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**ON EFFECTIVENESS OF RUSSIA'S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN
ESTONIA**

Bachelor's thesis

Programme International Relations

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Tallinn 2020

I hereby declare that I have compiled the paper independently and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors has been properly referenced and the same paper has not been previously presented for grading.
The document length is 12 285 words from the introduction to the end of conclusion.

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ABSTRACT

Living in a present era requires comprehension of socio-political structures that we are imbedded into. Truly vital are proven to be non-violent political tools of societal management and *vice versa*, – a society is able to conduct politics with help of ‘Soft Power’ via ‘Public Diplomacy’ mechanisms. Today, there is a sweeping popularity for Public Diplomacy in the whole world due to its universality in affecting opinion of foreign audience, thus, making other nations following a lead of a foreign policy ideals of a foreign to them government. This has become a must have leverage for Russia as well, because of its specific aptitude. While it expresses interest in Estonia and definitely has employed some action, the question is in its value. Thus, the paper is presented as a discussional platform and some data gathering, provided by theory of Public Diplomacy. The design of the paper suggests dividing certain modes and elements of the notion, so that it would strive, if possible, to display certainty of the chaotic and haunted framework. Qualitative methods such as interpretive and case study researches were used. Overall, the paper concludes on a number of outcomes, which may tell a different story on Russia’s effectiveness through Public Diplomacy outreach in Estonia.

Key words: Soft power, Public Diplomacy, Russia, Estonia.

INTRODUCTION

Present age is an era of multiplicity of upheavals, which are taking place simultaneously and in many spheres of life. Their impact can be found in multi-dimensional societal changes, technological advancements and an enhanced toolkit in disposal of political actors. States are still the major players on the international stage, and their initiatives on cooperation, communication and interaction attract utmost attention of the worldwide public. At the same time, despite the undisputed fact of importance, which a state can exhibit or be featured by, common citizens are becoming increasingly influential in the field of international relations.

Besides that, a universal as well as conceptual understanding of ‘power’, if it has ever been in place at all, has been significantly broadened. In the past, a noticeable scholarly emphasis was put on analyzing visible ranges of hard power tools (weaponry, armies, technological advancements, and distances to launch a deadly strike). These days, however, some newly recognized types of other ‘powers’ and *nouvelle* political leverages enable counterparts to promote their interests via non-military means, while redeveloping such notions as ‘politics’ and ‘diplomacy’. In this context, both ‘soft power’ (SP) and ‘public diplomacy’ (PD), being conceptually interlinked, are used by states to make a significant difference.

Generally speaking, PD is not a *know-how* of modernity – it has been thoroughly practiced in older times, while in today’s environment it remarkably heightened in importance. It may be a challenge to provide a single-cut definition for the phenomenon, however, many scholars still keep presenting their findings on the roles of government and public and their interplay, visualizing it as a basis of the PD’s effectiveness. According to Hendrickson (2006), the mere purpose of diplomacy is to affect the behavior of other states. Indeed, conventional diplomacy aims to do so explicitly, engaging directly with foreign governments. On the other hand, PD is aimed to influence a foreign government or its policy *indirectly*, using a wide set of activities, ranging from political youth forums and trade deals to diaspora communication and culture events. People, who had gained enough rights and representation in politics, regarded both as ‘crucial leverages’ by the politicians and as ‘primer receivers’ of PD. That is why, with the help of the framework, an actor/government seeks to engage with foreign and domestic civil society to mobilize support for policies, ‘beautify’ its international image, and build sustainable long-lasting relationships. In principle, communication with the purpose to alter and shape opinions of citizens and provided information is understood to be the essence of PD and its mechanisms (Gilboa, 2008).

Closer to the point of this particular research, plenty of states, ranging from big to small countries have already equipped themselves with PD-linked ranges of ‘assets’. Today, one could speak of a number of serious actors in the field of PD, which, arguably, has increased to the extent that almost no nation is left out. The interest of this academic enquiry was put on the Russian Federation-associated mechanisms of PD. Due to the country’s size, history and geographical location, this particular nation tries to do its best in exercising ‘soft’ measures, as do other geo-strategically powerful actors. Nowadays, Russia attempts at building its own ‘soft’ means of influence, following already existent and well-practiced ideas and partly structure generated earlier. It is evident that a range of new *скрепы* (can be loosely translated as social ‘clams’) were recently designed to broaden Russia’s PD-related toolkit. Russian PD effort is carried out by many actors ranging from country’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ostensibly free actors such as *Rossotrudnichestvo* (in Russian, *Россотрудничество*) and *Russia Today* (Россия Сегодня or RT), to name a few. Some more initiatives were created and assigned with production, distribution and coordination of activities in the strategic communication field and country’s branding. As argued by Saari (2014), the present Russian effort in PD is clearly divisible into the following two parallel streams: the first one is driven towards general international community with the aim to discard Russia’s perceivably negative image and repair reputation, convince and attract target audiences of the western world; as for the second stream, it is focused on the so-called post-Soviet states, and it is more of a coercive nature, aiming to attract.

In this context, should Ukraine be excluded from this generalization, the trio of the Baltics (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) stir the most interest if compared to other countries, which used to be associated with the former Soviet Union, to test the efficiency of Russia-originated soft mechanisms. This region stands out due to numerous features to count in such religion, history-bound understandings and *cliché*, perceptions, cultural values, *et cetera*. Today, the Baltics enjoy their full membership in both NATO and the EU; at the same time, the countries bare prominence for Russia for a number of reasons to be discussed at length. For example, the Baltic states share common borders with Russia, not to mention that there is a considerable number of Russian citizens and Russian language speakers, residing in the Baltics, onto whom Russia-originated PD output turned.

Seemingly, both geographic and demographic propensities create a fertile socio-political ground for application and effective utilization of Russia-originated soft tools. Truly, after the collapse of the USSR, Russia tries spreading its soft power on the nearby area, but, for several reasons,

Moscow has been unable to enhance its attractiveness among its closest neighbors (Cwiek-Karpowicz, 2012). There are plenty of obstacles that PD may face in its mere implementation, aggravated by PD-generated outcomes that are very hard to measure and, often, impossible to quantify. Therefore, a question on efficiency of Russian PD is complicated as well as multifaceted. Characteristically, nearly all Russian PD mechanisms in Estonia are ‘sharpened up’ towards the so-called ‘compatriots’, whom Russia, at times, uses in the course of its own geo-strategic exercises. Many in Estonia would argue that such a situation poses a threat to Estonia’s integrity, becoming pivotal for the local security providence. Thus, the existent countermeasures (for example, integration of the country’s Russian-speaking inhabitants into the Estonia-wide society) may paradoxically ‘argue’ on Russia-originated PD mechanisms being effective or ineffective. Overall, considering the aforementioned generalisations and a relative stability of societal interconnections within Estonia, it is worthwhile testing a claim that **Russia-originated public PD mechanisms are failing to deliver in Estonia.**

Yet, it is proverbial that PD is a framework-providing mechanism that was taught and adopted by many nation governments to project its soft power to foreign public. With that in mind, seeing PD as a mechanism of ‘soft power’, it would be useful to determine what PD actually is as a socio-political phenomenon and how it could be measured. Consequently, this quest will be explored in the first part of the paper. These days, Russia managed to pay attention to and endeavored PD as an instrument for own foreign policy needs, thus broadcasting its stream domestically and to the outer audience. Nevertheless, how exactly is it ‘sinking’ through into Estonian society? In order to set this in concise form, it would worth investigating in the second part where (in what cases/domains) it has the utmost (successful) applicability/penetration/it is able to set the scene for deployment of Russia-positive attitude?

Researchers use different methodological approaches data gathering as well as measuring the effectiveness of soft power tools. For example, public polls, statistical quantitative data on student exchanges, or popularity of national events might serve as a base for evaluation. Assessment models usually compile more than two methods, which increases chances to grasp a needed span, while ‘promoting’ a certain level of methodological diversity. Ideally, the measurement of effectiveness would be traced through cause-effect correlation (Willding, 2007), where the sequence between effort, output and compatibility with the set goals is followed. At the same time, every methodological model can be as productive as well as elusive, and, still, there is no universal methodology to get closer to the very essence of PD’s sheer effectiveness. More specifically for this particular study, it will attempt to observe Russia-originated PD mechanisms unfolded in Estonia through discourse analysis and process tracing, which are pluralistic qualitative methods.

The study will come across existent reports by the Estonian officials, news column, articles and other textual information. The collected data in the reports may well reflect the attitudes and perceived evaluated outcomes of influence.

1 PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: DEFINITIONS, MODES, SAMPLES

The link between PD and SP looks natural and seems to be academically proven. Abundance of scholarly research confirms that SP as a coherent notion and argument was introduced by Joseph Nye based on comprehensive deliberations about power's changing nature. Prior to Nye's seminal contributions, a dominant academic 'treatment' of power linked to the phenomenon's hard means (weaponry, armies and other capabilities to win a war or successfully intimidate an enemy). However, since there was a shift from a world of geopolitics to a postmodern world of images and influence, power in that sense is not anymore in persuasion and coercion but in information sharing and attraction (Batora 2005). More specifically, it was argued that power is a two-way relationship, which is defined by who is involved in power relationship and what topic the relationship concerns (Nye 2008, 6). There is some intangible capacity for a country to get what it wants, but avoid using hard power resources explicit coercion, threats and bribes. According to Nye, SP in itself is a resource that a country may accumulate from its culture (when and where it is attractive to others), political values and institutions (that must be attractive both domestically and internationally), and policies (that are seen as legitimate or having moral authority) (Nye 2008).

Nye was instrumental in offering an understanding that SP is an influence based on persuasion (a more outdated approach) and attractiveness, generated by home society or the authority in non-democracies, but broadcasted and disposed of by home state authority to communicate with foreign audiences. Seduction by these characteristics of foreign incumbents and publics may enable country leadership to set the agenda and determining the framework of a debate (Nye, 2008). To be able to attract foreigners by own SP assets, a serious work with people and information should be done, which itself might become a challenge-to be able to set the scene, a country or government needs to be enticing and persuasive, at the same time credible and accountable.

Nye defined the information and public opinion to be decisive for the scope of SP. Due to democratisation, people have become not only recipients, but producers, initiators and supervisors of policies, yielding, public opinion to challenge opinion of ruling elites and political technocrats in democratic societies. To possess an information meaning to wield power has never been so topical before. Different sources of information (international news agencies, broadcasts) frequency of news streams made information space too much entangled and confusing (Shukhova

2015), which led to a more prominent role for a government in information guidance. This is where PD appears to practically ‘shine’ in the field.

Intriguingly for the context of this particular research, information guidance is done through PD with a consideration to project SP to the foreigners. Rawnsley (2015) notes that “the success of soft power – ‘the ability to affect others through the co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction in order to obtain preferred outcomes’ (Nye 2011, 21) – depends on communication via public diplomacy to make sure ideals, values, policies and behavior are attractive to a target population”. There is also a vision that a country can employ either soft power or public diplomacy, but it does not represent the mainstream in PD studies – after all, ‘SP’ and ‘PD’ is not about either or, but PD is better understood as ‘soft power’s’ mouthpiece, fueled by the same resources (culture, values and policies).

1.1 Public diplomacy alone

Generally speaking, conventional diplomacy deals with persuasion and communication. Moreover, any diplomatic practice is about the art of presenting one’s policy in a way calculated to influence the policy of others; as practiced almost all countries, conventional diplomacy may inform, persuade, warn, and even lie if it serves interests of a state. However, there are certain things that it definitely misses out on. Firstly, cabinet diplomacy may not pay in attractiveness. Secondly, it is restricted to a circle of finely groomed professional diplomats, thus, unable to deliver into masses. Lastly, being realised via meetings and discussions, cabinet diplomacy is old-fashioned and time-consuming – because of that, it fails to work fast with information. These reasons served for slight receding of ‘cabinet diplomacy’ and forced other more efficient means to be searched for. Existent for centuries dimension of PD came into vision, regained popularity and was reconsidered within political thinking of western democracy.

The notion of PD has over 150 known definitions (Kerr as cited in Shukhova 2015, 28). Overly, it is understood as a set of communicative activities, which aimed at helping traditional diplomacy out and assisting in communicating foreign policy through. It has drastically changed throughout time. During the Cold War period, in which the phenomenon took off in the most recognisable way, the focus of PD was on persuasion, while after it drifted towards fostering empathy in foreign publics. Today, a more focused emphasis is laid onto mutual understanding. Evidently, that the concept provides more space for dialogue although preserving room for influence. Usually, PD is viewed as an instrument used by states, associations of states and non-state actors to understand

the culture, attitude and behaviors; to manage relationships; and to affect thoughts and initiate actions to advance their interests and values (Gregory as cited in Ryzhova 2019, 17). With an evolutionary wave forced by democratisation and technological advancement, the framework became to include multiple stakeholders and unofficial actor's presence (NGOs-nongovernmental organisations-, media, journalists as a specific professional cluster, and citizens). Understandably, nation governments are the primary beneficiaries of the practice. The state-arranged controlling factor still stands out, and nation governments can either act themselves or work hand in hand with civil society partners, coordinate, guide and fund PD-related undertakings (McDowell, 2008). Certainly, the process dictates its rules - independent, semi-independent and quasi-independent actors need to be in one ideological trend with governments to amplify the PD effort. In postmodern society, people tend to trust unofficial actors, for instance, NGOs (Shukhova 2015, 29) more, and, thus, trust as much as attractiveness become much wanted resources for states. Collaboration or even patronage for some government-created NGOs (called GONGOs) may help officials in their PD conduct. Thus, mostly PD comes down to describe the communication of governments to foreign publics. Initially the focus was only laid onto foreign publics, but in the era of speed news, backpack journalism and other technologies allowing quick information exchange, PD stipulates engagement also with home audience, which brings it closer to Public Relations (PR) phenomenon, but in no way equalising with it.

Today, the concept is actively scrutinised by academia and well employed by diplomats in their daily operations. According to Glebov (2018), PD is a powerful tool placed under foreign policy's strategic communications scope, it stands along PR and Information Operations.

Returning to the task of 'driving' a foreign public's opinion, a state or its partners may engage in two different types. Firstly, as suggested by McDowell (2008), in a simplistic mode, the task is performed by government of state 'A' solely. The state is able to address directly to society of country 'B', where the messages of positive image promotion or crisis mitigation and countering unfavorable picturing are typical. The communicator expects to influence public opinion, while further citizens of country 'B' may themselves affect their government to take action benefiting country 'A'. Fairly, addressing PD in such mode is highly restricted within the beliefs and political interests of one party among foreign publics (Sohtorikoğlu 2016, 11). Moreover, there is a risk for such strategy of slipping into public propaganda; it is riskier to choose this strategy when the communicator is an autocracy or totalitarian regime.

The scheme of how a state could engage with foreign public and address own objective concerns democracies that are able to mobilize own civil society to promote a collective agenda in foreign society. Both society and government persuade directly the public, while government

simultaneously mobilize conventional diplomacy. By doing so both society and government of country 'B' becomes pressurised through civil society, government and domestic civil society of a democracy 'A'.

1.2 A phenomenon with a distinct structure

Throughout the latest decade, a high number of serious academic contributions has been presented to draw plenty of attention to the phenomenon of PD and its integral elements. The general structure is perfectly reflected in taxonomies issued by Leonard (2002) and Cowan and Arsenault (2008) under rule of which PD has 3 layers set up hierarchically.

Another significant contribution needs to be singled out. Cull (2008) distinguished five elements- listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy and international broadcasting, which may be laid over the 3 layers.

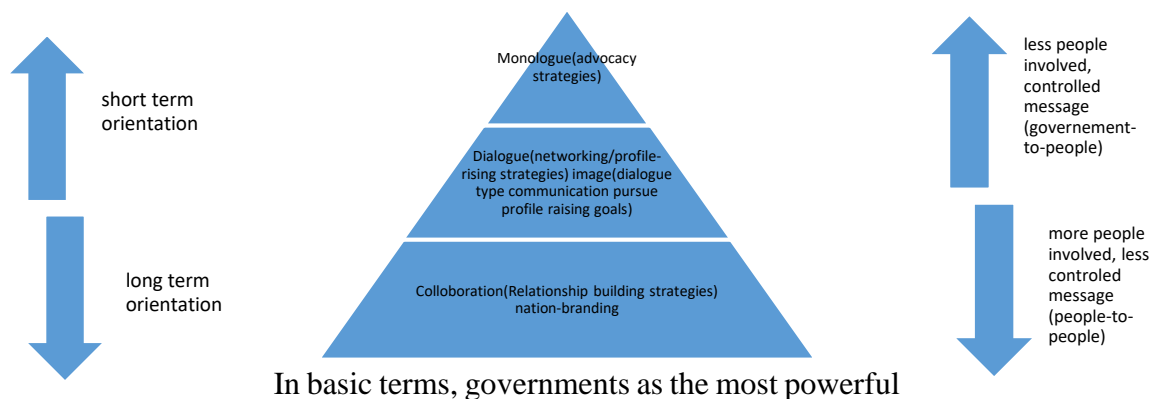


Figure 1. General structure of PD

organisers in the field may take up different strategies (Advocacy, Profile Raising and Relationship-Building) on each appropriate tier, but of course, other actors, primarily NGOs, follow through this hierarchy too. On the margins, there are two arrows as explanation for goals and capability of an actor to control its message. Consequently, the more a state practices Advocacy strategies, the more it is driven towards short-term gains, its goals are shortsighted; it expects to see a range of quick results and those results are easy-to-evaluate. The opposite would be fair too – the more a state commit to building long-lasting relationship, the more diffused are returns (a receiver may or may not like communicator in a longer run). Accordingly, another arrow depicts, that Advocacy Strategies will allow more control over own message, while the message itself will be handled by the authority. The more officials provide space to NGOs and civilians the more PD may commit to relationship with other nations. Hierarchy in the model is important and more players that are prudent venture more the bottom tier. Relationship-building activities, for example tourism, facilitate long-lasting fellowship, which its turn will eminently facilitates

advocacy, but no way it works in the reverse order. “[I]n soft power terms, the activities in the bottom tier increase SP, a potential that can be leveraged into successful advocacy at a later point in time” (McDowell, 2008).

In Advocacy, an actor engages directly to the informational space as to explain own national solutions to the wider community. One-way communication method, namely a monologue, is used to make a persuasive stance. Usually it executes in the form of government’s speeches, press releases or other. In information age, a great role is placed upon fast transmitting mediums – the Internet (in general) and social networks (in particular), which are actively used for political advocacy. For this purpose, as well helpful would be press and broadcasts in foreign languages, a quick response highly dependent on credibility issue and thus, advocacy in hot pursuit may help to convey and convince in own part of the story. The most matching elements for this tier and Advocacy strategy would be International Broadcasting (IB) and Advocacy.

Profile Raising Strategies aim to create a dialogue (two-way communication) through contacts and networks. This phase actualizes with the proactive cultivation of ties with decision-makers and opinion leaders from various sectors of society; it communicates strategically on events, campaigns, or policy initiatives. Element, which would attribute best to this tier and might get used often in strategy by a state is CD, since arguably, it is the best provider of dialogue. Indeed, the sphere of culture promotes plenty of strategic networking, since many cultural units and institutions manage communication with foreigners directly rather than turning for help of state every time. Cull (2008, 32) emphasizes the role of cultural influence and exchange as the most used mode throughout history and brought example of France. In one period, the country used to possess great cultural domination and was disposing far the biggest of universities and language. Russia pays attention to preservation and expansion of its culture today, which has been fixed in its official documents.

The third dimension is the most diffused and most difficult-to-measure in regards of long-term objectives. Relationship-Building Strategies require constant work and partnerships with key people who will be involved through scholarships, student exchange programs, trainings, seminars, and conferences. The third phase is more inclined with reciprocity, meaning that the audience itself follows the ideational trend of the communicator. It does so because there is a trust to a country due to its brand, which resonate with the receiver, and that country managed to build credible reputation and positive image for the receiver. Exchange Diplomacy (ED), as put forward by Cull, may represent a good substance or entity for Relationship-Building Strategy. It is driven with increasing fellowship for societies and sustaining appreciable cultural relations and spreading some good fame about host country.

The Cull's model visibly singles out two more elements – Listening and IB. Both of them may be used in each layer of the hierarchical 'ladder'. Listening deals with collecting opinion of public overseas, is a provision stage, which is extremely important for a better understanding of the target audience. Polls help politicians to (re)direct policy. Furthermore, IB which provides space to politics within means of media is a crucial element for our century. It is widespread and accessible by everyone, thus, covering mass audience, it enables a country to advocate transnationally. Depending on the aims and context, simultaneously several strategies and elements or just one could be used.

1.3 Exemplifying the usage of elements

Many countries have been extensively using the PD-originated elements as parts of foreign policy-shaping and making. Despite the fact that the phenomenon of PD has been initially described by Western schools of thought, its usage has gone far beyond the West and western-type democracies (Schiendler, 2015). Meanwhile, some political systems show advantage, while other, for instance, non-democracies, lag behind when it comes to PD campaign efficiency and credibility. Takes in PD by different states are all different, but there are of course lines revolving on similarities, thus, for example, big and also non-democratic countries wage more International Broadcasting relative to the whole effort. The streams of PD of big countries are very hard to embrace at once, whereas, there might be notorious parts, like mitigating crisis situations. Experiences of Norway and Canada, being medium-size countries in terms of PD, famous *de facto* for their PD courses, always emphasized as examples are widely spoken of. On the contrary, Russia is usually mentioned when the misses are analyzed. In particular, it regards to downfalls it made in PD implementation during and after Russo-Georgian War or during so-called Gas Wars with Ukraine 2006-2010. It would be too hard to comprehend strategies of countries all-round the world for the sake of this paper. Thus, focusing on some show cases would allow to draw some clearer lines for PD elements implementation.

Listening and Advocacy as elements of PD are quite blurry in detecting, not to mention measuring. however, these are simple and essential, as in everyday life, are being as basis for any communication as PD action. Listening, in this regard, is even more intangible and usually neglected by states. The principle of this method is to keep up with the time in PD, because preferences and opinions of foreign public and its leaders change fast. Gačevićová (2014), analysing the EU's PD and its applicability in the context of the EU-Ukraine partnership, detected that Ukraine's aspirations changed from economic development to security and stability after the

crisis, thus making the EU also to adjust own PD and maybe provide a more profound assistance in vulnerable areas. The same source is featured by an assumption that Advocacy is the element, which raises awareness about the author and its policies. Of course, all the rest elements contain Advocacy as their integral part, but taken remotely Advocacy is a hard task. It was argued that the EU advocates its policies mainly through its website (europa.eu), through the EU Information Centers and EU delegations (Gačevićová 2014, 24).

1.3.1 International broadcasting

As an integral element of PD, IB would be fairly characterised as a method of communication, which enables translation of national soft power imperatives to foreign publics with a help of communication technologies. Internet embodiment seriously affected PD, giving impetus to phenomenon of Diplomacy 2.0, *Twitter* diplomacy and blogging. As Cull maintained, IB can go along many communication styles. Monologue was once the preferred one. The most vivid example of this would be American outreach in West and East Europe during the Cold War. The USA needed some more *grandeur* effort to outplay the former USSR, thus, at those times the main body of USIA was created, successfully launching the country's PD. The framework famously had numerous supported and well-funded establishments like *Voice of America*, *Radio Free Europe*, and *Radio Liberty* (Trajkova & Trajkov 2015). The outreach made possible for the US to unite its common-thinkers and thus, to support its national interest. According to Merickova (2013), the value system was resonating with the receiving societies, the US PD efforts were seen as legitimate and credible and, thus, those triumphantly succeeded, clearly reflecting the power of Advocacy in IB.

Thinking of IB, exactly assertion first comes to mind. At times, media mobilisation can become the first straightforward action in the process of solving a crisis. For example, Israeli government proposed the example of such use of IB, when yet another threat of boycotting Israel appeared. According to Golov (2018), Israeli PD strategy to prevent dissemination of fake facts about country and negativity towards Israel (which are efforts intended to damage the country's image and reputation) was executed in three steps. The effort was truly immense and multilayered, combining different strategies and approaches. Here it is important to notice that Israeli PD practitioners and thinkers started with extensive counter-propaganda measures, entering world-famous media outlets – *Twitter*, *Facebook* and *YouTube*. The objective was, as argued, to “explain Israel's policy, expose manipulations and lies that are propagated as part of the anti-Israeli activity, and present other, noncontroversial aspects of Israeli society” (Golov 2018, 36).

Well, quite every government today has own web-page and right now particularly this fact is not reckoned as a groundbreaking coming-out. Meanwhile, few decades ago it was a good challenge for a government to acquaint people with its presence and act (PD) in cyber space. In particular, in Canada this Strategy of connecting people and technologies marched. It was needed for better engagement and dissemination of info “support outreach for web-based activity by human contacts on the ground” as to increase familiarity of the home government’s PD project (Batora 2005). It is an interactive approach between human and the web, which will definitely stay with us for long.

The Internet became truly universal medium, which nearly everyone can afford and what moves IB also to another level. Speaking of diversity of actors, not only governments are prone to use of IB in their purposes, but also it is worth not to disregard non-state actors, like ISIS, which used to be highly precarious socially. In its turn, China’s IB has been in a spotlight for quite a time for conducting own international TV channel *CCTV*. The channel is famous for bringing into action Chinese SP strategy, because a good half of its broadcast is devoted to projection of own culture (Rawnsley, 2015). Perhaps, it is a substantial example of how elements could be combined and enforced with one another. To sum up, IB is a crucial component of PD. Because of its tangible gains in both fronts some countries tend to prioritize this element over other (Ryzhova, 2019, p. 15). It can be either more streamline or interactive, creating plenty of room for innovation in this particular respect.

1.3.2 Cultural diplomacy

Culture is very influential for the given field. In a very similar manner, today as many years before, cultural events and all the culture-related topics are in vogue to better understand each other and foster mutuality. Behneer (2005) states that the USA lacks in establishing a positive international image for itself. However, its CD is ubiquitous and familiar to the whole world, if to consider Hollywood and Pop-culture as powerful sources of soft power. Surely, American PD campaign in the Middle Eastern countries is famous part of it overall efforts made in the field. After the 9/11 became a starting point for PD reconsideration, restructuring and overall revitalization of the practice. Rugh (2017) states that projecting soft power in the Arab world has been and remains a central theme for the US foreign policy and PD, where cultural strand was chosen as helpful at bringing nations together. As it was observed, people in Middle Eastern countries are not hostile towards US-produced cinematography; rather, they are much impassioned with all good that it transmits. Accordingly, common public still receptive and appreciable of American values and people.

Although there is convergence in most cases, there are cultural differences too; thus, some topics may outbreak resentment and negative attitudes. Explicit nudity in Arab countries is rejected due to indigenous culture, meaning that in order to be successful in CD, the attitudes, ‘cultural language’ needs to be respected. Basically, the essence of any CD strategy is in bringing people of different cultural backgrounds together for a creativity spillover and finding some common grounds for further cooperation. Allegedly, peer-to-peer cooperation brings better appraisal of a foreign nation. In Australia, for instance, the think tank named *Asialink* was brought by government, aimed to create a better understanding of Asia for Australians, promote Australia as a reliable and natural partner in Asian world-long-term economic cooperation between Australia and Asian nations. The think tank departmentalises ‘*Asialink*’ Arts, Business, Diplomacy and Education as separate bodies. Wright and Higginbotham (2019), while analysing a launched project for artists noted positive effect of such practice. The experiment showed that culture-related projects and CD as PD strategy are good ice-breakers and a learning from one another techniques.

Beside arts non less crucial social products such as education institutes and language schools, one semester study programs, theatres and exhibitions as the self-sufficient CD actors and more. Language and culture are also strategic assets for nation-states, thus, in order to ease language study, they create many facilitators, such as the British Council, Goethe Institute and Confucius Institute. Russia, for example, made its own analogue of such organisations to promote the Russian language studies, the Pushkin Institute.

1.3.3 Other elements and activities

Although it is much debatable on the effectiveness and accountability of branding in the framework, still endemically it connects with the relationship-building layer and is set on tourism, people, exports, culture and heritage, governance, investment and immigration (Potter 2018). Every part individually, like sports diplomacy, foreign aids or export of qualified work force is a samples of national-branding and PD helping nations to advance own purposes in foreign publics.

Batora (2005) analysed experiences of two ‘middle powers’ – Canada and Norway – and how those countries employed different national branding strategies. Firstly, the two nations had some image and brand-related problems before they actively started doing PD. Canada had poor international brand: even in the new century, it was seen as resource economy country, which lacks technologies.

In reality, it has outgrown that picture, aiming to reverse it for society of tolerance, multiculturalism, dynamism, innovation and technology. Norway on the other hand encountered visibility problem, which means that it was not perceived as unique and one-of-the-kind country. Both of acquired images impede interactions, funding and engagement, prompting that it is unreliable, obsolete and unsustainable.

A part of the solution offered by Canada was handled through slogan ‘Canada-cool-connected’ and conducive programs making emphasis on its multicultural and technological achievements. It has made a long way to expand its export corridors for made in Canada soft power resources. Interestingly, that both Norway and Canada chosen charity and help to other countries, making their image as ‘honest broker’ and ‘compassionate helper’, which is highly valuable for international public. Norway’s image was assembled with help of hired agency. The selected narratives of PD and nation-branding were: humanitarian superpower and peacemaker, society living with nature, society of high level of equality and internationalist society. Those are all credible pillars for Norwegian PD and image, since they had been present in society and local political tradition for centuries.

Nation-branding contains crucial conception and is a fertile ground for elements to grow from. Typically, in order to solve a problem of international image a country resorts to every element of PD and their combination. Here, ED might be useful in the connection to nation-branding. ED is a long-term strategy that hinges on the idea that everyone involved with the exchange will benefit from increased cultural understanding and respect, and that these feelings will be mobilized to improve international relations. It is executed through various visits, migration and other mobility by citizens (student and professional, artist exchanges) to foreign countries and practiced all around the world. It is the easiest to come up with striking examples, where Erasmus and Erasmus+ would be the most vivid.

General schooling of children, who are able to study in foreign language qualifies as another cornerstone. The practice is truly mass, since every country has schools teaching in foreign language. For example, there are French *ecoles* (schools), Italian and German schools in Turkey at the level of secondary school education (Sohtorikoğlu 2016, 21), by means of these schools and not only European nations nurtured democracy-biased rulers. There was a Slovak school in Marjino district in Moscow, Russia, in the name of Russia-Slovakia Friendship. Afterwards the school was reorganized and the courses on Slovak language were halted (Petrov 2016).

Reciprocity by means of PD may be supported by numerous activities of different formats. Intergovernmental or peer-to-peer cooperation is no exception and may be viewed being one of them. The most well-known activities, for instance, sister cities partnership acts sometimes yield

a good result in increased mutuality. There are other abundant programs hosted on international levels. For example, 'Global South' by the UNDP illustrates regional, transnational and economic integrations brought by PD in the entire world.

2 RUSSIAN PUBLIC DIPLOMACY EFFORTS IN ESTONIA

The projection of SP is pivotal for any PD-bound effort. Being enriched by the above presented field-specific instrumentarium as well as structural basics, this chapter is devoted to data-gathering on the Russian Federation's PD efforts in Estonia. Characteristically for the case, considering the quality of information collected by the Estonian Internal Security Service (*Kaitsepolitseiamet* or KAPO), the organisation's annual reports are to be used extensively in the process. Naturally, the focus of the chapter is going to be on collecting the actual data, detaching it from the obvious political component of the reports – a particular PD-associated action of Russia towards Estonia can objectively be measured as 'effective' for the Russian side, but considered 'harmful' by Estonia on the same level of objectivity.

From 2000, both SP (in general) and PD (in particular) have been gradually gaining popularity among Russian political elites. SP as the underlying conception in American deliberation, must be coming from society's culture, values and legitimate to the constituency policies- by Nye it was introduced as conception or system of ideas. In Russia SP is both seen as leverage or comprehensive toolkit of such, which are exerted by a state in sake of foreign policy, build on civil society's potential, information, cultural and other methods and technologies; and it equals humanitarian cooperation (Persson 2014). PD in Russia is defined as an independent field, which stands along cultural and humanitarian cooperation, people's diplomacy and strategic communications; it works with target audiences among which are representatives of political and business elites, media community, civil society, youth leaders and experts. PD is a dialogue (interaction) with specific foreign audiences for political (foreign policy) purposes (Бурлинова, Василенко, Иванченко, & Шакиров 2020).

Natalia Burlinova, former Head of the *Gorchakov Foundation*, now a head of Support and Development Center for Public Initiatives *Creative Diplomacy*, noted the difference in American and Russian deliberations. There is a hierarchy between SP and PD in western thought. SP-accumulated by society capital in culture, values and foreign policies inducing attractiveness in others- is a conception, while PD-system of institutions and mechanisms – which implies supplementation. There terms coexist in hierarchy, where conception comes first. On the other hand, in Russia notional stuffing of definitions seem to be toppled. There is no solid definition of PD in official sources; both SP and PD are viewed as mechanisms of influence. SP is understood

as appliances of country's forcing toolkit, especially concerning information meddling, rather than neoliberal conception; the terms do not imply a hierarchy as well.

Because soft power and PD are not firmly set and may be interpreted as meaning the same thing, it gets harder to differentiate whether elements belong to one or another. According to (Persson, 2014), 'humanitarian cooperation' acts as SP's broker. Humanitarian cooperation (*Гуманитарное сотрудничество*) is a Russian-language notion implying 1) the defense of human rights; 2) the protection of the interests of compatriots living abroad and their consolidation into a united community; 3) consular matters; and 4) partnerships in the cultural, educational and scientific sectors (Klyeva, Mikhaylova 2017). Moreover, there is Russian Compatriot Policy, formalizing pretty much same work points: the protection of the rights of compatriots living abroad; support for maintaining ethno-cultural and linguistic identity of compatriots; and development of close ties – cultural, political and economic – with the historical homeland and possible repatriation to Russia (Kallas 2016). Arguably, both are interactive pieces.

Beside that PD implementation in Russia famously dedicates attention to works with information, where informing foreign audiences remains crucial in both Compatriot policy and humanitarian cooperation. According to (Zakem, Saunders, Hashimova, & Hammerberg, 2018), Russia's media has three primary functions in contributing to Russian foreign policy: mobilizing and sustaining domestic political support for its foreign and security policies; presenting official perspectives and policies to foreign audiences; and influencing foreign audiences through disinformation and propaganda. On the other hand, foreign countries frequently call on Russia for detriment its media policies and IB cause. In the EU, Russia's influence operations carried out as IB and its media underground are often mentioned in security papers.

Russia involves in profile raising activities. For the latest projects it hosted Sochi Winter Olympics of 2014 and the FIFA 2018 World Cup in the quest of self-promotion (Fominykh, 2016). Russian Armed Forces may as well be seen as ambassadors of strategy to raise the country's image both at home and in the international arena. Deeper in relationship building it is worth recurring to 'humanitarian cooperation' and Exchange Diplomacy. As we can see, Russia aims at both long-term and short-term strategies, presumably combining elements too.

The country has a certain set of goals for its PD initiatives, corresponding its foreign policy, compatriot policy and humanitarian cooperation goals. These number such as good skills in information handling, activities that would increase Russia's popularity, image and political respect, consolidation diaspora abroad and more. (Pääbo & Nielsen, 2015) payed more attention to Russian PD execution in Estonia, since according to them soft means today are the most vital for Russia to practice here. Policy of 'near abroad', divisive 'compatriot policy' meddling in

information and political spaces and numerous provocations on sensitive topics such as WW2 and Soviet period, which actively exploited to discredit Estonian image, cyber threat and subversive deeds of NGOs is only a smaller part of identified activity of Russian PD actions in the official reports, research papers and news columns.

2.1 Allow Russia to introduce ... Russia!

People and people's collaboration matters highly for PD. In fact, neighbouring countries, although may have smaller relative number of target populace, are priority. Russian-speaking community in Estonia is variegated, which is determined by different waves of migration, generations, people's settlement in Estonia's counties, professional background and many other factors. Ideally, in a scientific quest, these people would not be collected in one entity, because of diversity, but for sake of specific model for this paper it is defined as heterogeneous community of people who uses Russian for everyday communication and shall be called Estonian Russians.

Russia's intelligence in Estonia although not directly testify in the field of PD, but, perhaps may be attributed as a sample of listening element. It is carried out in different ways, which encounter intelligence by people in interested areas, such as Estonian internal politics, economy and energy sector, defense capability and cyber environment and other. There is an extensive net of contact persons and active recruitment. Imaginably, by espionage it receives a good level of understanding of the local society; however, the covert actions are not morally appealing.

Overall, Russia devotes its attention to government-to-people engagement in its PD outreach. In Estonia work with target people is carried out through Russian Embassies, who are responsible for coordination of other entities, beside their direct competencies. Russian Federation uses diplomatic missions in its near abroad actively giving embassies responsibility for running annual Coordination Councils of Russian Compatriots which coordinate the agenda of an extensive network of institutions implementing policy abroad (Bulakh, et al 2014, 38).

Beside the major established institutions, such as Rossotrudnichestvo and Russkiy Mir, there are other networks that are vivid in Estonia. Thus, in 2012, Russia created 'Fund for the Legal Protection and Support of Russian Federation Compatriots Living Abroad' whose aim is to preclude what perceived as offences against rights of the Estonian Republic's multi-faceted minority of Estonian Russians. The Fund is witnessed in consequent funding World Without Nazism (*Mir Bez Natsizma* or MBN), which Russia frequently features in OSCE to further

legitimizing own messages of compatriot policy (KAPO 2012). There are other GONGOs involved into fieldwork, like Legal Information Center for Human Rights (LICHR).

Another organ in disguise is Coordination Councils of Russian Compatriots, tied in formidable power vertical administering movement of compatriots. The first level engagement comes in civic organizations of host countries, further expanding to national coordination councils. There is a Coordination Council of Russian Compatriots in Estonia. The final upper chain is called World Coordination Council (Davydova-Minguet, 2018). The Council bares poor fame in Estonia. As (Kallas, 2016) argued, the goal of the movement was to consolidate Estonian Russians and generate a higher degree of their socio-cultural and political ‘attachment’ to the Russian Federation by economic and political means, but it was marginalised due to corruption of its leaders. The blunders in work of local branch were spotted to be crucial.

Attention as in Council as in overall Russia’s strategy was paid to youth engagement. KAPO (2017) report marked several new formats to introduce youth to a compatriot movement: these in 2017 were: The World Games of Young Compatriots launched in 2015 as common undertaking of Ministry of Sport, Ministry of Education and *Rosstrudnichestvo* held in Kazan in May; The Third World Youth Forum of Russian Compatriots “Destiny of Russia: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow” held in Sofia, Bulgaria; and 19th World Festival of Youth and Students held in Sochi, which is the event for student movement. All the projects are deemed to serve patriotic (Russian) upbringing, consolidation of foreign youth and teaching or at least introducing ‘correct’ language, culture and history. While it is hard to ponder on receptivity of these messages, the numbers of attendants are modest. Thus like, in 2019 the event organized in Sofia gathered 130 and became the largest in the Forum’s history (Fifth World Youth Forum of Russian Compatriots Opens in Sofia, 2019). Moreover, there were two youth forums BaltFest and My Baltics in 2017 in Estonia. Both were organized by peer efforts from Pushkin Institute, Russkiy Mir Foundation and Russian Embassy. BaltFest forum managed to gather 40 young compatriots. Russia’s urge to foster Russia-related youth living in foreign countries was implemented in 2013 by inviting them to athlete camp ‘Soyuz’ devoted to Great Victory in WW2. The event was attended by schoolchildren from one of Maardu schools (KAPO 2013).

There are other non-less important aspects of Russia’s engagement with its compatriots-its passport policy and resettlement program. It is easier to make conclusions on Resettlement program, while passport issue is trickier to judge. So, as Russian ambassador Alexander Petrov commented for ERR, Estonian Russians almost aren’t interested in resettlement, last year only 17 people expressed interest (Vahtla 2019).

Today, in Estonia, there are 85 per cent of Estonian passport-holders, 7 per cent of Russian citizenship-holders and about same number of those who are holding stateless person status ('grey passports') (Statistics Estonia 2017). Overall, there is a constant fluctuation of acquiring citizenships of the two states. The turmoil is aggravated with the fact that people also change their citizenship, as Russian passport holders apply for Estonian citizenship and vice versa. More to that, grey passport holder's number declines significantly year after year. This contingency is able to apply for either Estonian or Russian citizenship. The Estonia's government press releases note a constant accession of persons of undetermined citizenship. Yet the citizenship aspect is worsened with the fact that Russia abstain from publishing the data on number of acquired passports.

Overall, Russian attempt to engage people is ambivalent it definitely mobilizes counterforce when is used against arrangements of Estonia, yet true also that it managed to create highly vocal stories. The counterforce confronted to those engagement campaigns by Russia is Integration of Estonian Russians into the Pan-Estonian society with a help of language trainings, history and culture, media, regional development programs and so on. Evidently, Russia strives different efforts to engage populace. It manages forums, festivals, meetings and trainings in different locations: in Russia; in friendly or neutral to Russia countries; giving responsibility to Embassies and locally set GONGOs. The goal of these events is to spread messages containing Russia's foreign policy objectives and contradicting ideology, made special concern for KAPO. The concern also imposed by the fact that youth from Estonia participated in all mentioned events. At the same time, the attendance is low and policies on youth are not very attractive to those of Estonia.

2.2 International broadcasting

IB is versatile element used by Russia both to advocate, listen and plot some strategies of influence in loyalist publics. Possibly, one of the samples when IB was used to attempt listening of the counterpart (Estonia) was made in 2011, when the population census was about to be released. However, the made-up data was distributed by Russia-based web sites- regnum.ru and newspb.ru- before the original report was put on the net. Further forged information was spread through a news story by channel Russia (Россия) (KAPO 2012), which demonstrates, that Russia sees own IB in a role of advocate and it reverts and frames information as to boost own advocacy the most. The idea of an information war exists in both Russia and the West, where media is at the forefront (Simons, 2018, p. 208). Russia has strictly controlled media climate domestically, where it spreads own IB messages being highly confrontational to the USA, US- and West-bound media sources,

and other pro-Western (which it reckons so being) positions. In information war against the West it uses puppet TV channel, RT, formerly known as *Russia Today*. *Russia Today* is an information agency with extensive apparatus and an umbrella for many other media outlets.

Returning to RT, the channel has become truly in a spotlight few years ago. Launched in 2015, it claims to be an independent news source, widely present in several languages with an auditorium of 700 million people; is a budget-funded undertaking that is famous for pro-Kremlin arguments (Shukhova 2015, 74). As an interesting observation, in ‘far abroad’ (дальнее зарубежье) it evidently hits two goals: it acquaints people with the country and Russia’s position on the world affairs, which reflects advocacy element and gaining attention as a short term goal; and traps people with catchy airing (using conspiracy theories), which further sway perceptions of audience.

In Estonia the media doesn’t require translation into native language, because it targets Russian-speaking community. Thus, Russia is able to sell here media produced for domestic consumption, although not only. Estonia’s media market has been liberal and market-oriented, which paved the way for Russian TV networks through a cable or satellite connection. However, some preceding events, on the account of the latest Russia’s actions in Ukraine, too, have drawn attention to the presence and actions taken by Russian media all over the EU and, particularly, in Estonia.

As mentioned, Information War puts a serious footprint on Russian IB in Estonia. Estonia regards Russia’s media presence and actions as propaganda, which is consequently the most used term in official KAPO reports. The officials side with analysts and political interlocutors, expressing affirmation that Kremlin-controlled media uses Soviet-style active measures (*активные мероприятия*), ‘weaponized information’, disinformation and conspiracy theories and other manipulative means to acquire wanted result. Thus, Russian media projects are being created to influence the Russian-speaking people in foreign countries and also the policies of their countries of residence (KAPO 2016).

The background in which Russia operates with its outreach is important, since Estonians and non-Estonians live in different information spaces, often with contrasting content (Bulakh 2014, 51). At the same time, trust to media sources and quality of provided information is one of key aspects of political nature; media orientation is connected to a sense of belonging: the stronger the person identifies themselves with the country, the more importance is attributed to Estonian-language and local Russian-language channels as sources of information (Integration Monitoring 2017).

Estonians, whose language of daily communication is Estonian, are prone to use Estonian-language and English-language media, trust ERR (Estonian Public Broadcasting), Estonian-language TV channels and online news reporters (Integration Monitoring 2017). However, there

is ambivalent situation concerning the use of media by Russian-speakers. For them there are plenty of sources: Russian media, Russian-language media produced in Estonia, Estonian media and English language media outlets. Yet the top of preferred channels to get informed is TV as Integration Monitoring 2017 shows.

With all the things considered, Russia has a big choice regarding media tools, with which it may target Russian-speakers in Estonia. Since TV is the most favored source of information, it makes a significant allocation in that sphere. BMA (Baltic Media Alliance) is privately owned business registered in Latvia, which provides with three major TV channels: PBK (Первый Балтийский Канал), RTR-Planeta and NTV Mir, available by local providers in Estonia. For these channels retranslation of TV shows, produced in Russia is the biggest chunk in their airing, adding local news and some locally produced shows. The channels are popular among Estonian Russians, and this factor consequently raises concerns that these channels translate white, grey and black propaganda (Ruusaar, 2018). The most notorious example of ‘black’ propaganda retranslation happened in 2015, when Russian channel Rossiya 1 (one of the main federal channels) took a comedy sketch, called ‘Estonia’s Next Neo-Nazi’ as a direct evidence of ‘fascism’ in Estonia, by combining its IB with ‘fight against history falsification’. There is much to be concerned of since in 2017 for the national monitoring poll, 70 per cent of Estonian Russian respondents chose Russian TV channels as valuing source of information. Arguably, demand for these channels comes from Russian language and emotional saturation-shows are more lively (Dougherty & Kaljurand 2015).

Russian outreach goes beyond TV and spreads to Internet. The Internet is universal medium, which is saturated with all kinds of information, making it a good opportunity for putting same white, grey and black propaganda for even wider audience. Moreover, anyone, not subscribed to provider’s services still will manage to retrieve the content. One of the successful projects, popular in Russia, CIS, and beyond, such as *Vkontakte* – a social network used mainly by the youth- where propaganda may not be ubiquitous and explicit, but at least the language is a dealmaker. Since 2010, the social network was exposed to reputational ups and downs, which ended in purchasing it by Mail.ru Group (*Digital Sky Technologies*). As a rule, repurchase of popular social networks enlisting as well *Yandex* and *Odnoklassniki*, causes for them being in disposal of Russian crony capitalism.

Quite fair to assume, that people are more interested in local news. Thus, Russia established two major initiative targeting both communities in Estonia. Sputnik is news agency and radio broadcaster that has multimedia information hubs in dozens of countries; Sputnik includes sites, mobile applications and pages on social networks and its news feeds are available around the clock

in Arabic, Chinese, English, Spanish, and Farsi. More interestingly though, that there is a local branch of Sputnik *Estonia*, which has both Russian and Estonian-language content.

Baltnews is yet another initiative, a news portal devoted to Baltic states. In 2018, the investigation revealed that the outlet cooperates with Sputnik-*Estonia*. Sputnik essentially is a branch created within *Russia Today* information agency; consequently, it cooperates with other outlets, guided by one editor-in-chef. Recently, *Russia Today* also purchased *Baltnews* making a localized voice of Kremlin in Baltics and precisely in Estonia (KAPO 2018). There are of course more enterprises including local ones, like *Baltija.eu* – a news portal, called as information portal of the Russian community in Estonia by the editors, and MK-Estonia (in possession of BMA media agency) newsletter in printed and electronic outlay.

There are other initiatives that in a course of time have become non-less valuable for Estonian Russians. Integration Monitoring 2017 revealed two Russian-language Estonian undertakings that the minority calls important as sources of information. Thus, Russian-language Estonian channel ETV+ launched in 2015 becomes more appreciated by the community. Understandably, right now it suffers very tough competition with Russian channels, who dispose of greater budget and had a head start, but the channel is expected to fruit in a longer run. News reporting in Russian by *Aktuaalne Kaamera*, which belongs to ERR is another benefit of Integration of Russian-speakers with providing for their language capabilities. The news sections are also valued positively. The major press agencies in Estonia *Postimees* and *Delfi*, provide newsletters in Russian and have electronic versions.

What comes to radio stations localized for Estonian Russians, it would be worth mentioning *Raadio 4* owned by *ERR*. It was created for minorities related to Russian community, making programs in Russian, Byelorussian, Ukrainian, Chuvash and other languages. It gained popularity rapidly, however, today it is important as a source of information only for 38 per cent of Estonian Russians (Integration Monitoring 2017).

Since the media today is much crowded space, it is also worth paying attention to oppositional or independent media. For instance, Radio Liberty (*Radio Svoboda*), funded by US Congress, broadcasts in Russian and is aimed to counterbalance Russia's media detrimental forms of discourse especially in Estonia, working on public opinion of Estonian Russians.

The issue of contrasting content and flipside arguments can be handled creatively, which would eventually make people lean a prudent side. Estonia and other European countries under the pressure from Russian advocacy and activity in IB, launched many sites, that are geared to search and halt fake information dissemination. Estonian site *Propastop* is a web page that is aimed at

revealing propaganda. It checks Russian news by the code word 'Estonia' and proofreads written information. Other initiatives alike are 'stopfake.org' and 'euvsdisinfo.eu'.

2.3 Cultural diplomacy à La Russe

Russia's culture is a mode of its humanitarian cooperation. Particularly, in regard of culture, it focuses on creation and maintenance of cultural ties, including those with target population abroad, and creation of cross civilizational dialogue (Klyeva, Mikhaylova 2017). Overall, Russian foreign and compatriot policies put strong emphasis on language (civilizational contribution), its preservation and promotion, making culture and language overly politicized.

The state's firmer grip on language and culture was very strong in the times of the former USSR and even earlier. CD in USSR was strictly controlled by the upper heads in the state authority. In the closed state invited visitors were only able to see what is shown, and shown was all the time only positive picture. This narrow perspective in culture was built through high culture (for example, Russian ballet or theatres) display, language, literacy (Soviets were well-read people), higher (and not only) education, student exchanges, sports, science and academic world and more.

Arguably, today Russia builds own CD as a prototype of the Soviet one (Terry, 2018, p. 29). Often this idea is proven with Russia's revitalization of Soviet-made institutions, referring to Rossotrudnichestvo; and its manipulative use of cultural policy. Language and culture became intertwined with Russian identity, hence, these two variables present a solid base for Russia's CD (Klyeva A., Mikhaylova A., 2017). Another powerful source is religion and 'spirituality', which is managed by Russian Orthodox Church (further ROC). Russian World ideology, thus, build on these variables (culture, language, Orthodoxy) to appeal to Russian identity of compatriots, residing in foreign territories.

Russian CD is done by many: there are overlapped competences between Ministry of Culture and Education, Rossotrudnischestvo, Foreign Affairs Ministry (MID) and Russkiy Mir Foundation. In the Soviet Union, however, there was more distinct structure. Thus, Russian Association for International Cooperation (RAMS) was established to coordinate the work of non-governmental organizations within the scope of Russian PD in the near abroad and the West. Currently, RAMS consists of 96 public organizations among which are Russia-Germany Society, Russia-Japan Society, Society of Russian-Chinese Friendship, Society of Russian-Armenian Friendship, Association of Friends of France and many others (Klyeva & Tsetsura 2016).

Russkiy Mir Foundation – a *quasi*-free institution, whose work entirely devoted to culture and language, stands out a bit more from the other executors. It is a well spread organization, which has 48 Russian centers around the world, including in Estonia. Russkiy Mir Foundation, whose goal is to promote the conception of Russian World, conducts own chores in different ways depending on the context. As Terry (2018) articulated in her report, Russkiy Mir Foundation was rather more politically biased and pressurised for more language right for the society in Ukraine than in Germany. When it comes to Russkiy Mir Foundation, in Estonia it appears that Pushkin Institute is the full executant acting in its name. The official site of Pushkin Institute says, that local Russian center enables information obtaining by the following directions: informational; educational (Russian language study materials); creative (provides many opportunities to create cultural content); communicative (formation of communication patterns) (2020).

Vene Kool Eestis (Russian School in Estonia) is another actor in Russian CD. Russian School in Estonia is NGO (as they call themselves) which aims to support schooling in Russian in Estonia. The purpose of the organization is to support and develop the Russian School of Estonia – which includes pre-school, primary school and higher education institutions – in order to create the most favorable and effective learning environment for children. The organization is against education in Estonian in Russian-speaking schools and acts to preserve Russian language education in Estonia. A problem of language, its special status in Estonia and usage for school education has been acute throughout many years. Another important player which is able to promote Russian culture is the Russian Cultural Center (Vene Kultuurikeskus) in Tallinn. The enterprise belongs to Tallinn city administration and hence, it may contribute to Russian foreign policy indirectly. The Center's activities are truly patchy, since it does art studios, art lectures, and computer handling workshops, art exhibitions and host festivals.

Lerhis (2016) argues that Russia's perspective to history affects compatriot's identity. Russia actively uses historical appeal in communication with diaspora and other players, which often provokes tensions. Usually hidden conflict of memories between Russian-speaking minority and Estonians, which is two different truths on the initiation of WW2, victory, Soviet period and memorials, once already broke in 2007. The decision of Tallinn City Administration to move the monument to the soldiers-liberators from the city center to the military cemetery on the outskirts of the city, provoked outrage of Russian-speaking half of the society. The matter eventually resulted in an open protest with street pogroms and forceful restraint.

Russia's role in this confrontation was vivid; it was actively involved in escalation and mobilizing its compatriots, calling up through the Russian Embassy in Estonia; supporters (movement Nashi/ 'Наши') vandalized Estonia's Embassy in Moscow. Parshukov (2017) argues that this case was

babbling for long on Russian state TV channels, which tilted Estonian Russians to back Kremlin, as there was no dialogue with Estonians. As he further observed, the topics included into the memory conflict were not so easily commuted within ETV+ as well. Prolonged memory conflicts can also most likely associate to other celebrations as well as to Soviet attributes and monuments that Russia promotes in Estonia for Russian-speaking people, such as the Immortal Regiment supported by Russkiy Mir Foundation. The theme of sticking to Estonia a Nazi label or accusing the society of Russophobia definitely advances of Russian World narrative, but the latest (2019) report by KAPO notes that Russia's appeal through those names is obsolete, because it is already known for forgery and consequently, it is not credible anymore.

As Terry (2018) fairly concluded, it is hard to measure CD effect because it requires some time to reveal the impact. Moreover, as appeared, Russia may not measure PD as expected, mightily invoke Soviet criteria of measurement. If that is maintained, then a more vocal Russian diaspora in Ukraine may be a success story for Russian PD. Russian appeal using narratives, for example, fight for rights of compatriots is strongly followed in case of Estonia. Moreover, culture is opposed to the western, comprehended in civilizational sense. But does it really invoke strong sympathy?

The question is about identity of Estonian Russians is not so obvious. Despite culture and language are named as strong anchors both by (Klyeva , Mikhaylova 2017) and by (Kallas 2016), the latter alleged that Estonian Russians generated territorial identification, naming Estonia their homeland. Younger generation, raised in Nordic culture, may particularly dissociate from Russian society since they don't know the life there. Thus, the identity may be drafted 'in between' (Parshukov, 2017, p. 39) not purely Russian nor Estonian and localized. Still identity issue gives much room for Russia's compulsion and co-optation, but there is optimistic insight on post-millennium development (KAPO 2019).

Russian cultural efforts are indeed more sophisticated. Recently Russia's political elite introduced an argument of 'spiritual shackles' (духовные скрепы), which 'rediscovered' the importance of Orthodox Christianity and Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) for the society and the state. Seemingly, in secular state religious organization would not be reckoned as manager for PD. However, according to Terry (2018, 42), as the result of cooperation between Putin administration and ROC, the latter became another state institution dealing with foreign relations. Thus, ROC departmentalized a special body responsible for PD and cooperation with outer public. Moreover, it communicates with Russkiy Mir and MID. Due to its bounds with other GONGOs, it takes part in some projects, funds and facilitates by hosting. Independently it promotes Sunday schools for children of repatriates or religious holidays in far and near abroad.

Might be that ROC inflict suspicion for the last years. For example, the aftermath of its pressure in Ukraine was the urge for Kyiv Patriarchate to broke away from Moscow Patriarchate not so long ago. Estonia was as well involved in the conflict, since it possesses considerable number of Orthodox believers- around 180,000 (Boom, 2018). Previously in Estonia there have been upheavals in Orthodox Church, already causing separation from Moscow. Churches and monasteries belonging to Moscow Patriarchate are generously funded from Russia. Funding for new perishes repeatedly came along controversies (Bulakh, и др., 2014, стр. 57), where the biggest case of such was connected to obscure scheme of funding by Russian Railways of construction of a new church in Lasnamäe.

2.4 Exchange diplomacy

Education in a sense is also a humanitarian mode, serving long-term engagement, which creates brand and reciprocal relations. Since Russia positions itself as having reliable and quality education, it intends to export it as a PD activity, along adding to it political inklings. This mode of PD is executed through big Russian state universities, whose efforts are driven to compatriots predominantly in Central Asia and Caucasus in order to accumulate economic integration; it stems from long-term political and economic interests, in exact those catalyzed by training intellectual elite (Fominykh, 2016). In order to increase attractiveness of Russian education some national projects were initiated. However, as mentioned by PICREDI and RIAC (Бурлинова, Василенко, Иванченко, & Шакиров, 2020), the volume of Russia's student, academic and professional exchanges is humble in comparison with its potential.

Because Russia is the largest country in the world, and, in the past, there were linkages with European high culture institutions, many traditions and institutions together with regalia were brought there by aristocrats. At some point it became a hub for own operas and art academies and its profile in high culture education was also accountable. (Bulakh 2014, 55) mentioned that in 2013 cooperation was established between the Estonia and Russia in the Golden Mask festival format. Moreover, many Estonian directors and theatre professional take up education in Russia, which forms a trend. In Estonia Russia manages enticing undergraduates, for ED promotion RF Embassy in Estonian Republic assisted by *Tallinna Puskini Instituut* (an NGO helping students get enrolled). To invite candidates from Estonia education in Russia is made free of charge, the organizing program itself is called RussiaStudy (Pastukhov, 2018) enabling quick and easy enrollment procedure.

3 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It is hardly deniable that Russia exemplifies, perhaps, one of the most evidence-providing countries for a high number of academic disciplines, be it in exact or non-exact scientific world. The obvious lack of social sciences (more specifically, international relations, or strategic communication studies, or, for that matter, research on security) is in having their very own ‘Russian example’, which is always empirically rich, academically ‘fresh’, and thoughts-provoking. The PD conceptual frameworks, which informs this particular analysis, is constantly getting enriched by evidence on Russia and Russia-associated events. This paper’s data-gathering process, while commencing with a thorough description of the PD-bound theoretical instrumentarium, has managed to ‘tell’ a comprehensive story on those myriads of peculiarities, which Russian PD in Estonia is featured by. The highly insightful data provides for a possibility to academically ‘craft’ a message on effectiveness of Russia-originated mechanisms of PD in the Republic of Estonia. Intriguingly, such a message is, as it would be easy to predict, multi-faceted and not necessarily underlining total ineffectiveness of what the Russian Federation attempts to arrange in the process of approaching the Estonia-wide society.

The operational nature of soft tools, such as PD, is perpetual, what should be taken into consideration pondering on their effectiveness. PD’s task is to convene soft power and hence facilitate accumulation of attractiveness. Attractiveness further spills behavioral change, however, the former is measurable only within long periods of time (Banks 2011). Since there is a scientifically limited possibility to quantify the actual PD’s outcomes, this research will utilise a speculative hypothetical model based on extrapolating the collected evidence on the element of the PD conceptual – the idea is to speculatively split the combined Estonia-focused Russian PD effort across the four elements (People, IB, CD, and ED). Considering the volume of the evidence, the actual split of 100 per cent will be correspondingly represented by 20 per cent allocated to ‘People’, 35 per cent for both ‘IB’ and ‘CD’ each, and 10 per cent given to ‘ED’.

On a concretely qualitative note, this study revealed that, due to significant resources in hand, Russia has a certain potential in employing IB- and CD-associated mechanisms to work on generating a better degree of its attractiveness among Estonian society. As for the other two segments out of the specified four, Russia’s influence operations that are focused on elderly people and, increasingly, youth, are unpopular in the society. There are situations, however, when corruption-associated schemes and inexpedient use of Russian public money can lead towards

making use of Estonian citizens of Estonia (mostly those who by nescience turned into Russia's intelligence agents) for the benefit of the Russian side. In addition, Russia's engagement with people in influence operations in the context of appealing for rights of compatriots, promotion of the so-called Compatriot Policy in order to restrain Russian-speakers from assimilation in their residence societies and humanitarian cooperation are delivering meager results. Fight for rights of compatriots was introduced by Russia after the USSR's dissolution, when radical reforms took spin in Estonia affecting many Estonian Russians. At the times of economic hardship, possibly, Russia managed to show its support in a relatively justifiable manner. Already thirty years have passed, in Estonia these were very plenteous under sway of European integration. Consequently, the effects of integration are observable today in unleashing social solidarity between the ethnic groups in Estonia. Of course, the international advocacy on behalf of community of Estonian Russians helped to voice the problem, but, soon, it became enacted as a pretext for interference in sovereign affairs, demonized and mishandled. Today, evidently, there is no precedent for debates of human rights violations, let alone humiliation of ethnic grounds. Thus, in the context of PD, this mode is rather used for provocations, for realization of which Russia forced to use payed personas. Frequency of mentioning also appears to be insufficient, last time the topic was raised was in 2015, at the UN General Assembly, which rather turned attention to Russia's domestic human rights violations. Consequently, a 'fight for rights' today is looking-into-past.

Back to IB and CD, this paper's evaluation of the status quo detected that (dis)information-disseminating activities are on the rise, and Russia made a few advancements within the process via effective centralization of media sources under the umbrella of *Russia Today* and assembling them in a powerful vertical masterminded directly from the Kremlin. Other factors such as finding malleable individuals, gaps and Achilles feet in European law and media market, further corrupting them to spread in Europe goes in hand with Russia-made IB. The information aired by pro-governmental media mobilizes psychological responses which are usually omitted from the studies devoted to disinformation, afterwards hampering the PD's ability to counter the need to watch particular TV channels. The tech side of media production matters too, Russia's TV has vast budget, which allows the high quality production, potentially even distracting from the content itself. Probably, it explains why Russian TV is surrounded with myths of zombification of its audiences, which causes nominal efficiency.

Both Russian language and culture remain major factors for the minority. Yet the appeal based on language remains quite successful, because in postmodern societies language and culture play a key role in identity formation. But the problem of Russia's cultural strand is in dependency on artificially crafted socio-political theories, which hardly be called popular in the XIX century,

which perverts Russian cultural and linguistic heritage. In other words, mental and anthropological structures which were developed in a course of time in Russian nation are the true force at play.

This paper exposed numerous cases of divisive underground projects and networks in money (speculations, weaponized usage of money and corruption), politics (connections with Estonian politicians and parties) and on the peer-to-peer level. Yet it is unclear whether wittingly failing activities- putting pressure on policing and destabilization only- are meant to be effective for Russia. Meanwhile, divisive policies caused Russia lost almost all credibility for the Estonian state, which obviously undermines potential cooperation. In general, these days, a certain lack of trust towards Russia is quite explicit in Estonia's majority and state authorities, while it tries to build trust almost only among compatriots through ED. The fruits of this activity may be palpable only within a period of time, but going ahead, the minority is welcomed also in Estonian higher education centers and European universities, which constitutes a serious competition to Russia.

Finally, the topic of competition is slightly broader. States nowadays compete for people's imagination and attention with other ideational (communism, religion) and territorial concepts, frameworks, assemblies, philosophies *et cetera* for becoming a soft power resource. As it is evident from Russia's major PD elements – IB, CD, ED (and even those more blurred ones – advocacy and listening) it faces harsh competition for hearts and minds of Estonian Russians. Considering the very different leverages that the two countries possess, the Government of Estonia-originated initiatives (countermeasures) such as *Vene Kultuurikeskus* and ETV+ can be treated as remarkable, effectiveness wise, showing the constituency that the Estonian side is willing to cooperate. The idea of a state needs to be attractive, furthermore, it must be attractive not only to foreigners, but to own constituency in first instance. Once it is not, PD tends to be incoherent with other forms of foreign communication (for example, people's diplomacy) and eventually loses even potential trustworthiness, which is, indeed, a must for regaining in the particular case of the Russian Federation.

This study demonstrated the value of systemic approach in researching PD as both a concept and an applied tool in the process of arranging a country's engagement with international societies. While the Russo-Estonian relations deserve to be better in many respects, there is a practical need in comprehending the phenomenon of PD on this complicated case. Firstly, this theme should be of immense interest for Estonia, considering its *intra*-communication with the country's Russian-speaking societal segment. Secondly, for Russia, who is one of the world's most active nations in developing and deploying different PD strategies, it is important understand where it misses out completely as well as conceptually. The PD-associated mechanisms are mighty sources to achieve appreciation of the other side's society, which, with necessity, brings about a desired spillover onto

foreign policy. This research attempted to trace down Russia's communication activities and programs focused on introducing Russia to the Estonia-wide society. Since it has brought a more nuanced understanding of the situation, it could be a good chance for the two sides to eventually start reconciling the differences and move on as partners. If only...

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