and member of the Centre Party and the then Deputy Major of Tallinn, responsible for educational and cultural issues, Yana Toom, began pushing the Russian schools in Tallinn to apply within the Tallinn City Council in order to be able to continue the teaching in Russian language. This was consequently done by 11 secondary schools, which thus set a precedent that was similarly followed by 5 high schools in Estonian city of Narva after being urged to do so by Mihhail Stalnuhhin.<sup>126</sup> After the Estonian elections, when Yana Toom was elected to Riigikogu, her fellow party member from the Centre Party, Mikhail Kõlvart, became a Deputy Major of Tallinn and continued working against transition to reformed schooling system in the language front. Having urged people to protest and to demonstrate for not being prepared to move forward with starting education transition to partially Estonian,

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<sup>124</sup> Kaldur, K., Vetik, R., Kirss, L. et. al. (2017). Integration of Estonian Society: Monitoring 2017, *Balti Uuringute Instituut, SA Poliitikauringute Keskus Praxis, Estonian Ministry of Culture*, [Available at: <https://www.kul.ee/et/EIM2017>]

<sup>125</sup> Kivirähk, Juhan (2010): How to Address the 'Humanitarian Dimension' of Russian Foreign Policy? *Diplomaatia*, Tallinn, [Available at: <https://www.icds.ee/publications/article/how-to-address-the-humanitarian-dimension-of-russian-foreign-policy>]

<sup>126</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2011). *Kaitsepolitseiameti Aastaraamat 2011, Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook*, [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-väljaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

which the schools in fact had been preparing for over the past few years, it resulted in signature gathering campaign, which Kõlvart lead after he had become the head of Russian Schooling in Estonia in the autumn of 2011.<sup>127</sup> His petition was delivered to Estonian Government, the President, and the Ministry of Education and Science in 2012 as it managed to gain over 35 000 signatures and create a lot of polemics within society.<sup>128</sup>

Language barrier, however, appears to be among the main issues segregating the native Estonian and native Russian populations within Estonia, as found out from the research conducted in 2014 and 2015 by the Inimõiguste Instituut (Human Rights Institute) named 'Keelelised inimõigused ja julgeolek' (Language based human rights and the security).<sup>129</sup> The study also established, that both Estonians and Estonian Russians would rather prefer a school system where everyone could study at the same Estonian speaking high schools together where the study in Russian language would be one of the selectable options within the school. The Russian speaking population supported the idea with 60% for primary school level and 67% for high school level. Estonian speaking population supported the idea with the 81% and 86% respectively. Overall, 75% of the Russian speaking respondents found that learning Estonian language is important and while the percentage was significantly larger, reaching 90% at the capital among the Russian speakers, the necessity of Estonian language was believed to be important only among 54% of the Russian speaking respondents in Ida-Virumaa – the county in the North East of Estonia, which is also bordering Russia. While two thirds of the Russian speaking respondents would be able to communicate in Estonian, only one third chooses to do so. Thus, the language topic can be considered as one of the more crucial ones towards uniting the society and has continuously been listed in the Government's action plan for the upcoming years as well.<sup>130</sup> From the mentioned study, it was also possible to draw comparisons between poor language skills and negativity towards

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<sup>127</sup> Gnadenteich, U. (2011). Tallinna abilinnapea organiseerib vene koolide reformi vastast protestiaktsiooni, *Postimees*, [Available at: <https://tallinn.postimees.ee/549222/tallinna-abilinnapea-organiseerib-vene-koolide-reformi-vastast-protestiaktsiooni>]

<sup>128</sup> Vedler, S. (2012). Divide and Conquer in Estonia, *Rebaltica*, [Available at: [http://www.rebaltica.lv/en/investigations/money\\_from\\_russia/a/610/divide\\_and\\_conquer\\_in\\_estonia.html](http://www.rebaltica.lv/en/investigations/money_from_russia/a/610/divide_and_conquer_in_estonia.html)]

<sup>129</sup> ERR (2015). Eestis Elavad Venelased Eelistaksid Eestikeelset Haridust, Eesti Keele Kasutamist Piirab Venekeelne Mugavusruum, *Inimõiguste Instituut & Turu-Uuringute AS* [Available at: <https://turu-uuringute.eu/eestis-elavad-venelased-eelistaksid-eestikeelset-haridust-eesti-keele-kasutamist-piirab-venekeelne-mugavusruum/>]

<sup>130</sup> Riigi Teataja (2015). Vabariigi Valitsuse Tegevusprogramm 2015-2019. *Vabariigi Valitsuse 29. Mai 2015. a korraldus* [Available at: <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/aktiivisa/3170/5201/6013/160k%20lisa.pdf>]

Estonian Government, possibly due to the media channels that they were following.<sup>131</sup> Furthermore, the results showed that every fifth to seventh Russian speaking respondent felt that they had been treated unfairly due to their native language. More than average saw that there were problems with ensuring their human rights although the correlation with language seems unclear. The assurance of the human rights of the Russian Compatriots and the 'violation' of their human rights has been the message which repeatedly occurs within the Russian media channels and could perhaps be associated with the disinformation the Russian speaking minorities in Estonia were subject to.

### 3.4. History Propaganda

Kremlin puts consistently and increasingly attention to historic propaganda and attempts to politicize the activities around the monuments around Russia and Soviet Union. 2017 was noteworthy in this sense as in addition to advocating the 'Great Victory' myth it also represented 100 years from the Russian revolution. This was another attempt to engage and consolidate the sympathizers both in Russia as well as Russians abroad, to attract new members including the youth into Russian segregation politics and use them to assert the Russian influence abroad.<sup>132</sup> Here, again the Russian Federation's National Security Strategy can be brought out, which emphasizes that the strengthening of national security in the sphere of culture is aided by 'the strengthening of state control over the condition of cultural heritage facilities (monuments of history and culture) and the enhancement of responsibility for violating the demands of their preservation, utilization and state protection'.<sup>133</sup> In this case, confirmation to Kremlin's aspirations to expand the behaviour to

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<sup>131</sup> ERR (2015). Eestis Elavad Venelased Eelistaksid Eestikeelset Haridust, Eesti Keele Kasutamist Piirab Venekeelne Mugavusruum, *Inimõiguste Instituut & Turu-Uuringute AS* [Available at: <https://turu-uuringute.eu/eestis-elavad-venelased-eelistaksid-eestikeelset-haridust-eesti-keele-kasutamist-piirab-venekeelne-mugavusruum/>]

<sup>132</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2017). Kaitsepolitseiameti Aastaraamat 2017, *Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook*, p. 7. [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-väljaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

<sup>133</sup> Russian National Security Strategy, December 2015 [Available at: <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/ru/l8iXkR8XLAtxeilX7JK3XXy6Y0AsHD5v.pdf> (In Russian)];

protect the monuments abroad was the Russian Pobeda (Victory) Organising Committee protocol confirmed by president Putin on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2017.<sup>134</sup> As already characteristic to Kremlin, significant effort is being put towards fighting ‘forging historic facts’ which is nothing new to Russia’s behaviour. The protocol’s guidelines are not only directing to establish Russian narratives in propaganda conferences and (Russian language) media, but also saw many activities in the public space abroad. For example, it obliged Russian authorities to ascertain, maintain and popularize the cultural and historic monuments associated with Russian history located outside of Russian borders. Russian authorities would have to assist the Russian War History Association and Russian Compatriot organizations and activists, to Russian war history and towards memorials celebrating victory over fascism, and in constructing monuments and memorial plaques. Authorities are directed towards creating and encouraging foreign organizations that deal with finding Russian (Soviet) soldiers and keeping their memories.<sup>135</sup>

From the work of authorities, what has stood out, is that Narva’s Russian Federation General Consulate’s General Consul Dmitri Kazenov and Consul advisor Andrei Surgajev’s activity was in contradiction with diplomatic relations according to Vienna Conventions article 41. Therefore, the above persons representing foreign country’s diplomatic agency were announced as persona non-grata-s according to the conventions Article 9 point 1 and Foreign Relations Act Article 9 point 6. Logically, the creation of war memorial work committee next to the Embassy in 2017 should also be added to this list. What is noteworthy, that the chairman of the committee is Russian ambassador in Estonia, Aleksandr Petrov. Besides him, the committee members are consisted of other diplomats from the embassy as well as activists in Russian segregation politics. The aim of this organization supporting the ambassador is to strengthen the control over organizations and individuals who deal with keeping the memory of deceased Russian (Soviet) soldiers, search for the remains of those soldiers and carry out the reburials as well as take care of the war

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[Available at: <http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/2016/Russian-National-Security-Strategy-31Dec2015.pdf> (in English)]

<sup>134</sup> President of Russia (2017). Minutes of Russian Pobeda (Victory) Organising Committee meeting, *Documents*, [Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/acts/news/54453>]

<sup>135</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2017). *Kaitsepolitsei ameti Aastaraamat 2017, Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook*, p. 7. [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-väljaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

memorials and so forth. With the supervision of the Russian embassy, the committee also organizes 'history conferences', the openings of monuments, the celebrations of Russian historic and national events, memorial events and so forth. The importance of the field for Russia is shown by the fact that the funding of the tidying and renovation of war memorials in Estonia has been a priority from other segregation politics activities. This could be due to the fact that it encourages the interest of the 'professional' Russian compatriots towards the field. This involves people who would partake in any Russian influence project no matter the nature, as long as it is funded. Interest groups have also arisen due to the fact that Russia has put more financial resources into historic propaganda and cleaning the monuments, and it has given individuals opportunities to make profit from it. Kremlin is increasingly interested in controlling and channelling the activities of veteran organizations and their cooperation as it sees opportunities to assert influence on the foreign governments via such organizations. For example, during the conference "Remember their memory" held on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October 2017 in Warsaw, by the Russian Federal agency Rossotrudnitšestvo, the representatives of different countries' veteran organizations accepted a petition deprecating Polish authorities memory politics. These activities aim at breaking the coherence of the society, targeted hatred and knowingly diversifying the ethnic groups by manipulating with the Estonian people and thus weakening the society. It should be noted that it is unlikely that at such old age the veterans of the Second World War would be interested in Kremlin's opportunistic public politics but instead would like to remember their fellow soldiers with respect and honour.<sup>136</sup>

### 3.5. Recent Events

As already has become apparent from the language section above as well, Kremlin is both encouraging and funding the persons who are supporting the propaganda narrative attacking Estonia. One of such examples was that the NGO information Centre and Russian

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<sup>136</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2017). *Kaitsepolitsei ameti Aastaraamat 2017, Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook*, p. 7. [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-valjaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

School in Estonia participated once again in the OSCE conference ODIHR in Warsaw in between 19<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2016 funded by Kremlin. Their mission there was to portray the ethnic Russian fundamental rights to be educated in Russian language as well as to inform the public about the mass non-citizenship issue that according to the NGO was present in Estonia.<sup>137</sup>

The creation of a network of Russian speaking youth outside of Russia has also received a lot of attention recently and Russia seems to have started putting more emphasis on that field of influence already several years ago. While Kosachev proposed taking advantage of the experiences gained by the Soviet Union, some of these ideas have also been put to practice, such as the re-launching of the system for friendship societies and organizing festivals to young people and students.<sup>138</sup> New formats of youth events have been set up and the previous ones expanded from 2015, by having changed the many local and regional formats into international ones. Many events aimed at segregation politics are being organized both in Russia and abroad, with the target group being youth within different age groups and profiles from foreign states. From 2017, such examples are sports competitions held in May 2017 in Kazan for primary school children (up to 15-year-olds), known as global compatriot games. From 22<sup>nd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> of September 2017, the Global Russian Compatriot Youth forum was held in Sofia, Bulgaria, named “Russia’s Destiny: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow” which targeted Russian people around the world in the age group between 18 to 35. The main event of 2017 for Russia, however, was the International Youth and Student Festival in Sochi from the 14<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> of October in 2017 where youth were invited from different backgrounds from around the Globe. Estonian youth attended all the above-mentioned events as well.<sup>139</sup> Russian Compatriots in Estonia have also had the opportunity to participate in the Seliger Youth Educational Forums or camps that have been organized by the Nashi Youth Movement at Lake Seliger in Tver Oblast near the city of Ostashkov already

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<sup>137</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2016). Kaitsepolitseiameti Aastaraamat 2016, *Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook* [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-väljaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

<sup>138</sup> Sergunin, A. and Karabeshkin, L. (2015). Understanding Russia’s Soft Power Strategy, *Politics*, 35:3-4, pp. 347-363.

<sup>139</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2017). Kaitsepolitseiameti Aastaraamat 2017, *Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook*, [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-väljaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

since 2005.<sup>140</sup> In 2017, Russia planned to hold another International Festival of Youth and Students. It is notable that the Soviet Union also held such kinds of events twice, and both times with the propaganda effect: at first in 1957, when the Iron Curtain was slightly lifted by the first time by the Soviet Union leadership; and then in 1985, when it held the first high-profile international publicity campaign for Perestroika.<sup>141</sup>

These types of events are only the tip of the iceberg and the target group of young people are also being included to various language, culture, and education competitions, youth camps, and seminars. Such events have of course been made very appealing for the youth target group as the organizers backed by Kremlin public diplomacy leaders, can often cover the expenses for both living and travel associated with attending them and additionally may add free ideological entertainment program as well. The so called Russian world ideology and Russian national history approach propaganda allows seeking out the rebellious and easily manipulative people whom to include and use on a later date for their benefit.<sup>142</sup> Russian point of view is well described by the speech held by Foreign Ministry's Compatriot Department leader Oleg Malginov in the State Duma in 20<sup>th</sup> of March 2017 'On Today's Policy of the Russian Federation Towards Compatriots Living Abroad', where he described that it is "important to keep in contact with prospective young Russian people, and supporting their ambitions and helping them to achieve their goals is in Russia's interests as soon they may become influential people".<sup>143</sup>

From above it is clear, why ensuring the undergrowth of rapidly ageing supporters of Russian interests was one of the main agenda points for the annual conference in 21<sup>st</sup> of April 2017 arranged by the leaders of Kremlin's segregation politics in Tallinn. On the other hand, the local Russian community's self-proclaimed leaders are not so much interested in

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<sup>140</sup> Forum Seliger [Available at: <http://www.forumseliger.ru/>]

<sup>141</sup> Bulakh, A., Tupay, J., Kaas, K., Tuohy, E., Visnapuu, K and Kivirähk, J. (2014). Russian Soft Power and Non-Military Influence: The View from Estonia, *International Centre for Defence Studies*, Tallinn, p. 49. in Winnerstig, M. (ed.) (2014). Tools of Destabilization: Russian Soft Power and Non-military Influence in the Baltic States

<sup>142</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2017). Kaitsepolitseiameti Aastaraamat 2017, *Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook*, [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-väljaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

<sup>143</sup> The Far Abroad (2017). Representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church take part in Parliamentary hearings, *The Russian Orthodox Church* [Available at: <https://mospat.ru/en/2017/03/20/news143728/>]

youth work but more so in personal, political and/or economical ambitions. This means that they are seeking funding in particular from the known Russian agencies such as Russkii Mir, Rossotrudnitšestvo and the Russian Embassy in Estonia as well as receiving promises for being able to promote themselves via Russian media channels. According to Russian Foreign Ministry's guidelines, the local embassy in Estonia also puts more emphasis towards working with the youth.

In 2017, with the funding and organization from the Russian Embassy in Estonia and Russkii Mir, two events intended for the Russian speaking youth in the Baltics were organized in Estonia: from 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> of May a forum "My Baltic States" was held in the county of Järva in the Valgehobusemäe guest house in South of Estonia, and from 29<sup>th</sup> of September to 1<sup>st</sup> of October the youth forum "BaltFest 2017" in Harju county in Nelijärve guesthouse in the North of Estonia, close to the capital Tallinn. Oleg Malginov, the already mentioned leader of the Russian Foreign Ministry's Compatriot Department leader also attended the first forum, who claimed, that the Russian Compatriot Department were interested in reforming their work, giving up formal work schemes and reorienting towards working more with focus groups and working with the youth. He claimed that the forum was a success and recommended taking the obtained experiences into other countries.<sup>144</sup>

One of the target groups via whom Russia tries to influence the youth with the Compatriot Policies that is also closely linked to the education section is the teachers. Risk factor in this instance is caused by the free training and learning programs that Russia offers but which in turn come along with the ideological and biased content. Especially deplorable are the so called 'refresher trainings' held in Russia involving topics around history, from where the obtained propaganda narratives are often later on shared to students. For example, one of the study programs "The History of Russia" aimed at Russian compatriots was held from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> of August in 2017 in St. Petersburg. The main topic of the program was '100 Years After 1917: Objective Look Back to the Past and Lessons for the Future'. The History and Social Sciences teachers from Estonian cities with significant Russian communities also

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<sup>144</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2017). Kaitsepolitseiameti Aastaraamat 2017, *Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook*, [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-väljaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

attended in the course, from: Tallinn, Narva and Kohtla-Järve. The Pro-Kremlin individuals and groupings are also attempting to involve the youth into their marginal protest actions and therefore create a greater divide within the society.<sup>145</sup>

In addition to the events aimed at promoting the culture, education or unification of the Russian Compatriots abroad, some more extreme activities and unfortunately provocative in nature that were also arranged by Russian activists in 2017. For instance, briefly before the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, a stone was put on a private property in the town of Kiviõli as if it was a memorial, brought from Lügänuuse, Rääsa village that was dedicated to a pilot shot down in 1944 near that village. However, it was not a war memorial as nobody was buried near the stone.<sup>146</sup> A year before, in 2016, another somewhat ridiculous example was the provocation attempt during the memorial event for those fallen during the 'Sinimägede lahingud' - Battle of Tannenberg Line, when one of the known 'skinheads' Aleksei Maksimov from St. Petersburg was sent to Estonia and had to be recorded by the Russian media, in order to demonstrate that Estonia is propagating Nazism.<sup>147</sup>

There are some other illustrating examples that are portraying the Russian influence activities towards the Baltics such as the creation Russian Baltic Research Association (RBRA) in April 2016 in St. Petersburg, which aims to be an association for social and humanitarian researchers that should be taken seriously. In reality Russian Baltic Research Association's main function is to support Russian national influence towards the Baltic states by publishing 'pseudo-research' and arrange conferences. RBRA's creation is closely related to the fond Historic Memory, the director of which, Alexandr Djukov proposed setting up such kind of association. Thus, Historic Memory received 20,000 euros of support in 2015 for arranging the first conference, which was held in Kaliningrad from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> of April,

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<sup>145</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2017). Kaitsepolitseiameti Aastaraamat 2017, *Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook*, [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-väljaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

<sup>146</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2017). Kaitsepolitseiameti Aastaraamat 2017, *Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook*, [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-väljaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

<sup>147</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2016). Kaitsepolitseiameti Aastaraamat 2016, *Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook* [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-väljaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

2016.<sup>148</sup> One of the first signs of the spreading of Russian influence also in the recent year, 2018 was the conference held in St. Petersburg on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October 2017 named “Wars and Revolutions 1917-1920: The birth of Finland’s, Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian statehood”. The organizers were the Russian President’s coordinated Russian Baltic Research Association (RBRA) and Kremlin’s even more ambitious tool, public diplomacy support fond called Gorchakov. The association is now searching for historians from the Baltic states who would be ready to legitimize Kremlin’s propaganda towards Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania with their participation. Therefore, it needs to be taken into account that Russia is not looking for substantive dialogue nor discussion. Instead, it merely tries to take advantage of the representatives of the illusionary opponent.<sup>149</sup>

#### 4. Discussion of Results

From the current paper analysing the implementation of Russia’s soft power in Estonia the topic has been examined mostly in the frame of five core angles: the Russian Foreign Policy, Social Media and Media Coverage; Language and Education Questions; History Propaganda; and the Recent Events that have occurred within Estonia or which have or had some kind of impact on Estonia within the context of soft power. Since Russia is not known as a democratic country as discussed in the beginning of this paper and the concepts analysed in the literature review are referring to its approach as becoming an alternative option to the West, there are also some signs of the ‘antidemocratic toolkit’ which Walker has referred to visible in Russia’s foreign policy approach that are being implemented within Russia’s goals as opposing the views of the West and exercising these also within Baltics and in Estonia. It is visible that Russia feels threatened by the Western democratic worldview and aims to make the preservation of the Russian history and culture via approaching the ethnic Russians as its’ primary objective within the soft power approach. What has become apparent from both Russian National Security Strategy and Foreign Policy Concept is that

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<sup>148</sup> Teabeamet. Estonian Information Board (2017). *Eesti Rahvusvahelises Julgeolekukeskkonnas 2017*, p. 20. [Available at: <https://www.valisluureamet.ee/hinnang.html>]

<sup>149</sup> Välisluureamet, Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service (2018). *Eesti Rahvusvahelises Julgeolekukeskkonnas 2018*, p. 50, [Available at: <https://www.valisluureamet.ee/hinnang.html>]

Russia is able to start interpreting everything as a threat towards them and thus finds it crucial to preserve the Russian language, culture and values representing the legacy both home and abroad as the security aspect gives a justifiable excuse for Russia to 'protect themselves'. These are among some of the reasons bringing about the much-discussed Compatriot Policies, which have been the excuses for organizing various events, conferences, meetings and all other types of gatherings for ethnic Russian youth target group within Estonia, in addition to organizing the educational events for teachers in Russian schools as well as other types of gatherings that can fit under the umbrella of preservation of culture.

From the relations that Russia has established with Estonia as well as with the other two Baltic States it appears that they are within a 'limbo' between being important for Russia due to their geographic location and simultaneously perceived as the less significant part of the European Union of whom Russia would have to deal with out of necessity due to shared history and borders and whom Russia could undermine and manipulate with in order to influence EU's politics. This is because the Baltics are located within the 'near abroad' and in addition to bordering Russia, they also are located between Russia's administrative exclave Kaliningrad at the Baltic Sea, they prove a unique type of neighbours to Russia, who are part of EU and NATO, but also to some extent belong to Russian post-Soviet influence space. When talking about undermining the small countries, such politics may be insignificant for Russia, or in turn well thought out as these are effective tools for discrediting or questioning the credibility of the small states and this can pose a threat to Estonia – whether we are talking about the preservation of Russian language education in Estonia and thus distantly endangering the preservation of Estonian language as the national language in the country; whether we are investigating the accusations towards discrimination of the human rights of the Russian minorities in Estonia or those residents without the citizenships even though their number has significantly decreased and thereby placing blame on Estonia in an international environment for groundless accusations; whether we are addressing the issue of Russia not enabling the divided society to become less segregated by enforcing the Russian Compatriot Policies within the country; or whether we are simply talking about having corrupt shadow organizations within the country been set up and funding illegitimate businesses for propagandistic purposes. Estonian Internal Security Service

Yearbook notes that while Moscow's strategy against the west may be tactically insidious, it is not thought-out in the long perspective.<sup>150</sup> Thus a few recommendations made by Korejba could be repeated here that in the analysis of the potential gains and losses should be made prior the launch of a specific information campaign and that a wider use of soft power in a positive context is crucial for Russia to propose its own projects as opposed to criticizing the others' which would aid them in investing in its own greatness morally rather than staying situational and reactive.<sup>151</sup>

From the population censuses and studies that have been conducted in the past, it has been established that the language barrier between the native Estonians and native Russians is one of the main concerns causing segregation within the Estonian society. While it has only been believed to be necessary by some among the Estonian population, better integration was the aim of the gradual reforms started by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research to start implementing the Estonian language also in the Russian schools in Estonia. This caused a lot of polemics within society and few of the pro-Russian politicians from the Centre Party have been working against it saying that the schools are not ready for such transition. Such actions were able to set a precedent and delayed the whole process of the intended reforms. Segregation issues within the Estonian society caused by language barrier is a noteworthy problem within the population and also something that the Russian Compatriot Policy can take advantage of. The ethnic Russian youth in Estonia has become the target group for the Russian soft power programs for whom many events and conferences were held over the recent years. Organizing these kinds of gatherings is a convenient way to bring together a group whom to manipulate with and have people whose world view has not yet fully evolved. Another benefit is that in order to ensure that there would be an undergrowth of future leaders of Kremlin's segregation politics, the positive and supportive image by focusing on the youth would bear its fruit for the Russian Compatriot Policy aims on a later date.

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<sup>150</sup> Puusepp, H. (ed.) (2016). *Kaitsepolitseiameti Aastaraamat 2016, Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook*, p. 8. [Available at: <https://www.kapo.ee/et/content/aastaraamatu-väljaandmise-traditsiooni-ajalugu-ja-eesmärk-0.html>]

<sup>151</sup> Korejba, J. (2015). *Will Russia Ever Be Soft?* In Rostoks, T. and Spruds, A. (2015). *The Different Faces of Soft Power: the Baltic States and Eastern Neighbourhood Between Russia and the EU*.

#### 4.1. Challenges and Limitations

The researcher acknowledges that current study may be subject to biases due to researchers own ethnic background – as the researcher is Estonian and does not belong to the Russian speaking minority group. This could contribute to the personal bias of sensing the ethnic divide within the society between the ethnic Russian and ethnic Estonians within Estonia, and experiencing the distinctions between the two groups on an everyday basis. However, coming from such social background has given the benefits of being able to understand the cultural issues further and also assess the documents that would not be accessible for a non-native Estonian speaker. This sets the limitations of not being able to look at the issues with an outsider's point of view who would not generally rush into attaching stigmas to any of the involved parties'. Therefore, the author recognizes there could be somewhat a lack of objectivity in the assessments, which perhaps could be perceived from the chapters following the Research Methodology such as: Russian Foreign Policy; Social Media and Media Coverage; Language and Education Questions; History Propaganda and Recent Events.

Another challenge, which occurred during the research period was the setup of the project. While the initial aim of the research was to further assess the language and education topics within Estonia by conducting surveys within the Russian speaking high schools in Tallinn (or where the 60-40 language model would be in practice), the approaches were changed along the process. The reasons for neglecting the initial approach became prevalent after having contacted the relevant staff members representing the selected high schools and not receiving any responses after several attempts. The first assumption was that the lack of communication was caused either by busy schedules of these schools and approaching examination period, or even the poor communication between the Estonian and Russian communities in Estonia and the lack of willingness of the school representatives to communicate in Estonian (same goes for the English language if it is identifiable that the researcher is native Estonia). Due to not fluent Russian language skills of the researcher, the researcher would not feel confident in holding lengthy conversations in Russian language. However, after having conducted an internship with the International Centre of Defence

and Security, the researchers in the think tank confirmed, the lack of communication was not the result of any of such assumptions, but rather political instead. The reason for schools' refusal to participate in the proposed study or in most studies lies in the heightened interest of many researchers to analyze the ethnic Russian's opinions and attitudes and thus compatriot organizations have simply advised against it. Following the shift of the approach, the chapter regarding the social media and the overall media coverage was then been based on research already conducted in the past and taken from the results of national surveys, and more focus was shifted towards the Russian Foreign Policy chapter as well by analyzing some of the commonly used terminology and assessing the use of language within the official policy documents and speeches.

The researcher recognizes that current paper did not cover the religion topics in Estonia – while majority of Estonians do not feel any affiliation with religion, it is not the case for ethnic Russians as 47 per cent of ethnic Russians feel affiliated with Russian Orthodoxy according to the 2011 Population and Housing Census.<sup>152</sup> The topic of religion could thus have been elaborated further, as the researcher acknowledges that Russian Orthodoxy is also one of the tools for Russian soft power in Estonia, which is also believed to be heavily funded by Russian investors and has also been covered in previous studies on the same topic.

#### 4.2. Recommendations for Further Research

Further research in the field of Russian soft power within Estonia could be conducted to better understand the perceptions of Russian minorities in Estonia concerning the soft power. Additionally, the researcher believes that it would be especially valuable to see the perceptions of the younger generations towards whom the Russian Compatriot Policies are targeted towards as well. It would be interesting to observe the results of a longitudinal study that would assess the change of integration of ethnic minorities feelings regarding social belonging throughout a period of time. In regard to the media usage, conducting the

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<sup>152</sup> Population and Housing Census (2011). Over a Quarter of the Population are Affiliated with a Particular Religion, [Available at: <http://www.stat.ee/65352>]

surveys that have been added in the appendices would be helpful in giving insight to which language media do the high school students from Russian speaking backgrounds are using and would be therefore helpful in addressing the question whether the language reforms have been changing something in their daily lives as well. Furthermore, it would be useful to add the social dimension to such surveys as well, which would help to give better understanding to the social bonds – whether the ethnic Russian and ethnic Estonian youth feel the social segregation and whether the target audience of the Russian Foreign Policy in Estonia acknowledges the impacts of such policies. Unfortunately, it was not under the capability of the current study to investigate these issues while the aim was to do so, however, another recommendation would be to either use a native Russian speaker or improve the Russian language abilities to a level that the language issue would not become a delaying issue for the research.

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