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Estonia as an Area of Russian Influence: Analysis and Synthesis of the Kremlin's Methodology of Exerting Influence on Tallinn's Political and Social Stability

Abstract: Russia's hostile actions against the Estonian state structures take the form of soft power, which can be observed in such areas as the activities of the Russian-speaking minority, media coverage, or through the use of coercion when it comes to fuel sales. This article presents qualitative methods of measuring Russian influence on Estonia. An observable trend in international relations is replacing hard power with soft power, commonly used against states within the sphere of interest of certain geopolitical entities. It is more difficult to identify the latter and prove it results from an aggressor's deliberate actions. Information warfare, including disinformation and propaganda, is one of the means Russia uses to exert political influence. By accepting the offer of a political and military alliance with the Western world, the Baltic States have become a threat to the Kremlin's imperialist aspirations. Russia's direct military actions against Estonia and the other Baltic states would have provoked a strong reaction and could even have led to military confrontation. However, the Russian government wishes to avoid it and, for the time being, limits itself to soft power measures.

Keywords: *Russia, Estonia, soft power, policy, qualitative method, impact*

Introduction to the Research Problem

The article illustrates Russia's directional actions against Estonia, a democratic European state that is a member of NATO and the European Union. The author's primary intention is to present the methods of studying the Kremlin's influence on Estonia, emphasizing the qualitative method. Of course, the author is aware that to fully investigate a given phenomenon, both qualitative and quantitative measurements (and other methods resulting from the specificity of the phenomenon under study) should be used. However, bearing in mind the assumed goal of the research, the author's basic interest is in the qualitative methods of

measuring the effectiveness of Russian influence in Estonia, including the use of soft force measures. In addition, key areas have been identified that are targeted by Russian propaganda and disinformation efforts. The following questions determine the research problem of this study: What data are the source of knowledge for the qualitative measurement of Russia's use of soft power toward Estonia? Which areas of the Estonian state are most vulnerable to attacks by the aggressor in terms of propaganda and disinformation? For this article, it has been hypothesized that the actions of the Russian disinformation and propaganda apparatus are aimed at engaging the Russian minority and the Orthodox Church in Estonia and evoking alleged fascist attitudes. The methodology adopted in this article is based on the desk research method, focusing on the analysis of data found in publications on the influence of Russia on Estonia with the use of soft power tools. The study was prepared based on selected scientific publications with an international dimension on this subject. In order to verify the adopted hypothesis, the author collected the available sources on this subject, systematized and analyzed them. Considering the substantive scope of the research undertaken, it is necessary to indicate the main theoretical categories: political and social stability, soft power, and influencing the behavior of geopolitical actors.

The term soft power was first introduced in public and scientific discourse by Joseph Nye in 1990 in his book *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. The concept presented by Nye was met with a wave of criticism concerning the lack of a proper explanation of the introduced term. Moreover, many readers did not understand the difference between soft and hard power. The main objection was that soft power could not be defined separately, as it essentially has the same purpose as hard power. Additionally, soft power was compared to the concept of hegemony proposed by Antonio Gramsci, an Italian politician. Defending his ideas, Nye refuted the mentioned accusations, claiming that the critics failed to understand the concept and pointed out that the US does not exert only economic and military power but also soft power, which should be considered the third dimension of power. Joseph Nye's further defines soft power in terms of the following characteristic features:

- The ability to influence the behavior of others to achieve the desired outcomes.
- The ability to shape the preferences of others.
- Unlike hard power, which involves the ability to use the carrots and sticks of economic and military might to make others follow one's will, soft power aims to achieve the same results indirectly.
- Soft power is not limited to the power of persuasion but also involves the ability to attract others.
- Soft power involves persuasive skills that produce convincing arguments.
- Both soft power and hard power can impact the behavior of others, the only difference being the tools used; hard power uses the tools of force and threat, while soft power tends to rely on culture, education, or the ability to manipulate election programmes.

- Soft power is the ability to achieve the desired results through persuasion or attractiveness.
- Soft power stems from the attractiveness of one's policies, political ideas, and culture (Taşkın, 2019).

Nye points out that soft power is based on three basic resources: culture, political values, and foreign policy. Some of the indicated resources may be attractive, and others may not. Therefore, unattractive resources should be considered a desirable product for the potential recipient. In his book, *The Rhetoric of Soft Power; Public Diplomacy in Global Contexts*, Craig Hayden argues that hard power resources are associated with coercive behavior while soft power with co-optive behaviors. Culture, according to Hayden, is one of the greatest soft power resources. In his book *The Future of Power*, Nye suggests two models of soft power: the direct and indirect model. Under the direct model, the governments of countries (or other entities) make active efforts to achieve the intended goals, while under the indirect model, those goals are achieved by using the population of the country under attack (Taşkın, 2019).

Regarding the instruments of soft power, Tom Patterson observes that soft media programmes have significantly increased their potential in recent years. According to Patterson's definition, the characteristic features of soft news include sensationalism, subjectivism, no time limits, functionality, and an incident-based approach. In Matt Bauman's view, most people would not prefer to watch the news when transmitted in a non-sensationalized way. In turn, the „soft” approach allows one to reach a larger audience. Viewers tend to focus on the more entertaining, shocking, or scandalous aspects of politics. Soft media offer people an alternative that combines entertainment with information. Another important criterion mentioned by Bauman is the attention given to wars and political crises. In order for people to become interested in the conveyed message and be able to form an informed opinion, the content must be both informative and have an educational value. The role of soft media in the democratic systems is further emphasized because they are targeted not only to people typically not interested in the news but also at those who want to broaden their knowledge on political issues. On the other hand, if soft media encourage people to pay greater attention to the entertaining side of political issues, and thus offer no educational effects, then this form of soft power starts to exert significant influence on society (Prior, 2003).

Estonia as an Area of Russian Influence

Elizabeth Cleary, in an article „The Impact of Religion on Minority Identity and Community: A Case Study of Russian Orthodoxy and the Russian Minority in Case Study of Russian Orthodoxy and the Russian Minority in Estonia”, analyzes the relations with national minorities in Estonia, taking into account the historical narrative and the religious aspects. The case study conducted by the author focuses on Russian influence through the involvement of religious, historical, and cultural resources, used as crucial tools of exerting soft power. The

study was conducted using a qualitative method by interviewing Estonian clergy, academics, leaders of non-profit organizations, and government employees. Elizabeth Cleary emphasized the strong relationship between the church and the world of culture and politics. In Estonia, there is a noticeable discord between the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church and the Estonian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. Since the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia provides every citizen the right to preserve his or her national identity, it is difficult to interpret the efforts of the Russian minority to defend its identity as a hostile act. One should, however, take into consideration the Russian idea of foreign policy, which includes the right to protect the national identity of Russians living outside the borders of the Russian Federation. These activities are not limited to making sure that minority rights are respected but go as far as to attempt to influence Estonian culture and emphasize the significance of the historical past of the Russian nation. The activities of the Estonian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate as a cultural institution in Estonia unambiguously point to the expansion of Russian influence on the Russian population living in Estonia, which is not enthusiastically received by the native Estonian population. The assumptions of the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, approved by President Vladimir Putin on November 30, 2016, stress the importance of soft power as a comprehensive set of tools for achieving foreign policy goals by means other than diplomacy. The document alleges that there have been instances of other nations using soft power to undermine the stability of states and interfere in their internal affairs. The stance of the Russian government regarding the interpretation of soft power makes Estonians wary of the activities of the Estonian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. The author of the cited article points out that the institution of the Moscow church provides cultural and historical tools for exerting soft power in Estonia. The church provides an opportunity for the Russian minority to foster their own ideas and preferences, and feelings of camaraderie among the members of the minority living in a foreign state (Estonia). It also encourages the Russians in Estonia to take a more intransigent position and – if needed – enlist Russian support. However, the interviewed Estonians indicated that subordination to the Russian church was an implausible scenario. This opinion, however, contradicts the response by the Executive Secretary of the Estonian Council of Churches, Erik Yoks, who, on the one hand, admits there is a need to establish a dialogue with the clergy of individual churches, but – on the other – strongly points out that the role of the Estonian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate might be one of the ways through which the Kremlin can potentially enter Estonia, and that its actions go beyond simply protecting ethnic rights (Cleary, 2014). In April 2007, an incident related to relocating the controversial Bronze Soldier monument from the city center to the cemetery caused serious tension between Moscow and Tallinn. The monument commemorates the liberation of Estonia from German Nazis by Soviet forces. The initial protests of the Russian minority turned into social unrest and criminal acts that resulted in many arrests and the death of one person. The so-called Bronze Soldier incident came under a barrage of criticism from the Kremlin and the Russian Church and became the most serious ethnic conflict in Estonia

that continues to stir up many emotions. The Patriarch of Moscow, Alexey, condemned the relocation of the monument and the bodies of two unknown Russian soldiers and accused the Estonian government of disrespecting the memory of the Russians fallen in battle and the entire Russian nation. The Estonian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate also expressed its disappointment at the decision of the Estonian authorities and called for them to respect the Soviet legacy. Citing Katherina Verdery's stance on the monument's significance and the bodies of the fallen soldiers, Cleary argues that the church interferes in political matters. One of the author's interlocutors pointed out that the number of members of the Estonian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate grew after the mentioned incident, which was confirmed by analyzing data from the Estonian population census. The conflict stirred by the relocation of the „Bronze Soldier” has contributed to the growing importance of the Russian Church in Estonia, the activity of which helps to cultivate the memory of those who fought against the Nazis. The incident also clarified that Estonians' and Russians' membership in the church is not dictated solely by matters of faith but is also a sign of loyalty to one's ethnicity. The incident in question has contributed to a rapprochement between the Estonian Centre Party and supporters of the views of the Russian ethnic minority and the Russian church. The party is still frowned upon by Estonians due to its political relations with representatives of United Russia, Vladimir Putin's party. The link between political thought and the doctrine of the Orthodox Church was noticeable during Patriarch Kirill's visit to Estonia when he visited the building of the Russian Orthodox Church and laid a wreath at the Bronze Soldier monument relocated to the military cemetery. During his two-day visit, Kirill went to Tallinn's Lasnamäe district, which has the largest Russian-speaking population in the capital, to bless a newly built church. Earlier in 2012, a bust of the late Patriarch Alexei was unveiled at the same location, thus reinforcing the relationship between Tallinn and Moscow through the Estonian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. The event was attended by Edgar Savisaar, an Estonian politician of the Estonian Centre Party (Mayor of Tallinn), who, in his speech, expressed his appreciation for Alexey, calling him „our outstanding compatriot” (Cleary, 2014).

Elisabeth Cleary's article is a Master's thesis submitted in 2014 to the University of West Virginia. It consists of four substantive chapters on theoretical assumptions, historical review, data analysis, and the Ukrainian crisis and its consequences. The author describes Russia's influence on Estonia in her work, using religious, historical, and cultural resources as key tools to influence soft power. Within the framework of the prepared study, reference was made to only some of the conclusions presented by Elisabeth Cleary, whose entire work consists of 98 pages. It should also be noted that the author's position is not treated as the only one – the basic bibliographic source, but together with other studies, it supplements the collected research material.

The Role of the Media in Russia's Soft Power Strategy

The media are responsible for shaping the perception of reality. The results of the qualitative study conducted by Elizabeth Cleary raised voices among the Estonian community that the Russian media keep the Russians living in Estonia on a very „short leash” through the use of exclusive Russian media targeted at them. Russian propaganda encroaches not only in the sphere of culture but also information in its broadest sense. One of the main suppliers of Russian programmes is the PKB channel (First Baltic Channel), linked to the Baltic Media that also broadcasts Russian programmes in Latvia and Lithuania. PKB closely cooperates with the Estonian Centre Party, creating commercials used during election campaigns, and has close ties with Russian oligarchs. The respondents in Cleary's survey indicated that soft power tools are visible in the media, especially in the north-eastern part of Estonia that is closer to the Russian border. One example of soft power observed in mass media is the resistance to learning Estonian. The ties between Russia and the Estonian-Russian media are very strong and provoke understandable fear among those who fear disloyalty from the Russian-speaking minority. Estonians watch with concern the ties between the Estonian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, Russian media, politicians, and Russian oligarchs (Cleary, 2014).

In her article „Russia's Soft Power in the Baltic States”, Aleksandra Kuczynska-Zonik points out the sources of the mentioned soft power. The main one is the Russian language present, for example, in the media, in hotels, and restaurants with Russian menus. Russian culture, including literature, education, academic exchange, popular art, and mass entertainment, is well known and widely promoted by the Russian government or the Russian private sector in the Baltic states. In addition, Russian cultural days, festivals, concerts, and sporting events are organized. The content conveyed through Russian culture contains elements of soft power, the „smuggled” ideology of the „Russian World”, and anti-liberal concepts, providing an alternative to the Western idea of a multipolar world. Using disinformation and propaganda, Russia accuses Estonia of glorifying fascism and Nazism, and the fight against falsifying history has become the main goal of Russian soft power. The level of soft power exerted depends on the society that is subject to it, so politicians are constantly striving to establish and maintain contact with the citizens of their own country (Kuczyńska-Zonik, 2016).

Systemic „Soft Power”

In the case of Russia, we are dealing with a hierarchical model of information exchange, in which cultural and economic entities, television, radio, foundations, and churches are sending messages to the Baltic society about the attractiveness of Russian cultural values. Aleksandra Kuczynska-Zonik points out seven groups of Russian soft power instruments used for exerting influence on the Baltic states:

- Information – the media are the most influential factor for communicating values. The Russian media use this tool to focus on the Russian diaspora, which is independent and isolated from the general society of the Baltic States. Russia uses the media not only for information purposes but also to engage in propaganda campaigns against the governments of the Baltic States. Such campaigns are harmful as they create ethnic divisions among the citizens of individual countries.
- Financial support – the author of the article, quoting Jemberga, Salu, and Černiauskas, informs us that over 40 organizations operating in the Baltic States received over three years of funding from Russia, equal to at least EUR 1.5 million. These funds were used, for instance, by filmmakers and scientists who supported and promoted the Russian version of historical events.
- Organizations – The Russian government is financing entities and agencies responsible for national policy in the broadest sense. The Russian administration supports organizations notorious for their use of soft power, including Rosstrudnichestvo, International Coordination Council of Russian Compatriots, International Congress of Compatriots, Compatriot Support, Legal Protection Foundation, and embassies. In the Baltic states, there are about 100 so-called Russophile centers responsible for spreading Russian culture in line with the assumptions of Russian soft power. Other examples of the ever-widespread Russian influence are research institutions and diplomacy that support Russian foreign interests. These institutions aim to influence public views by promoting democracy and protecting human rights in the Russian understanding.
- Diplomacy – Russia has repeatedly accused the Baltic states of human rights violations, promoting fascism and nationalism. Russia criticized Estonian discriminatory policies at the UN Human Rights Council meeting, where Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov pointed to the phenomenon of statelessness among the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia, calling it shameful and stressing the need to address the problem.
- Ideology – Russia pays special attention to anti-Nazi rhetoric. Sergey Lavrov informed the international community before the UN General Assembly about the organization of parades in Estonia and Latvia in honor of veterans of the Waffen SS and the Estonian SS Division. Another vehicle for demonstrating Russian opposition to Nazism is the International Human Rights Protection Movement, World without Nazism, founded in 2010, which presents Russian values on the international forum. Russia also seeks to draw international attention to the discrimination against national minorities in the Baltic States. According to James Kirchick, the idea of a world without Nazism enables Russia to pursue its own policy of exerting influence on other states. Russia's self-proclaimed wars on terror (e.g., interventions in Chechnya) are a way of convincing the international community of the need to take radical action to protect the security, peace, and stability in Europe.

- Legal policy – using visa and citizenship policy as an instrument of soft power. Russian soft power in visa and citizenship policy comes down to persuading citizens of the Baltic States with Russian ancestry to return to their homeland. As Russian citizens, the residents of the Baltic States can take advantage of the opportunity to travel to Russia for family and business purposes, benefit from social assistance, or have the opportunity to study in Russia. Given the higher pensions for Russian citizens in the Baltic States and the possibility to travel freely, this is somewhat challenging for the governments of the Baltic States.
- Economic aspects – strong Russian-speaking lobbies and interest groups in the Baltics. Russian elites of the business world and Russian companies promoting Russian business culture are implementing the government's soft power policy, especially in the energy sector (Kuczyńska-Zonik, 2016).

In his article „Russia and the OSCE- The Influence of Interested Third and Disinterested Fourth Parties on the Conflicts in Estonia and Moldova”, based on qualitative research involving the analysis of source materials, including legal acts of international organizations, Claus Neukirch presents the problem of national minorities in Estonia, with particular emphasis on the Russian-speaking minority. Referring to the historical past, the author draws attention to the attitude of the Russian administration to Estonia regaining sovereignty. In 1990, Boris Yeltsin and his administration were supporting Estonian independence. At that time, the leaders of Russia and the Baltic states were united against the Soviet and pro-Soviet leaders. In response to the OMON intervention in Vilnius and Riga, Boris Yeltsin went to Tallinn to support the Baltic leaders. The Estonian government was able to oppose the Soviet forces present in Tallinn and the Russian-dominated industrial centers in the north of the country. At that time, Russian decision-makers, led by Boris Yeltsin and Andrei Kozyrev, Minister of Foreign Affairs, were mainly interested in the economic aspects of foreign policy and establishing good relations with Western countries. The issue of the Russian minority was not high on the agenda of the Russian government. It was agreed that the Russian minority would be granted citizenship of the host country. Any potential problems were to be resolved through the national courts or international organizations such as the OSCE. It should be noted that the Estonian-Russian agreement of January 12, 1991, assumed that every person living on the territory of Estonia or the RSFSR would have the right to obtain or retain Russian or Estonian citizenship, according to his or her will. The mentioned agreement and Russia's disinterest in the problems of Russian minorities at that time helped stabilize the Estonian-Russian relations. The situation changed due to the war in Transnistria in 1992 and Andrei Kozyrev's criticism of diplomacy in terms of protecting the Russian diaspora. Further difficulties in Estonian-Russian relations were caused by Estonia's introduction of a new law on foreigners in 1993. The tensions that arose contributed to the involvement in the conflict of the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities, Max van der Stolten, as well as the UN, the Council of Europe, and the European Bank for Reconstruction. The

reports prepared by these entities and the public debate on national minorities in Estonia made it possible to use diplomatic tools to stabilize the situation (Neukirch, 2001).

In the CEPS working document, „Rebranding Russia: Norms, Politics and Power”, Andrey S. Makarychev highlights the normative aspect of the foreign policies of Russia and Estonia toward each other. In its approach toward Estonia, Russia establishes two normative landmarks by presenting itself as the defender of true European values, allegedly being challenged by Tallinn. The first normative principle is the condemnation of fascism, which Moscow believes is being cultivated by certain Estonian organizations. The second principle is based on the protection of the Russian minority. By accusing Estonia of failing to meet the requirements arising from the two normative principles, Moscow claims that Estonia does not meet the requirements set for democratic states. In addition, Russia accuses Estonia of creating a new version of the history of the Second World War, which does not mention the special role of the Soviet army in liberating the Baltic States from Hitler’s tyranny. In 2004, Russia sent a statement to the European Union informing them about Estonia’s anti-Russian attitude and initiatives aimed at making material and political claims against Russia and falsifying the history of the Second World War. Other examples of soft power exerted on Estonia are negative media campaigns and unfair economic trading rules. Sergei Ivanov, Russia’s first deputy prime minister, suggested that Russians refrain from buying Estonian goods or traveling to that country (Makarychev, 2008).

Eiki Berg and Saima Orasw, in a publication „Writing post-Soviet Estonia on to the world map”, quoting Marju Lauristin and Rein Vihalemm, point out that asymmetrical national perspectives in relations between a small and a large neighboring state are the main obstacle to achieving mutual recognition and trust between Estonians and the Russian minority. Citing Rein Ruutsoo, the authors write that the main goal of creating Estonian statehood was anti-Russian and anti-immigration policy. The current political trend of the Estonian state adopts two basic government policies on language and education to give Estonians the status of a privileged language and promote cultural standardization (Berg & Orasw, 2000).

Russia’s Current Actions Against Estonia

The analysis of the presented materials makes it possible to identify the main actions of Russia aimed at the constitutional rights of Estonia. The aspects referred to in this article concerning the measurement of Russia’s influence on Estonia are based on the prism of the Kremlin’s model influence on specific goals – the state through which Moscow aims to achieve the adopted geopolitical goals. Estonian intelligence believes that a military attack by Russia against their country is very unlikely, but it must be borne in mind that any conflict with the West can quickly turn into a threat to the Baltic states. Mikk Marran, director-general of the Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service, said Russia might use preventive military action against Estonia (Tanner, 2020).

An example of an eloquent foreign policy of Russia is, for example, involvement in the affairs of the Persian Gulf and using political instruments to influence countries such as UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq, and Iran (Jacuch, 2021).

Russia, seeing the legitimacy of the implementation of the adopted direction of foreign policy referring, *inter alia*, to the concept of the Eurasian geopolitical model, is interested in controlling key areas – the pivot area. It seems that in order to achieve the Russian concept of a return to the primacy of rule over the Eurasian massif, it is necessary to exert influence, among others, in the Persian Gulf area and certainly in the Baltic States. At present, Russia is directing activities in hybrid war toward Estonia. The Kremlin, which wants to keep the level of influence below the threshold of interest and for a response by NATO forces, is not interested in an open military conflict. Estonia is not an easily destabilized country, as it is characterized by decisive actions aimed at ensuring public security and pursues an active energy policy, gradually becoming independent from Russian influence. As in previous years, the Kremlin's current efforts against Estonia focus primarily on less integrated Russian-speaking groups and the highly computerized Estonian society. The most visible Russian initiatives include, for example, demonstrations of power in the Western Military District, as well as criminal crime expressed by money laundering by Scandinavian banks, which fits perfectly into the assumptions destabilizing the Estonian economy. The main instruments of Russian aggression against Estonia are specialized propaganda and disinformation channels. They certainly include the Russia Today TV channel and the Sputnik news agency with the Voice of Russia and RIA Novosti news service and radio broadcasts. The Kremlin's information tools are characterized by a double identity, which for uninformed recipients is a positive message to the European Union and NATO and implements Moscow's assumptions. Russian propaganda channels are part of almost every TV package in Estonia as provided by major internet and TV providers in Estonia – Telia, Elisa, STV (Stoicescu, 2021). The influence of the Russian media continues to be a strong influence on the lives of citizens. About 300,000 Russian-speaking people live in Estonia, and 225,000 of them watch the same TV program as the people of Moscow. Estonian security services believe that Kremlin-led media operations are being conducted to undermine Estonia's integrity (Cesare, 2020). In a 2020 poll by Kantar Emor, 37 percent of non-ethnic Estonians said the Russian-language TV channel ETV+ was credible, and 15 percent found the Russian Federation's RTR channel the most reliable (Nõmm, 2020). Estonia's response to Russia's information campaigns is the actions of Estonian Public Broadcasting (ERR), which launched a Russian-language TV channel (ETV+) in September 2015, targeting the country's Russian-speaking minority and broadcasting news and entertainment. Another response from Estonia against Russian disinformation is the launch by the Defense League of the volunteer blog „Propastop”, which aims to counter propaganda and strengthen the security of Estonia's information space (Stoicescu, 2021). The Estonian authorities, taking active measures against Russian disinformation, imposed sanctions against Sputnik, which they considered a propaganda institution. Thus, it was noted that the head of the Russian

media group Rossiya Siegodnia – Dmitry Kiselow, was involved in propaganda activities during Russia's aggression against Ukraine (Turovski, 2019).

Estonian actions to limit Russian media activity were reflected in the message of the Russian media. In 2020, III Baltnews that the decision to close the information program of the First Baltic Channel (PBK) contributed to the systematic limitation of the Russian-language information space in Estonia. According to Russian observers, the Estonian television station ETV+ was created specifically to counteract alleged Russian propaganda and received a monopoly on truth on local television (Филонов, 2020). In order to maintain the narrative of Russian propaganda, information about Estonian actions against the Russian media appears in the media. The message from Moscow includes information about Estonia's intolerant and unfair actions and raises the heritage of Russian information on the territory of Estonia (Фонд, 2019).

Summary and Conclusions

This article aimed to analyze qualitative methods for measuring the effectiveness of Russian influence in Estonia. The collected research material indicates that the authors who applied qualitative research methods for examining Russian influence exerted on Estonia relied mainly on the analysis of source materials, such as non-serial publications, scientific articles, studies, and reports. In some cases, the research was also based on interviews, including interviews with experts on the subject. The collected material allows us to conclude that Russia's use of soft power on Estonia mainly relies on appeals to protect the rights of the Russian minority, bringing up anti-fascist sentiments, engaging the Russian church, and exerting influence on Estonian culture and entertainment. The Russian administration is taking diplomatic measures to spread disinformation among the international community. An accurate assessment of the effectiveness of the actions taken by the Kremlin requires an analysis of current events on the European and global political map that affect Estonia, but these issues fall beyond the scope of this paper. As a member of the European Union and NATO, Estonia remains an independent country that continues to fend off hostile Russian actions. It is important to note the Russian influence on the Estonian population of Russian origin, who – partly through the Russian church – is subjected to Russian propaganda and lured by the benefits of Russia's visa and citizenship policy. An equally important problem is Russia's hostile economic actions aimed at Estonia.

During the research, the author analyzed the source publications listed in the references below. However, only selected source items were cited in the text due to the repetition of the issues raised and aspects of Russia's influence on Estonia.

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