Gabriel Nowacki
Military University of Technology (Poland)
ORCID: 0000-0001-5357-8824
e-mail: gabriel.nowacki@wat.edu.pl

Latvia as the Area of Correlated Russian "Hard Power" and "Soft Power" Operations

Abstract: This work presents the methodology of the Russian impact on Latvia after 1991. It defines and specifies the scope of methods concerning both the hard and soft power in international relations in the 21st century, particularly the ones used to implement the Russian Federation's foreign policy. The implemented strategies and impact models are described. The work is also focused on certain indicators used in global rankings by experts worldwide. In the 21st century, it is no longer enough to employ the hard power methods as it is advisable to use the soft power ones, which may bring about much better results than the hard ones.

Keywords: *hard impact (hard power), soft impact (soft power), international security, Latvia, Russia*

Introduction

Following the dissolution of the former Soviet Union on December 31, 1991, Latvia declared independence and became a member of the United Nations. It has been a member of NATO since March 29, 2004, and of the European Union since May 1, 2004. Similar decisions were made by Estonia and Lithuania, which reduced the Russian impact on those states significantly.

The Baltic region is unstable in terms of geopolitics. The Baltic states strive to integrate with the West's political and cultural system and break ties with Russia as a non-Western state.

Today's global policy is pragmatic, the military has a hard impact on national security, but the soft impact on international relations cannot be neglected, even more so as its role has been growing steadily.

Russia is perceived as an irritating factor by the Baltic states, and the Soviet past is analyzed from the perspective of the Russian occupation and is used to justify the authorities' operations. It reduces the Russian opportunities to employ the hard power (military and economic measures) and the soft one employing mass media, culture, and educational, political, and economic cooperation (Smirnow, 2012).

Research Problems and Terminology

This work is aimed at presenting the methodology of the Russian Federation's impact on Latvia. The research objective was achieved by solving the major research problem: *What methods of impact in the foreign policy are employed by the Russian Federation regarding Latvia?*

The solution to the major research problem took the form of a research hypothesis: *In relation to the new types of global hazards, it is necessary to employ both the hard and the soft impact methods to achieve effective impact in the foreign policy of the state at present,*

To solve the major research problem and to verify the research hypothesis, qualitative and quantitative research methods were used, including:

- the systems analysis which enabled to solve a complex problem, i.e., the state security system, and its foreign policy,
- the analogy which was used to phrase the research hypothesis and look for similarities between particular aspects of the foreign policy implementation,
- the historical method which enabled to reconstruct and analyze former international relations, the reasons, major events, and legal framework of the Russian Federation foreign policy were analyzed,
- the statistical method which enabled to collect, present and analyze data describing different phenomena in international relations,
- the analytical method which enabled to consider the factors of the foreign policy organization in Latvia,
- the comparative method being the basis for studying and analyzing the basic mechanisms of the Russian foreign policy implementation,
- the behavioral method, which enabled to identify and explain through observing political behaviors of individuals and social groups.

The adopted research methodology enabled identifying an independent variable for this work, i.e., *security environment.*

The identified dependent variable is *the impact of the foreign policy implemented using soft and hard methods.*

The *hard impact/hard power* is the use of military and economic measures to influence the behavior or interests of other bodies or nations (Nye, 2003). This form is based on coercion, and it may be effective if it is imposed by one state on the other, particularly with a smaller military or economic power.

Ernest Wilson describes hard power as the ability to force another body to act in the way specified by the forcing agent (Wilson, 2008).

Other authors define the *hard power* (Ospanov et al., 2018) as the strategy based on coercion and the promotion of the state and its interests using military and economic measures, claiming it is up-to-date in the contemporary world, e.g., when states try to safeguard their sovereignty and interests against terrorist organizations.

The opposite of the hard impact is the *soft impact/hard power*, much better known, which J. Nye defines as the ability of a political body, i.e., the subject of the international law, e.g., a state, to exert a direct impact on the behavior of other political bodies (states) using non-military and non-economic measures to achieve national interests (Matlary, 2018).

The soft impact is more effective than the hard one as it is based on persuasion and attraction, while the hard one is based on coercion (Nye, 2017).

Other authors (Ospanov et al., 2018) define *soft power* as the strategy enabling different parties to achieve the same results without employing any means of coercion. The major emphasis is on employing persuasion techniques, convincing arguments, facts, and other methods to ensure cooperation. In this way, the attractiveness and promotion of one's interests become the keywords in foreign policy.

The Russian understanding of soft power is different from the "standard" one introduced by Nye or other Western scientists and practicians. The Russian interpretation of soft power is more practical and interest-oriented.

The Russian concept of the foreign policy dated 2013 defines the soft power as the "set of instruments" helpful to achieve the foreign policy objectives using the civic society institutions, IT and communications, humanitarian methods, and other methods different from the standard diplomacy (Sergunin, 2014).

The soft power of Russia reflects the synergy between the state bodies, semi-official foundations, e.g., the Russian World, favorite TV companies and film producers, state-dominated business, and truly independent activity (Golts & Tonya, 2004).

President Putin was even more pragmatic and instrumental, defining the soft power as the ordinary tool of the foreign policy or technology that helps either lobby for Moscow's interests abroad or improve Russia's international image (Putin, 2014).

The most characteristic response to the dominance of Russian television and significant presence in printed media was the "information security" since 1990. However, most measures were repressive and brought about the effect opposite to the intended one (Golts & Tonya, 2004).

Since the mid-2000s, Russia has been trying to develop its concept and mechanism of soft power implementation. In 2009, the Information Security Doctrine was adopted. It emphasized the Russian soft power as the key concepts, and the ideology underlying them was largely inspired by the analogous Russian document dated 2000. The soft power concept was formally derived from the Russian international policy doctrine in 2013, and

the Russian rulers (including President Putin) considered the soft power instruments to be the most important ones in the international strategy tools of Moscow.

Moscow has used the hard power instruments in the post-Soviet space many times toward Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014), which is conflicting with the attachment to the peaceful foreign policy methods officially declared by Russia (Sergunin, 2014).

The Russian leaders believe that the most important manifestations of hard power are strong armed forces, and the Russian army wants to compare itself to the American armed forces each time even given the large military budget which Russia has today (it is several times lower than the US ones) (Golts, 2007).

In the early 21st century, the experts realized that international security could not rest solely on the hard impact of the nation. The hard impact in the international policy remains an important military and economic factor, but it is necessary to employ the soft one to succeed.

The soft impact covers public diplomacy, which has become a component of the strategic communication of NATO and Russia.

Strategic communication is a set of coordinated activities and means of communications comprising (NATO Policy, 2012): the Public Diplomacy, Civil Affairs, Military Affairs, Information Operations, and Psychological Operations.

The Public Diplomacy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010) includes activities of a strategic, conceptual, analytical, coordinating, and implementing nature which, shaping social attitudes and the public opinion abroad, affect the implementation of vital interests of a given state worldwide, using tools and methods from outside the traditional diplomacy as the interstate relation area.

The Public Diplomacy is a foundation of the soft impact concept as a set of measures affecting the society of a given state directly. The measures aim to create an appealing image of the state abroad by informing the international public and maintaining relations with other countries through education and culture. Thus, the Public Diplomacy is not just an
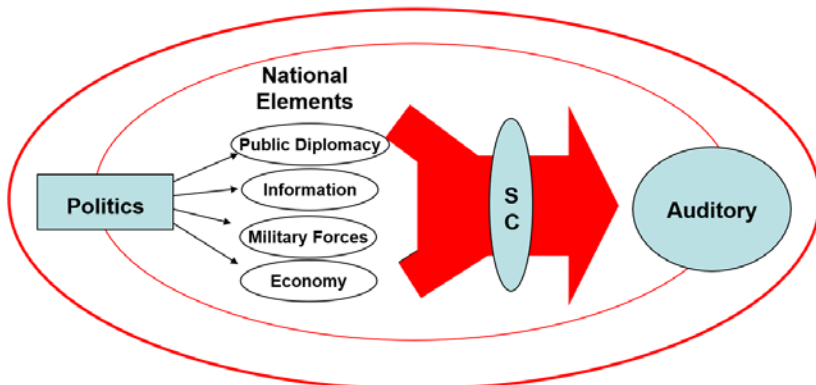

Fig. 1. Mechanism of strategic communications — SC. (LePage, 2014)

intervention in human minds, hearts, and souls, but also an effective way to influence the internal affairs of a sovereign state (*Russia in Global Affairs*, 2010).

Tab. 1. Public Diplomacy levels (Hebarmas, 2006)

Level 1	Centre of the political system: governments, parliaments, courts	Strategies of foreign policy, strategies of public diplomacy	g2g Government to Government	Agenda of politicians.
Level 2	The periphery of the political system: the media system	Media, NGOs, lobbyists	g2p Government to People	Media agenda.
Level 3	Daily Public Communica-tion: Civil Society	Citizens, social movements, networks (including social media), civil diplomacy	p2p People to People	Audience agenda (stakeholders).

Reference Works Review and Discussion (comparison of opinions and research results)

Hard Impact Methods

In the international relations theory, the authority has always entailed possession of material resources, including people, territory, natural resources, economic and military power.

As already mentioned, the hard impact is the ability of a nation or a political body to use economic measures or military force to influence other states' behaviors. This form is based on coercion, and it may be effective if it is imposed by one state on the other, particularly with a smaller military or economic power, as is the case for the Russian Federation's impact on Latvia (see Table 2).

Tab. 2. Comparison of the potentials of the Russian Federation and Latvia (The Military Balance, 2020)

Indicators	RF	Latvia
No	1	124
Area, world ranking (km2)	17,075,400	64,573
No	9	150
Total population, ranking in the world	142,122,776	1,923,559
Airports	1,218	42
Seaports	48	10
Length of railway lines (km)	121,000	2,565
Road network (km)	1,283,387	72,215
Motorways and expressways (km)	39,143	198

Indicators	RF	Latvia
Active military	900,000	6,210
Reserve military	2,000,000	15,900
Paramilitary	55,400	0
Total personnel	3,454,000	22,110
Defense expenditure (USD)	61,600,000,000	712,000,000
Defense budget (% Gross Domestic Product)	3.5	2.03

The data in the table indicates the asymmetry of power between Latvia and the Russian Federation. Russia is one of the military powers worldwide in terms of the armed forces equipment and personnel number.

Latvian NATO and EU membership reduced the asymmetry in specific areas (reduced military threats, defense of airspace, improved border control) to a certain degree.

Russia keeps using the military deterrence strategy for Latvia and other Baltic states (the War Doctrine, 2014), and the Russian nuclear weapons remain the basic tool of deterrence. Another challenge for Russian security is also regime changes in the Baltic states, compromising the Russian interests.

Many NATO servicemen treat the war with Russia highly seriously. In 2016, R. Shirreff presented prognoses related to the war with Russia, although they were considered to be science fiction (Shireff, 2016). He assumed the following scenario:

- Russia will attack the Baltic states in 2017,
- Russia will avoid NATO intervention by using nuclear blackmail,
- the blackmail will turn out an expensive illusion for NATO,
- it will bring the situation to the verge of a disaster, and the operations will be started only at the last minute,
- the Western world order, popularly believed to be stable, will be threatened.

N. Carter believes that the Russian army is well-equipped and more self-confident. He claims that Russians used Syria as a testing ground (48 thousand soldiers and officers took part in fights in 2016–2017). They tested the use of long-range missiles and 150 pieces of equipment, weapons, and gear. What is more, the number of platforms used to launch long-range missiles has grown twelve times for the last five years, while the number of missiles ranging four thousand kilometers has grown thirty times. According to N. Carter, this enables Russia to create mobile missile systems called A2AD (*anti-access – area denial*), which will prevent the opposite party from crossing the airspace and will ensure the freedom of operations to the Russian forces (Świerczyński, 2018).

Many authors anticipate different development scenarios of the situation between Russia and Latvia. For instance, the Latvian Latgale region has the highest percentage share of Russian-speaking people and the worst socio-economic conditions in the state. The "hybrid war" probability in that region has become discussed in Western political and military milieus (BBC, 2016).

However, at least for the time being, two factors seem to attenuate any Russian attempt at repeating the Ukrainian scenario in Latgale. Firstly, despite the high share of Russian-speaking people in Latgale, the region's identity is shaped primarily by Latgale inhabitants, i.e., ethnic Latvians. In the survey of 2016, the Latgale inhabitants displayed the highest patriotic attitude to Latvia and the highest support for the Western geopolitical orientation of Latvia. Consequently, Russia is likely to encounter strong resistance if it will stir up the separatist tendencies in Latgale. Secondly, the basic difference between Latvia on the one hand and Georgia and Ukraine on the other is the NATO membership of the former state, which increases the risk for the Kremlin significantly if the decision to initiate the "hybrid" is made, not to mention the traditional war with Latvia. (For example, there was no military response from Russia after Turkey shot down a Russian airplane on November 24, 2015 (BBC, 2015).

U. Kühn presented three scenarios of the conflict development, with two of them referring to Latvia. Scenario 1 – escalation deliberation (Kühn, 2018):

- Stage 1, large-scale protests, the authority of the Russian President is at risk, in 2 weeks the general staff announces large military maneuvers in the Western Military District of Russia, near the Latvian border, which attracts NATO's attention to the fact that this situation may result in an international crisis;

- Stage 2, protests of the Russian minority community in Latgale in Latvia get out of control and result in several fatalities, which could lead to escalating the conflict between Russia and NATO;

- Stage 3, the Russian forces cross the Latvian border and occupy Latgale; The Russian President announces that the "Russian humanitarian intervention ends here and now" in the media. NATO ministers of defense issue an ultimatum demanding the complete withdrawal of Russia, the situation could get out of NATO's control;

- Stage 4, NATO is ready to deploy NRF (NATO Response Forces), the US brings personnel and equipment to Western Europe and Poland by air. The Russian President claims that "NATO provokes unnecessary war". Although NRF would be ready in less than a week, the other forces would take several weeks to prepare;

- Stage 5, NATO receives intelligence reports claiming that Russia is preparing some tactical nuclear weapons for use. The Russian President warns that "both parties are on the verge of a nuclear Armageddon". This decision could cause serious frictions within the Alliance and could further delay the military response;

- Stage 6, US satellites detect a low-intensity nuclear explosion above a distant area of the North Sea. It is where NATO would have to face the crisis.

The second scenario, i.e., an irreversible escalation, focuses on the internal crisis in Latvia, which gets out of control to the point where the Russian leaders feel forced to threaten with the intervention by the internal pressure;

- Stage 1, an ethnic conflict in Riga emerges due to the anniversary of the Soviet Union victory over the Nazis. There are two fatalities. Crowds of angry Russians take to

the streets the following day. This situation would result in the diplomatic NATO intervention to avoid further protest escalation;

- Stage 2, the protests intensify, the Kremlin authorities do not respond officially, the Russian ultra-nationalist groups launch protests in Moscow, demanding "help for brothers and sisters" from the President. Some NATO members may opt for deploying NATO battle group to "prove the presence" on the Latvian and Russian border;
- Stage 3, NATO deploys the spearhead force (response forces) to patrol the Latvian and Russian border. The following day the Russian army starts large-scale maneuvers in the Western Military District. Armed forces deployment by NATO would have a clear defensive purpose, but this is a difficult decision;
- Stage 4, NATO is preparing to deploy its forces, the Russian army starts to collect soldiers (ca. 40,000 people) near the Latvian border. The Russian President declares that "any attempt by NATO at sending forces to Latvia would be perceived as an act of hostility which would have serious consequences". NATO will have a difficult decision to make;
- Stage 5, NATO declares that "the spearhead force deployment will be continued immediately". A couple of hours later, the Russian Ministry of Defense announces the use of nuclear forces. This strong Russian nuclear signal may open up different escalation paths depending on the NATO response.

Experts from the American Enterprise Institute proposed another scenario of the Russian attack on Latvia. According to them, the attack on Latvia could start from the low-intensity operations supported by NCW (Network Centric Warfare). It may comprise supporting armed separatist or anti-governmental groups to divide local elites and the society, corrupt the armed forces and military elites, undermine trust in the key governmental institutions, slander political leaders considered to be opposing the Russian interests, and eliminate any opportunities to build a coalition with foreign allies to obtain political and operational support in order to separate the state on the international arena.

Suppose the low-intensity attack using NCW is not successful. In that case, the conflict may escalate with high-intensity contact-free attacks using weapons of high delivery precision against the most sensitive, strategically important, and potentially dangerous military and industrial targets to force Latvia and NATO to accept the defeat. The Russian army's deployment to win would result from establishing the zone with prohibited air flights.

The Western responses should be multi-tier. Firstly, it is necessary to reduce the chances of low-intensity operation success. It means increasing the society's immunity to invigilation and the political objectives of Russia. Another important factor is establishing deeper economic relations between Latvia and its western partners to ensure economic growth and turn every Russian attack on Latvia into an attack on western economic interests. The military response to the Russian aggression must be traditional to increase the costs for Moscow. It comprises further development of Latvian capacities in cooperation with NATO.

NATO presence in the Baltic states is the best deterrent, and the fast and decisive strategic response of NATO is the best way to avoid escalation.

Russia has employed military deterrence for a prolonged time. The Armed Forces of the Russian Federation keep violating the airspace of the Baltic states. The air defense of the Baltic states is provided by NATO fighters within BAP operation (Baltic Air Policing) which fly to capture Russian aircraft.

During the initial six years of the mission, from 2004 to 2010, BAP fighters escorted fewer than 10 Russian airplanes a year, while in 2010, this number grew five times and achieved 50 cases a year (Tisov & Iljenko, 2016). In subsequent years, the number of violations kept growing steadily, see Table 3.

Tab. 3. Number of violations (Defence24, 2017)

2013	47 violations
2014	150 violations
2015	160 violations
2016	110 violations

What is more, Russia has been demonstrating its military forces, which are modernized now, with the share of the cutting-edge weapons to reach:

- 32% in land forces,
- 33% in air forces,
- 51% in the fleet,
- 57% in the strategic missile forces,
- 54% in the aerospace forces,
- 40% in the airborne forces.

To facilitate the special forces deployment, the Special Operation Support Command was created, composed of:

- The center for the collection, processing, and analysis of the intelligence information;
- The psychological operations center;
- The cyber-war center;
- The information defense center;
- The RTV center;
- The autonomous brigade of the electronic reconnaissance;
- The autonomous brigade of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV).

What is more, Russia created its Aerospace Forces (MoD, 2015). The forces creation was initiated on December 1, 2011, and they were called up formally on August 1, 2015. They are composed of the former Space Forces, Air Forces, Air Defense Forces, and Missile Defense Forces. The structures were created due to the changes of the international situation, the

protection of the security and the national interests of the RF in space, and warning against missile attacks and controlling orbital space apparatus.

What is more, RF has researched the anti-satellite weapons and space lasers (ASAT) to shoot down spying satellites of the adversary.

In the War Doctrine of the Russian Federation dated 2014, one of the major external threats was creating and developing the systems for the strategic missile defense, which contributes to holding weapons systems in space and developing traditional guided weapons systems.

In the military area, Russia may use the information warfare tools against Latvia, including the integrated complex of operations comprising the following eight subcategories (Thimoty, 2000): reconnaissance (intelligence) and counter-intelligence, misinformation and masking, electronic fight, reduced communication opportunities of the adversary, identification of the adversary's military facilities, destruction of the adversary's navigation support, psychological operations, destruction of computer networks and software of the other party.

Another method of the Russian hard impact on Latvia is using economic measures. Russia has the world's largest natural gas deposits, is second concerning coal resources, and seventh in crude oil resources.

The Baltic states depended on Russia in terms of power, including crude oil, natural gas, and nuclear energy. However, Latvia does not have sufficient energy resources. In 2010, it imported close to 50% of its energy from Russia.

The Baltic states depend on Russian natural gas. Latvia depends on the natural gas deliveries from Russia in close to 100% (Mauricas, 2014). In the absolute values, the import of Russian gas to Latvia is 1.7 billion cubic meters. Despite the growing consumption of renewable energy sources (e.g., wind, bio-fuel), Russian gas has been one of the most popular resources for energy production in Latvia. Natural gas is also used widely to produce heat, and its share in the central heating system is 78% in Lithuania.

Statistically, Latvia seems to depend largely on the Russian gas import, but there is no risk of the gas delivery disruption thanks to the underground gas store with the storing capacity of up to 2.32 billion m³ of natural gas, i.e., 140% of the Latvian consumption a year. This facility plays a crucial role in increasing the gas delivery security in Latvia and the entire Baltic region.

Although all Baltic states are members of the electric power market Nord Pool Spot, Latvia, and Lithuania do not have any connections with other regions (there is only a 330 MW connection with Estonia, making a bottleneck).

The export of goods and services constitutes 18% of Latvian export to Russia (Janczys, 2014). Ca. 60-70% of Latvian cargo comes from Russia. Most cargo (60%) in Riga harbor belongs to Russians either directly or indirectly. The commercial exchange between Latvia and Riga is 13.2%, respectively.

On August 7, 2014, Russia prohibited importing meat, fish, fruit, vegetables, and dairy products to all EU states for one year (Mauricas, 2014). The Baltic states belong to the most affected EU states due to their broad commercial relationship with Russia. One year earlier, the export of those states was: Lithuania – 19.8%, Latvia – 16.2%. Estonia – 11.4%.

The imposed sanctions harm food production, transport, and agriculture, but the overall direct impact on the economic growth was slightly reduced and reached 0.6% of GDP for the entire Baltic Sea region, in Lithuania (0.81%), in Latvia (0.44%), in Estonia (0.46%).

Another problem emerged in late 2009 when Russia decided to impose stricter border controls a couple of months before the customs union was created. As a result, the export from all Baltic states fell by close to 50%, but this prohibition did not significantly affect long-term effects.

Soft Impact Methods

The "soft method" term comprises the standards of social and political life practiced by Russia to increase its influence abroad. It is impossible to create an appealing external image without successfully coping with internal problems. Russia has numerous problems connected with corruption, human rights violations, no democracy, and no rule of law. That is why its political and socio-economic transformation model cannot be deemed to be a positive example for other states.

The Kremlin perceived these instruments as propaganda tools. So the Russian authorities started to promote them as their own approach to democracy, criticizing the western, liberal democratic states.

Following colorful revolutions, Russia has tried to increase its influence on Latvia and other Baltic states using the soft impact, including public diplomacy, propaganda, and misinformation. The impact covered three entities (Makarychev, 2011):

- NGOs,
- Russian Orthodox Church,
- Mass media.

In 2007, the Russian authorities founded the Russkiy Mir Foundation, sponsored by the government and private companies (Simons, 2015). The name of this organization is derived from the ideological idea of the Russian nation, focusing on cultural and language ties. The operations of this organization are rather controversial as they refer not only to the above aspects, but they cover new findings connected with the history creation and Russian minority rights protection. The foundation, however, has a highly nationalist image.

The Russian Orthodox Church has also become an important ally when supporting state policy toward the co-patriots living abroad. The Russian orthodox church leaders have often supported the Russian global ideology. The Patriarch of Moscow has also opposed the creation of the orthodox church association in the post-Soviet states.

The third instrument is mass media, including the TV and the Internet, which broadcast programmes and news services controlled by the state (Makarychev, 2011).

In 2005, the Kremlin established an information channel Russia Today (RT) which broadcasts in English, and the Internet private information agencies, including Regnum and Novy.

The authorities decided to modernize the news agency called RIA Novosti, and they created the website called Inosmi.ru. Furthermore, the Russian newspapers, including *Komsomolskaja Pravda, Arguments and Facts,* expanded their special *offers* of publications in neighboring countries. *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* launched a dedicated programme with dozens of global newspapers, including the *Washington Post, Daily Telegraph*, and *Le Figaro,* to edit its monthly stance concerning the political situation of Russia toward foreigners.

Aktürk S. claims that Russia uses five tools within its soft impact in the foreign policy (Aktürk, 2019):

- Far Left parties, their activity characterized by the pro-Russian anti-imperialism meaning that Russia has not broken its ties with the Soviet past entirely,
- Far-Right parties, their policy perceiving Russia as the Savior of the white, Christian, and European civilization,
- Orthodox Christians who perceive Russia as the defender of the tradition and the family, the disputes between the Christians and the Orthodox Church members do not prevent Putin's government and the Russian Orthodox Church from taking the lead when protecting Christianity and family tradition all over the world,
- Russian and Russian minority groups, operations aimed at the Russian minorities in the Baltic states,
- pro-Russian ethnic and sector networks, affinity through heritage, development of the pro-Russian geopolitical identity.

The data is confirmed by the Latvian investigative journalism group Re: Baltica claiming that Russia sponsors local non-governmental organizations defending their policy in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia (Jemberga, 2015). Furthermore, the investigation proves that more than 40 such organizations in the Baltic states received aid funds reaching at least EUR 1.5 million in 2011–2014. The major conclusion is that Putin's propaganda machine is oriented to people with different, often conflicting, worldviews compared to Soviet propaganda oriented to the ideological opponents of Socialism and Communism.

The Russian elites underestimate the idea of a true partnership with mutual benefits. The failed activism of the Russian soft impact in the post-Soviet area also results from the neo-imperial attitude to the neighboring countries. Moscow does not offer any appealing vision of cooperation to them without building strong dependency patterns.

Russia has immense problems connected with corruption, human rights abuse, no democracy, and no rule of law. That is why its impact model does not reflect the socio-economic transformation as a positive example for other post-Soviet states.

Russia uses various information tools to achieve its political and military objectives. Russian government media are one of the most important components of this toolset. That is why Latvia is an exceptional country, as the Latvian media viewers mainly consume Russian media. Several TV channels that largely explain Russia's media content belong to the ten most often watched TV channels in Latvia, see Table 4.

Tab. 4. Top 10 TV channels in Latvia, June 2018 (Berzina, 2018)

Rank-ing	TV channel	Consolidated viewing timeshare %
1.	LTV1	9.2
2.	TV3	8.1
3.	LNT	7.7
4.	RTR Planeta Baltija	6.6
5.	PBK	6.3
6.	LTV7	5.9
7.	NTV Mir Baltic	5.8
8.	REN TV Baltic	3
9.	Dom Kino	2.7
10.	3+	2.3

According to the data in Table 4 and Kantar TNS of June 2018, the consolidated viewing timeshare for RTR Planeta Baltija was 6.6%, for First Baltic Channel (PBK) was 6.3%, and for NTV Mir Baltic 5.8%. To compare, the consolidated viewing timeshare for the Latvian public television channel called LTV1 reached 9.2%, making it the most often watched TV channel in Latvia in June 2018 (Kantar TNS 2018). Russian media content in Latvia is also available via other media channels, including the Internet, the radio, and the press. To understand the trends in the Latvian society, this article analyses the dynamics of consuming Russian media content in the TV and political trust in Latvia in 2007–2018.

Until recently, all Russian attempts at using soft impact mechanisms in the Baltic region were non-systematic and ineffective, and they did not bring about the assumed results. Despite all the difficulties encountered by Russia when implementing the soft impact, it should identify the priority in its foreign, cultural, scientific, and educational policy.

Before his re-election in 2012, Putin claimed that the "soft impact" is a complex of tools and methods to achieve the foreign policy objectives without exercising any force, via public diplomacy, information, and other means of impact (Makarychev, 2011). The soft impact concept was included in the Russian foreign policy in 2013, while in March 2016, the Russian General Staff Leader, Valery Gerasimov, said that it is impossible to respond to military threats using traditional measures as they can be counteracted solely using hybrid methods.

Russia has improved those techniques. Besides the official public diplomacy actors, including Russia Today and Sputnik, Russia employs an army of paid trolls and botnets to generate false information which may be distributed and may be legal as if it were true. Then, in 2016 the Russian military intelligence went one step further, breaking into the private network of the National Democratic Committee, stealing information, and posting it on the Internet to harm Hillary Clinton as the candidate president.

However, although the Russian information warfare was a bit successful for disturbances that affected the US election in 2016 to a certain degree, it was not successful in terms of soft impact generation.

Characteristics of the Russian Impact Methodology in Latvia, Research Results

The hard impact comprises a wide range of coercion, including economic sanctions, military activities, and military alliances to deter and defend one another. The hard impact can be used to establish or change the political status or the balance of power. However, the current global foreign policy requires the soft impact. The general division of the hard and soft impact ranges is presented in Table 5.

Tab. 5. The range of hard and soft power (Gilbowa, 2008)

Type	Hard power (hard impact)		Soft power (soft impact)
	Military	Economical	
Behavior	Deterrence, coercion	Coercion, coercion	Incentives, Proposals, Common Options
Means	Armed forces, threats	Sanctions, payments	Values, culture, rules, institutions
Government policy	Coercive diplomacy, war, Alliance	Help, bribes	Public diplomacy, bilateral or multilateral

The external activity of Russia is highly diversified and is not popular in the former Eastern Bloc. On the other hand, in the Middle East, it has an impact higher than any time before since the 1960s (mainly in Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt).

What is more, Russia fixed its relations with Turkey after the latter shot down a Russian airplane in 2015, and the most recent Turkish purchase of advanced missile systems S-400 threatens the NATO structure. Central Asia is one of the more important regions in Russian foreign policy. Russia has friendly relations with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Chinese operations are a challenge for the Russian policy as China increases its activity also in the regional security area. It may force Russia to involve more funds in the policy oriented toward Central Asia, but it does not reduce its activity in other regions adjacent to the European Union.

Following the USSR dissolution, Russia retained immense military potential, which was important when using the hard impact. Russia uses military deterrence (air force incidents and force demonstration, new force deployment). In the Baltic states, there are numerous incidents caused by the Russian air force. They got particularly intense in the Latvian airspace. Russia implemented far-reaching military reforms to create more professional armed forces that are ready to fight and be transferred to the prospective opponent's area in a short time (Gressel, 2016).

Russia, which has significant armed forces and nuclear weapons, may inspire respect but cannot recognize the international milieu (Kosaczov, 2012).

Focusing on the deficits of the Russian armed forces' equipment, the West misinterpreted the reforms and, consequently, underestimated Russian capabilities as evidenced by the response in Ukraine or the operations in Syria.

After the collapse of Communism, Russia has largely lost its cultural and ideological appeal. That is why to restore its external appeal, Russia started to develop its foreign policy in line with the soft impact principles besides the hard one (Ćwiek-Karpowicz, 2012). However, in this respect, it had to start many operations anew, virtually from scratch (Ivanchenko et al., 2017).

Russia inherited the experience of the USSR, schools of diplomacy, and negotiations. However, the ideological work used in USSR soon turned out obsolete in the contemporary world.

In recent years, Russia tried to adapt the soft impact concept to its foreign policy and activate itself on the public diplomacy paths, but this did not bring the desired results. It means there is a long way before Moscow's soft impact strategy is adapted to the popularly acceptable standards and before Russia is perceived as an attractive international partner from a broader perspective (Sergunin, 2015).

The soft impact assessment is very hard to measure. It is connected with non-material resources, including culture, ideology, and the possibility of using them to gain allies by attracting and not coercion or payments (Nye, 2004).

Moscow perceives the soft impact as the ability to influence or even manipulate public opinion. However, in Latvia, despite its significant Russian minority, Russia cannot offer an appealing vision of integration without building a strong dependence pattern. That is why its stance regarding public diplomacy and economic cooperation seems relatively dangerous for Latvian sovereignty.

Because of new global threats and the world order, states are forced to adapt their foreign policy strategies. The soft impact will still be a key component of the strategy implementation. The states which are best at using the soft impact to facilitate positive cooperation will be prepared to cope with the growing uncertainty and geopolitical instability of the collapsing global order better (Mcclory, 2019).

If we consider the soft impact significance, a question emerges how this soft impact can be utilized efficiently? According to J. Nye's model, the soft impact conversion (McClory,

2019) into the desired result is composed of five consecutive activities (resources, objectives, conversion, response object, and result).

The first step in converting the soft impact into the desired result is identifying resources that will influence the objective (objectives). It is the first obstacle (measure) where most governments stumble.

Developing this concept close to three decades ago, J. Nye emphasized three basic sources of the soft impact, i.e., the culture, political values, and foreign policy. Based on the comprehensive review of reference works, the Soft Power 30 structure is based on three key soft impact sources by J. Nye, recording a broad range of factors affecting the perception of the state and later on its soft impact resources. The Soft Power 30 index evaluates states' resources, combining objective and subjective data. The objective data, broken into six categories, come from a number of recognized and frequently quoted third-party sources. Every category creates an effective, independent sub-index with its result and relevant ranking for every state. According to all previous editions, the six sub-indexes include culture, education, involvement, digitization, entrepreneurship, and the government. The category frameworks were built based on the review of the existing academic literature devoted to the soft impact.

At present, there are three basic models of impact in the foreign policy of states worldwide. The first standard model points to the equality of the hard and the soft impact (American model). The second points to the stronger hard impact and weaker soft one (e.g., Russian model). The third one points to the firm soft impact and smaller soft one (e.g., Latvia).

Tab. 6. Assessment of the Russian Federation's impact (Ivanchenko et al., 2017; The Soft Power 30, 2017)

Indicators	United States	Russian Federation	Latvia
The proportion of hard and soft power.	Equality of strong and soft power.	Strong hard power. Limited soft power.	Strong soft power. Limited hard power.
Key Soft Power Objectives.	Leadership and domination in international relations.	National security. Active defense against anti-Russian media.	Stability and peace area. Allies (EU, NATO).
Practical implementation of soft power.	A wide range of mechanisms (through public diplomacy, the concept of leadership, media).	Public diplomacy. Defense against agents the opposite party.	Extending the norms and principles of cooperation through public diplomacy and the media.
Rank in Portland.	3	26	Undefined

The American model is a standard example of using the soft impact (Kosaczov, 2012). In the United States, hard impact methods are used widely and frequently. However, the US has also developed its soft impact component for several dozen years. As a result, the US has the most comprehensive foreign policy instruments, ranging from the hard

impact (advanced technology weapons) to the wide range of soft impact (public diplomacy networks).

According to J. Nye, its first pillar is the appeal of the American culture and lifestyle (Kosaczov, 2012). The second is public diplomacy which is sympathized with fully or partly by one-half of respondents worldwide. It is more universal, and this is why other nations find it easier to assimilate.

The Russian model is not based on any universal human values. Instead, it considers Russia's power status, which seemingly gives it moral rights to consider itself superior to others based on that uniqueness, and suggests dialogue through mutual enrichment of the unique cultures, considering the needs of the state and the politicians but not those of commoners.

The Soft Power 30 (A Global Ranking of Soft Power) Portland, USC Center on Public Diplomacy, compares the soft impact of the 30 most important states worldwide. According to that data, Russia ranked 26th in 2017 (the score of 49.60), 28th in 2018 (51.10), and 30th in 2019 (48.64). It proves that the soft impact of Russia does not improve.

Conclusions

Russia employs the hard impact in its foreign policy through military deterrence and high readiness of its armed forces, including nuclear weapons.

Given such a strategy, it is important to understand the boundaries and the ability to use them. Otherwise, there is a danger of a negative response and position loss. What is more, it is necessary to have economic capacities to support one's armed forces, which is also a difficult and expensive task for Russia.

Today, Russia has a chance to utilize the methodology based on a combination of the hard and soft impact, which is considered a highly effective strategy in the contemporary world by some experts.

The basic tool of the Russian soft impact in Latvia is public diplomacy, propaganda, and misinformation. However, exerting any influence on the Russian-speaking minority was not successful. The younger generation born in Latvia identifies much more with Europe than with Russia.

The soft impact of Russia is based on the Russian language, the Orthodox Church, and the Soviet nostalgia, which is the utmost problem due to the absence of any anti-corruption policy internally. That is why the Russian soft impact model cannot provide a fast and efficient response to challenges in regional relations.

At present, the Russian soft power strategy is a combination of ideological and material reasons. On the one hand, soft power is an important instrument for restoring and retaining the Russian power status and also shaping the future world order, and subjugating the rules of that order to the West (in particular to the US) for the Kremlin. On the one hand, in a relatively pragmatic way, Moscow perceives the soft power strategy as an effective tool

to promote its national interests abroad, build a coalition, and counterbalance the West in the global geopolitical game.

Following the Crimea annexation by Russia and the beginning of the war in the East of Ukraine in 2014, many western analysts stress the unpredictability of Russia (Golts, 2018). The rule of Vladimir Putin brought a new quality to internal and foreign policy. The state policy in international relations is shaped by the Ministry of Foreign affairs of the Russian Federation subordinated directly to the President.

The information impact resources recreated in the second decade of the 21st century indicate that Russia conducts foreign policy on an international scale and that it is a component of implementing long-term imperial objectives of the Kremlin (Chmielewski, 2018). The Kremlin can use them to manipulate political decisions in other states to a limited degree. It is proved by a growing number of political groupings in Western Europe that incorporate the narration developed in the Kremlin into their programme.

The presented conclusions confirm that the major research problem was solved, and the research hypothesis was verified positively.

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