Russia's Information Policy in Lithuania

The Spread of Soft Power or Information Geopolotics?

BY NERIJUS MALIUKEVICIUS

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Introduction by Ray Finch, FMSO

The article below, written by Dr. Maliukevicius from Lithuania, focuses on a paradox: the competitive advantage Russia has regarding its information policies inside Lithuania and, at the same time, an entirely negative image the Lithuanian public has about modern Russia. The article contends that this paradox is largely due to Russia's choice of strategy in pursuing this information policy. Written before the Russian-Georgian conflict of August 2008, the article also presciently points out how critical the role of information has become in "winning the hearts and minds" of the global audience.

In much of the modern world, people tend to regard access to information as a fundamental right. Though information-processing is also considered a profitable business, many consider 'freedom of speech' as one of the necessary ingredients to a free and open society. While there is a danger that this frank diversity might become a cacophony of ill-informed opinions, the alternative (one state-approved truth) is abhorrent to those that place their faith in democracy. However, this belief in free speech and open information has not always resonated among Russian leaders.

Except for a few, relatively brief oases of liberality in Russian history, Kremlin authorities have taken extraordinary measures to control the flow of information within their borders. The Soviet period was perhaps the most egregious example of state regulation over nearly every aspect of the news. And not only current events, but history had to be rewritten in order to make it conform to Marxist-Leninist teaching. In their attempt to create the 'new Soviet man,' the state (aka Big Brother) spared no effort to control what the workers would mentally digest.

To carry out this propaganda effort, a huge journalistic/information industry was established. There were Soviet newspapers, magazines, books, radio/TV programs, movies, etc., all dedicated to strengthening the party's control, maintaining morale, and keeping the threat of foreign, capitalist intervention alive and well. Unfortunately, neither this huge, information bureaucracy, nor the Kremlin tendency to control information dissolved with the collapse of the USSR.

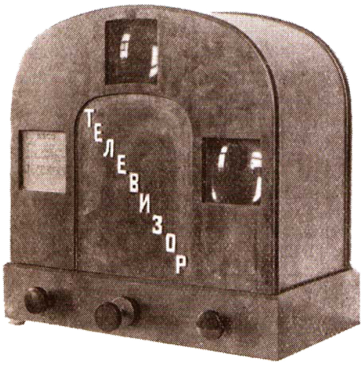
In 2000, one of then President Putin's first 'offensives' was against independent national TV stations, working diligently to create a system of control (some say 'power-vertical') over the Russian national media. While there was no imposition of direct censorship as in Soviet times, journalists quickly understood that some topics (i.e. criticizing Putin) were off-limits. Since then, considerable funding and manpower has been invested to ensure that the Kremlin version of the truth reaches the widest possible audience, both domestically and abroad.

As Dr. Maliukevicius makes clear in his article below, the line between 'soft power' and 'information geo-politics' is becoming ever more difficult to distinguish. In April 2010, Dr. Maliukevicius was hosted by non-governmental organizations in Washington, D.C. to present his research that led to this publication.

Russia's Information Policy in Lithuania:

The Spread of Soft Power or Information Geopolitics?

By *Nerijus Maliukevicius*



Antique Russian TV from tvhistory.tv

> **"Therefore social and communication resources (TV channels, radio, and the press) may eventually become more important than natural resources (crude oil and natural gas). In post-modern politics, power is transformed into communication structures."**

Lithuania joined the European Union and NATO in 2004, thus attaining its vital political goals. However the merger of the Lithuanian information environment, in terms of culture and values, with the Western information environment still lacks clarity and stability. The results of electronic media (TV) monitoring (conducted by the author in 2005-2007) reveal a significant increase of Russia's impact on the content of Lithuanian media products. Significant segments of Lithuanian society receive popular information as well as news about the world and the post-Soviet region through Russian TV networks (Civil Society Institute (CSI) – Vilmorus poll, 2006). The same study shows that many Lithuanians still have a feeling of nostalgia for the "soviet times." This might lead us to think that Russian information policies are successful in this particular post-Soviet country. However, the CSI-Vilmorus poll reveals just the opposite: in Lithuania, Russia is considered to be the most hostile country (CSI, 2006).

This article focuses on the above mentioned paradox: the competitive advantage Russia has for its information policies in the Lithuanian information environment and, at the same time, an entirely negative image the Lithuanian public has formed about modern Russia. This dilemma tempts us to find a reasoned explanation. The article contends that the main reason behind this paradox is the strategy used by Russia in pursuing its information policy. The said strategy rests on the principles of resonance communication and on the theory and practice of information geopolitics – a strategy which fundamentally contradicts the current soft power principles so popular in international politics.

1. Theory: soft power vs information geopolitics

When searching for an answer to what kind of strategy does Russia actually (or declaratively) use for its information policy in the post-Soviet environment, both Lithuanian and Russian experts immediately focus on the Department for Interregional and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries at the Administration of the President of the Russian Federation, headed by Modest Korero. This institution established at the beginning of 2005 was designated by Putin to enhance Russia's image in the neighboring post-Soviet countries. In most of his interviews, Modest Kolerov repeatedly states that Russia's foreign policy interests should be supported by humanitarian instruments (Telegraf, 2005). Such statements and the official title of the presidential department imply that Kremlin

wants to pursue soft power politics – a strategy applied by the United States in Western information environment. This strategy is specially designed to be popular and attractive and it is aimed at achieving the desired results through making others believe that they want what you want.

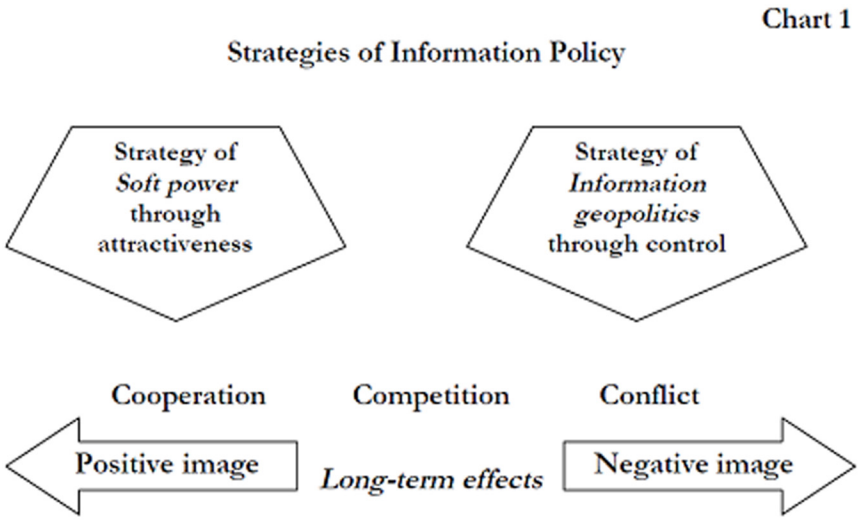
Patrick Tyrrell has predicted that linguistic, religious or cultural forms of sovereignty will develop alongside national sovereignty within the global information environment, which will not necessarily coincide with state territorial borders (Tyrrel, 1999, p. 73). So the important question is: "Who will be the sovereigns of the newly formed sovereign environments?" Western scholars Robert O. Keohane (Keohane, Nye, 1998) and Joseph S. Nye (Nye, 2004) think that future sovereigns would be the ones who are able to wield soft power. They define this power as "the ability to get desired outcomes because others want what you want" (Keohane, Nye, 1998).

It was already highlighted (Maliukevicius, 2006) that based on this concept effective foreign policy will depend increasingly more on the popularity and seductiveness of state-promoted political ideas and international initiatives. Coalitions will be formed more often through public relations or political marketing and less often by using hard power. Therefore social and communication resources (TV channels, radio, and the press) may eventually become more important than natural resources (crude oil and natural gas). In post-modern politics, power is transformed into communication structures.

In Russia, however, the concept of information geopolitics is more popular. Exponents of this concept (Panarin, 2006; Manoilo, 2003; Voroncova and Frolov, 2006) see the post-Soviet environment as an information battlefield. According to Manoilo (Manoilo, 2003, p. 17), dominance in the information environment of a geopolitical adversary can be ensured only through the use of such tools as:

Maps provided by *maps.com*, *yahoo*, and *ESRI*.

- *Latent information management* of the opponent's internal, economic and cultural processes – which would create the required background for informational, ideological, economic and cultural expansion, and predetermine the opponent's decisions beneficial for the manipulator.
- *Information-psychological aggression based on economic, political and diplomatic pressure*. E.g. the recent wine blockade against Georgia and Moldova is still accompanied by intense information-psychological attacks (see news column "Zapret na vvoz moldavskih i gruzinskih vin i mineralnoi vody v Rossy" at IA Regnum, http://www.regnum.ru/dossier/833.html).
- *Information war based on economic blockade and the threat of use of force*. Russia resorted to this tool after the arrest of Russian military servicemen in Georgia (see news column "Obostrenie otnoshenii mezhdu Rossy i Gruzyei" at IA Regnum, http://www.regnum.ru/dossier/1056.html). The question of an economic blockade is currently on the agenda: Poland (meat issue), Lithuania ("Mazeikiu nafta" and "Druzhba" issue) and Belarus (gas issue). Moreover Russia continues to deploy its troops in some post-Soviet areas, which allows it to exert pressure on local governments by not only economic or informational means.



Source: *Chart by the author.*

We can compare the impact produced by soft power politics and information geopolitics on the image of a country that chooses one or another avenue.

The distinction between the actors of international relations who choose one or the other strategy is the same as Machiavelli's division of politicians into "foxes" and "lions": political "foxes" are intelligent, manipulative, imaginative, consensus seeking, flexible, determined and enduring, whereas political "lions" are prone to confrontation, resolute, principled, impatient, merciless and unyielding (Rush, 1992, p. 64).

A country as a political actor can reach its short term goals using both strategies. In the long run however, soft power politics lead to mutual cooperation and understanding, while information geopolitics lead to conflict and strong negative images of each other. This is due to the fact that the concept of soft power is based on the ideas of attractiveness and aspiration, while the concept of information geopolitics, by contrast, is based on the ideas of competition and contest between countries in a global or regional information environment. As Nye puts it: "Seduction is always more effective than coercion, and many values like democracy, human rights, and individual opportunities are deeply seductive" (Nye, 2004, p. X).

So why is it that the United States and Russia have decided to rely on conceptually different strategies of information policy? Nye believes that "soft power is a staple of daily democratic politics" and that "whereas leaders in authoritarian countries can use coercion and issue commands, politicians in democracies have to rely more on combination of inducement and attraction" (Nye, 2004, p. 6). However I would say that there are deeper reasons behind these differences.

When the United States emerged as the winner of the Cold War, it took up the All-Winner's philosophy with a positive and pro-active attitude promoting American goals and ideals across the world. A political and cultural hegemony was thus established on the modern international arena guided by the principle that "a country may

obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries – admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness – want to follow it" (Nye, 2004, p. 5).

Meanwhile, an outlook with a hugely negative emotional charge prevails in modern Russian society and political elite, which distorts their perception of the existing international system: Soviet Union suffered an embarrassing defeat in the Cold War; its subsequent dissolution continues to ignite separatist tensions in Russia; and Russia has been humiliated by losing its status of a super power after the collapse of the bi-polar international system:

"*Russians have been going through a major cultural trauma after losing their status of a super power, as revealed by most public opinion polls in post-Soviet Russia*" (Cimonian, 2005, p. 3, own translation from Russian text).

Most Russians believe that the international community is openly aggressive and that tremendous political, economic, cultural and information pressure is constantly exerted on Russia since the end of the Cold War, i.e. a "neo-taming" strategy is used against Russia (Rapoport, 2005). To regain the influence it had lost in post-Soviet countries, Russia resorts to information and communication technologies as well as the media and uses them as hard power tools of political and ideological struggle in a transformed international environment.

In addition, Russia may be objectively unable to use soft power for the simple reason that "a country that suffers economic and military decline is likely to lose not only its hard-power resources but also some of its ability to shape the international agenda and some of its attractiveness" (Nye, 2004, p. 9). And such was the actual reality faced by Russia in the last decade of the 20th century.

2. Russia's competitive advantage in Lithuania's information environment

Before analyzing Russia's resources for information policy in Lithuanian information environment we need to explore the very concept of this environment. In today's high-tech world, relations between countries or cultures are developing within the global information environment, which can be defined as a totality of conflicting or interactive national or regional information environments[1]. Differently from national information environments, regional information environments do not necessarily exist within strict geographical or territorial boundaries; they are based on cultures, religions or business practices. These environments are interconnected by information, telecommunications and media links which readily overstep geographical boundaries and easily overcome legal and technological barriers. However, interaction is possible only through a basic communication code: understandable language and common values.

National information environment can be defined as a communication, language, and culture medium where a specific society or community collects or receives information about itself and those surrounding it or about ongoing national and global developments. They work within this environment and also share information, knowledge, and mass culture products. Two aspects are essential in this context: technical and language-based knowledge and ability to participate in the global or regional communication process. Based on such skills and capacity, two types of national information environments are distinguished: open societies (Saulauskas, 2000) and closed or isolated national information environments. Lithuania, in terms of information environment, is a fairly open society.

National information environment encompasses three basic components:

1. Information and telecommunications technologies, media infrastructure, media and show business principles established in a specific national market, and regulatory legal framework;
2. People who live in the territory of a specific country or beyond, but psychologically associate themselves with the information environment of this particular country[2] their language skills and preferences of media

use, and also moral principles;

3 Overall information circulating within the environment and mass culture products.

A detailed analysis of the Lithuanian information environment suggests that in most cases Russia has a substantial competitive advantage in pursuing its information policy goals:

- most Lithuanians still have a good knowledge of the Russianlanguage;
- Russia's media channels (TV, radio, and the press) can reach significant portions of society and they are popular among local audiences;
- there is a sizeable Russian ethnic minority in Lithuania, which also contributes to Russia's goals.

Table 1

Knowledge of Languages among Lithuanian Population

	Lithuanian	Russian	Polish	English	German	None other
Lithuanians	-	64,1%	7,8%	18,0%	8,6%	28,2%
Poles	61,6%	76,9%	-	6,9%	5,8%	8,0%
Russians	65,8%	-	14,4%	15,9%	6,1%	19,5%

Source: *Department of Statistics, 2001 Population Census.*

2.1. Russian language as resource of soft power

Let us start with the language issue - Russian is the most widely spoken foreign language in Lithuania:

Table 2

Knowledge of English and Russian in the Baltic states[3]

	Russian	English
Lithuania	60,3%	16,9%
Latvia	43,7%	14,3%
Estonia	42,2%	25,2%

Source: *Department of Statistics, 2001 Population and Housing Census*

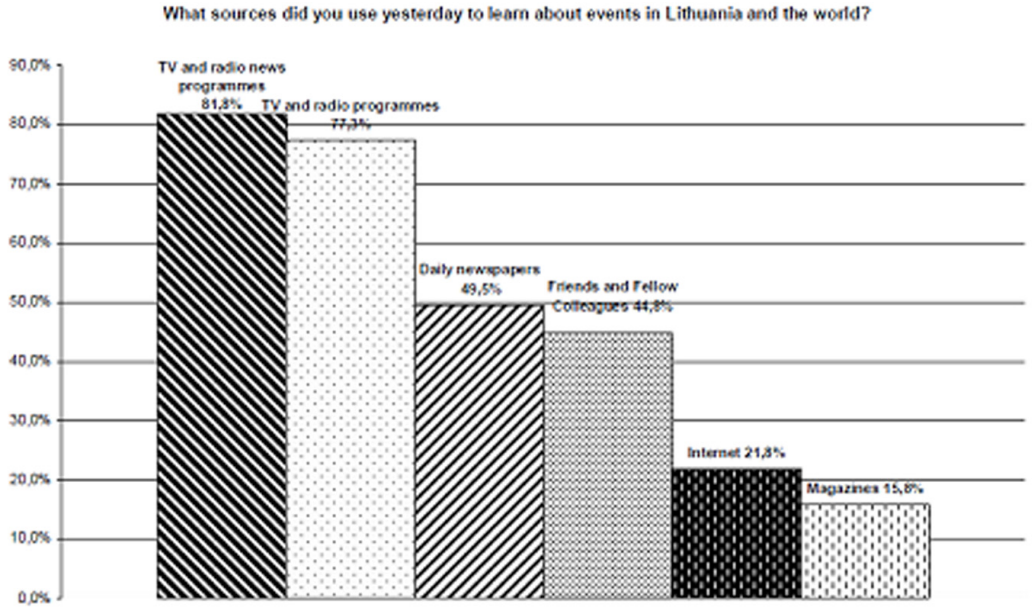
Compared to the situation in the European Union (Eurobarometer, 2006, No 243), where Russian language ranks seventh in popularity (7% of the EU population speak Russian), it is an enormous advantage for Russia's information policy.

The knowledge of Russian, if not the native language, is similar in both Latvia and Estonia, while in Lithuania the percentage gap between those who understand and speak Russian and English is much larger. Of the three Baltic states, the Estonian population (one-fourth) knows English the best. Some consider that Russia has bigger advantage for its information policies in Latvia and Estonia because of numerous Russian minorities there, but statistics show that, in terms of language, Russia has an even stronger potential in Lithuania.

2.2. Russia's dominance in Lithuanian media environment

Lithuanian media expert Laima Nevinskaite points out that Lithuania is emerging as a TV-viewing rather than a press-focused nation with all of the ensuing negative consequences for civil and political activity (Maliukenvicius, 2006, p. 158). The pace of the development of TV broadcasting, re-broadcasting and reception infrastructures is the fastest in Lithuania; the same applies to the development of technical characteristics pertaining to television sets and TV networks. Digital television has already been launched in Lithuania. In 2005, only

Chart 2



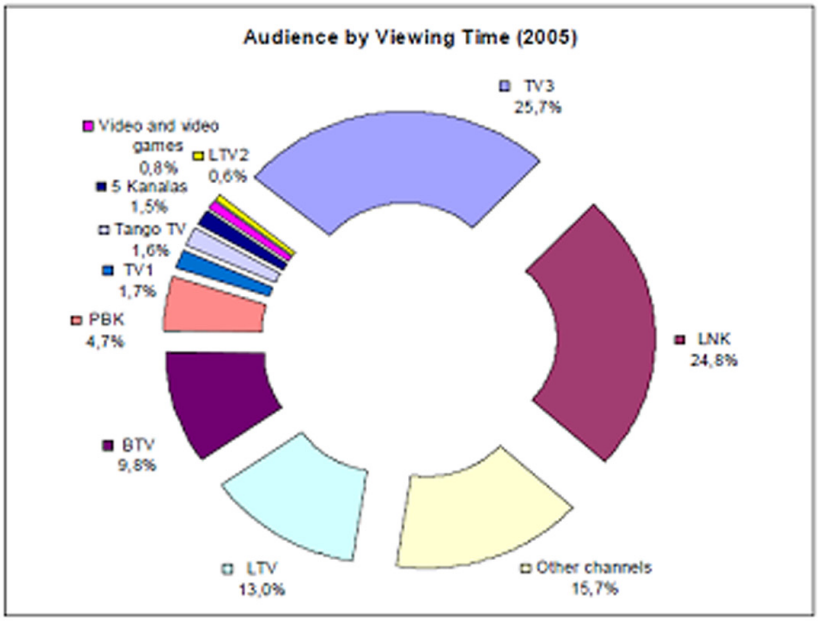
Source: *Ruta Zilinkaite, Aine Ramonaite, Laima Nevinskaite, Vida Beresneviciute, Inga Vinogradnaite. Neatrasta galia: Lietuvos pilietines visuomenes zemelapis. Vilnius: Pilietines visuomenes institutas, Versus Aurius, 2006, p. 162.*

1,5 percent of Lithuanian residents did not have a television set, while those with more than one TV set accounted for as much as 39 percent of the total population and only 1,8 percent of the respondents said that they did not watch TV at all (TNS Gallup, 2005). The data produced the same year show that most people in Lithuania get to know about international and local developments from television programs.

The television era, which started in 1957 with the launch of the Lithuanian television network, is currently undergoing a rapid transformation: 31 TV networks and 57 cable TV networks (including 4 MMDS re-broadcasters) operated in Lithuania at the end of 2006 (Lithuanian Radio and Television Commission data, 2006).

National TV networks[4] not only receive the lion's share of income from television advertising, but they are also the most popular among the Lithuanian viewers: in 2005, the viewing time of four national television networks (LTV, TV3, LNK, BTV) accounted for more than 70 percent of the total TV viewing time in Lithuania (TNS Gallup, 2005).

Chart 3



Source: *TNS Gallup Survey: Annual Review of Media Surveys 2005.*

Within this context, it would be interesting to compare the share of Russian programs, serials, movies and talk shows in the broadcasting time of major TV networks (LTV, TV3, LNK, BTV and 5 Kanalas[5]). The comparison is based on a qualitative analysis of TV program guides published in magazines and TV websites. Three random periods were compared (seven days of broadcasting time,

Saturday- Friday): April 30- May 6, 2005; February 25-March 3, 2006; and January 20-26, 2007.

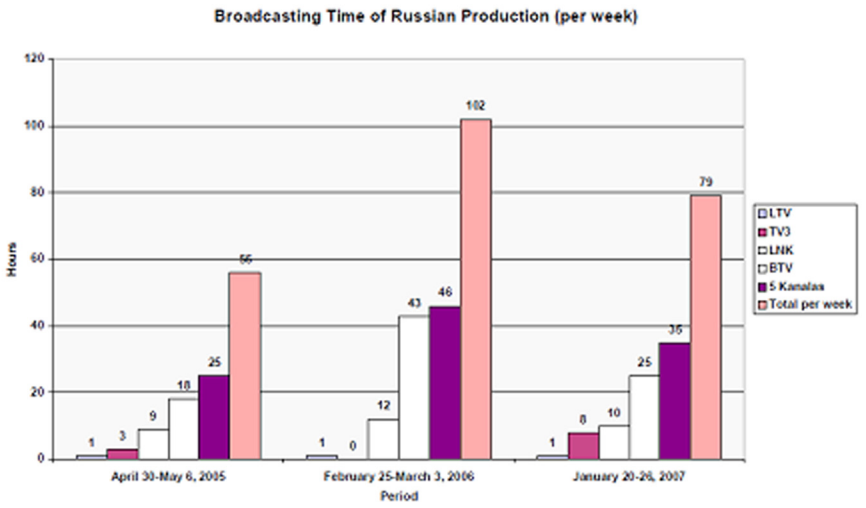
During the above mentioned periods, the Lithuanian Television broadcasted two programs in Russian: *The Russian Street* and *News in Russian*, which amounted to more than 1 hour of the LTV broadcasting time in the respective periods. In this aspect, LTV should be described as the most consistent television network that produces and broadcasts original programs for ethnic minorities[6]. We could even question whether the original programs produced by the public broadcaster and intended for the Russian ethnic minority are adequate in terms of quantity. Having too few Russian-language programs is likely to shift the Russian-speaking audience from local information and entertainment sources to Russian-language sources outside Lithuania.

Meanwhile, the amount of Russian programs broadcasted by TV3, LNK, BTV and 5 Kanalas in the above mentioned periods greatly varied. This survey reveals several important tendencies in the Lithuanian TV environment:

- first, some television networks broadcast a significant amount of Russian production (e.g. in 2006, during the reference week, 5 Kanalas broadcasted 46 hours of such programs, which accounted for nearly 42 percent of the total weekly broadcasting time (112 hours); other TV networks broadcasted less of Russian production (e.g. TV3 did not broadcast any Russian programs during the same period);

- second, we can presume that the ongoing changes are mostly predetermined by economic factors and business decisions: e.g. in 2007, 5 Kanalas significantly reduced broadcasting NTV (Russian network) production; meanwhile in 2007, after its general director was appointed to head the DTV network (Viasat Group) in Russia, TV3 started broadcasting Russian-made humor programs, reality shows and series;

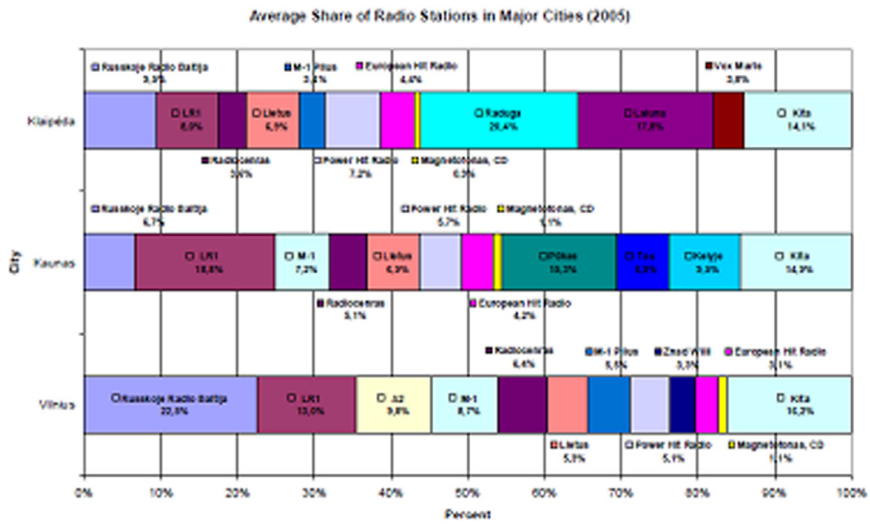
Chart 4[7]



Source: *Media Content Survey conducted by the author: LTV, TV3, LNK, BTV and 5 Kanalas // April 30-May 6, 2005; February 25-March 3, 2006; January 20-26, 2007.*

In spite of a decrease in the broadcasting of Russian production this year, Russian-made TV shows and series continue to fiercely work their way to Lithuania's major national networks. This tendency is interrelated with the above mentioned language issue. Taking into consideration that the Law on Provision of Information to the Public (Article 34) states that foreign-language programs must either be voiced over or subtitled in Lithuanian and given that a major portion of people in Lithuania understand Russian, commercial TV networks prefer to use subtitles in Russian TV series and talk shows, while the English-language production is usually voiced over. This reinforces the Russian language position in the Lithuanian information environment.

The results of analysing the audience of radio stations airing news in Russian and playing Russian music (*Russkoje Radio Baltija*, *Raduga*) on the basis of the average share of radio stations in major cities are also quite interesting and revealing.

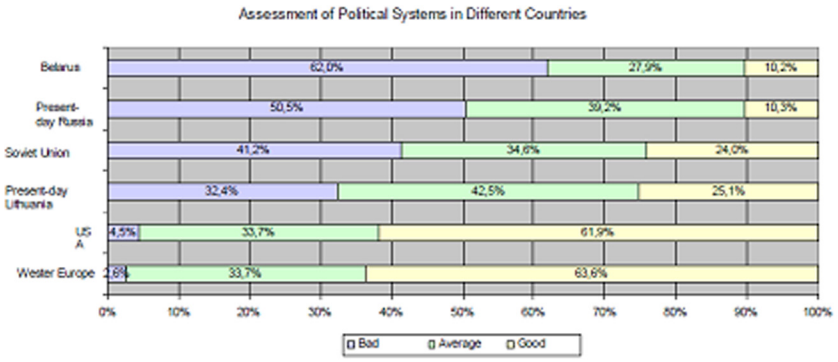


In Vilnius, *Russkoje Radijo Baltija* has emerged as a clear-cut leader; while in Klaipeda the leading position belongs to *Raduga*. Meanwhile, LR1 and Pukas (which plays Lithuanian music) dominate in Kaunas. It means that the popularity of a radio station in Lithuanian major cities depends on the city's ethnic composition.

2.3. Nostalgia for "Soviet times"

In addition to the above mentioned resources for information policies, the analysis of public values show that many Lithuanians have strong nostalgic feelings towards Soviet times: they assess in similar terms the political system which existed in the former Soviet Union and the political system which currently exists in Lithuania (CSI, 2006). The respondents in this survey were asked to evaluate the political system of the Soviet Union and the political system of modern Lithuania: 24 percent of those questioned described the former Soviet system as good or very good and 25.1 percent describe the current political system of Lithuania in the same terms. 41.2 percent of Lithuanian residents assess the Soviet political system as bad and very bad; in respect of modern Lithuania, such respondents stand at 32.4 percent. The respondents were also asked to evaluate different aspects of life in the Soviet Union and modern Lithuania: education and health care, social welfare, public safety and law and order, employment, economic well-being, culture and arts, justice guarantees, equal opportunities and treatment, and respect for moral principles (CSI, 2006). The most different assessments were given in respect of health care: 47.4 percent of those questioned said that the Soviet health care system was good and very good compared to 18.2 percent of the respondents who said the same about health care in modern Lithuania. As regards employment opportunities in the Soviet Union, 72.5 percent said that they were good and very good compared to 29.5 percent of respondents who described employment in modern Lithuania in the same terms. 33.7 percent of respondents assessed public safety and law and order in the Soviet Union as good and very good compared to 16.4 percent who said the same about public safety and law and order in today's Lithuania.

Chart 6



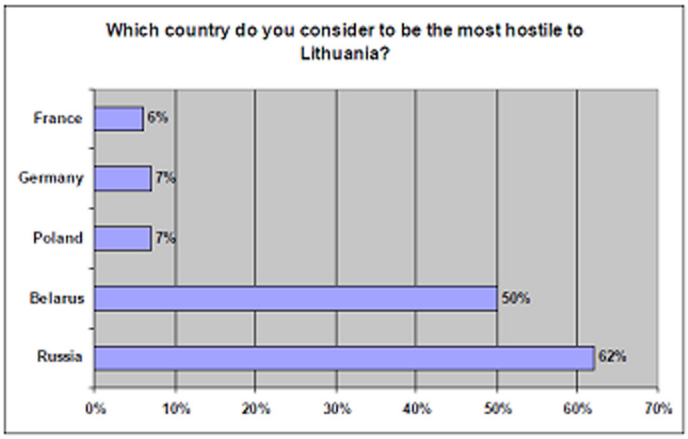
Source: *Civil Society Institute (CSI) – Vilmorus poll, 2006.*

Despite the nostalgia for "Soviet times" the Lithuanian population assesses the political system of present-day Russia in a very different way: only 10.3 percent of those questioned describe it as good or very good (similarly as the political system of Belarus) and more that 50 percent of respondents think of it as a bad or very bad. This is a very important issue. Ney emphasizes that language, media resources are important for effective soft power

politics, but even more importantly they should include a country's "political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad) and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority)" (Nye, 2004, p. 11). And as the survey shows, modern Russia does not have such resources in Lithuania. To put it in terms of modern management theories – Russia can not lead other post-Soviet countries by its example.

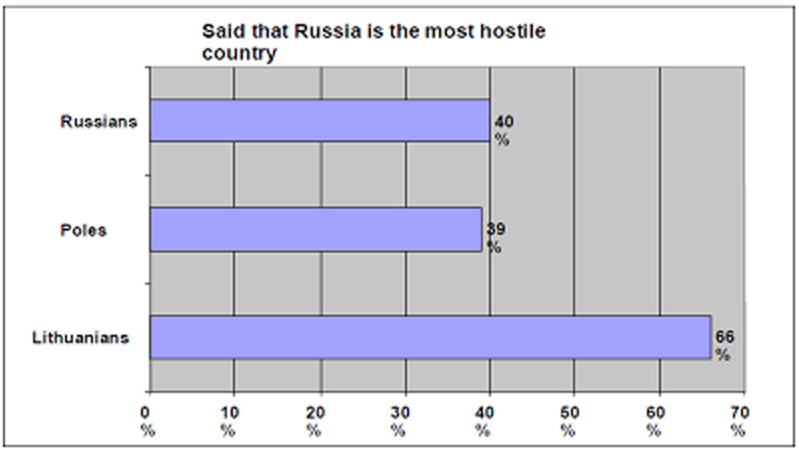
3. Russia's image in Lithuania: most hostile country. Why?

Chart 7



Source: *Civil Society Institute (CSI) – Vilmorus poll, 2006.*

Chart 8



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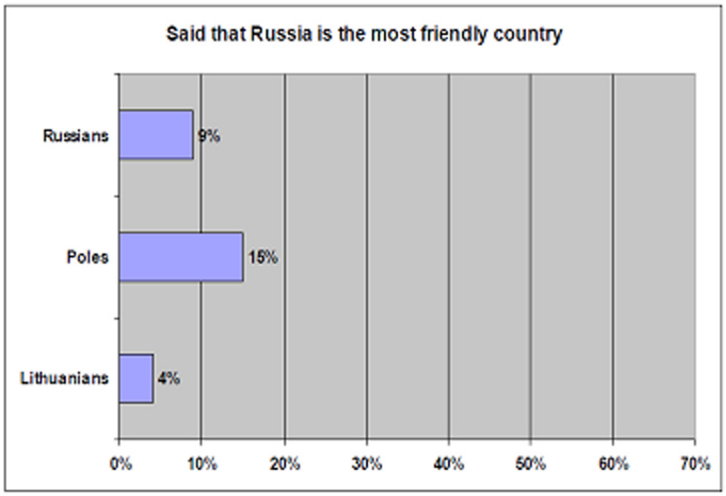


Source: *Public Opinion Survey. Civil Society Institute, Vilmorus, October 2006.*

The public opinion survey focused on the image of other countries in Lithuania (CSI, 2006). It revealed that Lithuanian society perceives Russia as a major adversary and its current political and economic vectors are discarded. Modern Russia has a very negative image in this particular post-Soviet society in spite of the competitive advantage it has in the Lithuanian information environment.

The opinions held by local ethnic minorities about Russia are quite unexpected and surprising: 40% of Russians in Lithuania perceive Russia as the most hostile country and only 9% of them think that Russia is a friendly country. In general, Russia has a better image among ethnic Poles than among ethnic Russians.

The results of a public opinion survey conducted two years earlier by the same research centre showed that 46% of Lithuanians hold negative views about the reforms carried out by President Putin in modern Russia (CSI, 2004). This portion was even higher among the younger generation (almost 60%) but lower among ethnic Russians and Poles (around 20%). 51% of Lithuanian respondents at that time said they thought that Russia posed the greatest threat to Lithuania (CSI, 2004).

3.1 Reason one: global information environment, global audience

The problem seems to be not with the tactics of Russian information policy but with the whole strategy. First of all, Russian "spin doctors" do not realize that just like in political sciences, where a clear-cut divide has been obliterated between domestic and foreign policies, the divide between separate media audiences is also disappearing in the sphere of communications. That segment of Lithuanian society which is under the influence of the Russian information environment and uses Russian mass culture products or watches Russian-produced news programs actually receives the same information which is consumed by Russia's domestic audience.

Theoretically, this tendency can be defined as a modern phenomenon of "interpreting audiences" since the world of today no longer recognizes the existence of local or external, Russian or post-Soviet audiences. This new phenomenon asserted itself most pointedly when cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed published in a Danish newspaper and intended for the Danish readership caused an outrage in the Islamic world or when the remarks made by Pope Benedict XVI that were intended for a German audience were also heard by Islamic audiences, or when the video of Saddam Hussein's execution was seen via the Internet by people all around the world instead of only the Iraqis. These specific occurrences produced a very strong world-wide reaction, but the process is spreading all around the world and its consequences will eventually become visible. In a similar manner, the audiences in Lithuania and other post-Soviet countries have been watching Russian TV broadcasts about the YUKOS trial, the investigation into the murder of Anna Politkovskaya, recent ethnic tensions in Kondopoga, the illness and poisoning of Alexander Litvinenko, and many other events or happenings that are assessed differently by Russian and Lithuanian societies. The Lithuanian audience consumes such information through 'Western' values and compares it with the information received from the Western media, thus making their own distinct interpretations.

"Russia's information policy in Lithuania and the other Baltic states can be best assessed not by the declarations of the Kremlin officials but by concrete actions."

The phenomenon of "interpreting audiences" and its impact on Russia's image in Lithuania have been best described by a woman living in the Lithuanian province who said: "[…] I watch Russian TV programs. I have cable television and I must say that Russian series and talk shows are very interesting indeed. But life is so ugly there that I keep telling myself 'Thank God I don't live in Russia. They must be terribly unhappy over there'[…]" (Ziliukaite, Ramonaite, Nevinskaite, Beresneviciutė, Vinogradnaite, 2006, p. 173) Therefore, the fact that 40% of ethnic Russians in Lithuania consider Russia to be Lithuania's most hostile adversary should not be very surprising after all.

3.2. Reason two: Russian information policy as a manifestation of information geopolitics

Russia's information policy in Lithuania and the other Baltic states can be best assessed not by the declarations of the Kremlin officials but by concrete actions. The most visible during recent years were several TV documentaries that were broadcasted via Russian TV channels. The first one was "Secrets of the Century. Verdict for Europe," which was broadcasted by the PBK TV network, closely related to Russia's ORT TV, and which questioned the consequences of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact for Lithuania and its independence. Last year the TVCi network broadcasted „Nazism pa Pribaltijski" (Nazism Baltic way) based on the so-called FSB "historical archives." The same archives were later used by Europa Publishing House[8] to put out a book for each of the Baltic states[9]. Those books can be called a classic example of black propaganda.

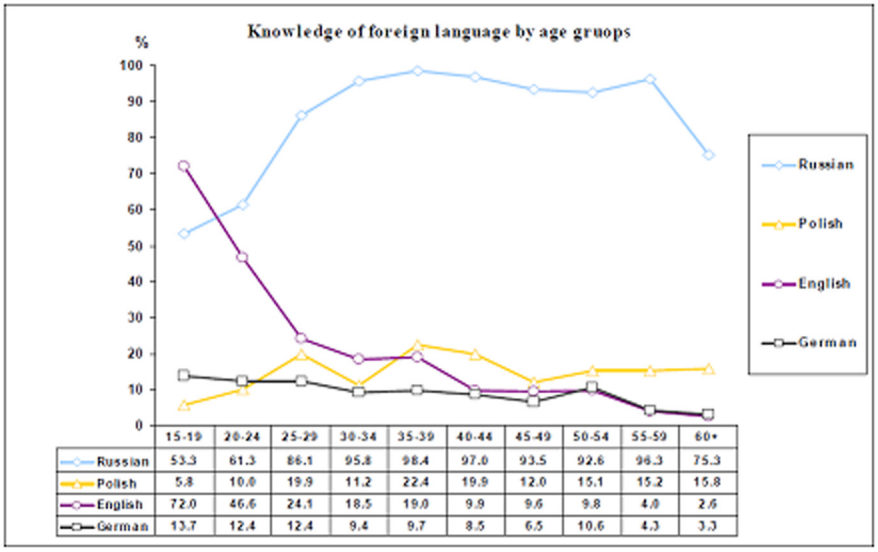
Such information attacks are difficult to comprehend within the context of soft power strategy. This is due to the fact that Russia's information policy in Lithuania is based on the concept of information geopolitics

“Although a single world-wide audience is being created by the “media without borders”, it does not mean that all viewers cherish and respect the same values: an image of a strong and resolute government greatly favored by the Russian viewer is perceived as a major restriction of human rights or freedoms painfully reminding of the Soviet regime to the Baltic viewer”

which in turn leads to resonant communication with most post-Soviet societies. Against this background, the information warfare emerges as a tool for Russia in attaining its short-term foreign policy goals. But in a long term perspective Russia loses popularity and attractiveness among Lithuanian society. It also loses it’s image among Baltic populations.

In the future Russia will find it even more difficult to improve this image because it has started to lose the soft power resources it had. The Russian language is beginning to lose in competitiveness to other languages: the young generation in Lithuania does not understand Russian.

Chart 9



	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60+
Russian	53.3	61.3	86.1	95.8	98.4	97.0	93.5	92.6	96.3	75.3
Polish	5.8	10.0	19.9	11.2	22.4	19.9	12.0	15.1	15.2	15.8
English	72.0	46.6	24.1	18.5	19.0	9.9	9.6	9.8	4.0	2.6
German	13.7	12.4	12.4	9.4	9.7	8.5	6.5	10.6	4.3	3.3

Source: *TNS-Gallup, 2006 III qrt.*

Lithuanian political scholars define the current Lithuania-Russia relationship in very similar terms: Raimondas Lopata describes it as a stalemate, while Gediminas Vitkus calls it *aporia* (Vitkus, 2006). The relationship between the two countries will not be set into motion even by the following statement made by the deputy editor-in-chief of the daily *Kommersant*: “Kremlin does not yet have sufficient strength to implement its doctrine “of friendship which cannot be rejected” on the international arena” (Rogov, 2006) for the simple reason that strength is not required in this context.

Conclusions

The analysis shows that Kolerov’s statements about Russia’s soft power politics in post-Soviet countries are only declarations unsupported by practical action. The Russian political elite enjoys a favorable image on the domestic scene and thinks that it should be the same abroad. In Western democracies, however, society applies other than Russian criteria to assess the government and its performance. Lithuanian publicist Spraunius emphasizes “that the weakest aspect of modern Russian foreign politics is the non-convergence of imperial Russian ideals: these notions simply cannot be translated into other languages” (Spraunius, 2007) for foreign audience.

Although a single world-wide audience is being created by the “media without borders”, it does not mean that all viewers cherish and respect the same values: an image of a strong and resolute government greatly favored by the Russian viewer is perceived as a major restriction of human rights or freedoms painfully reminding of the Soviet regime to the Baltic viewer. Thus Russia’s dominance in the post-Soviet information environment does not actually mean that Russia has created itself a favorable image in these countries. The above mentioned CSI survey shows that the final result is quite to the contrary.

Even Kremlin has admitted that Russia hasserious image problems in Europe and post-Soviet countries. Russia decided to launch a public relations campaign (Evans, 2005), but attempts to fix such problems by printing articles "written" by President Putin in "FT" and other big Western newspapers does not seem to be an effective new strategy for information policy.

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1 Examples of regional information environments : "*European public sphere"*, "*post-Soviet space"*, "*Oriental culture"*, "*Islam world", etc*. [N.M]

2 Some social groups within a particular national environment may belong to the information environment of another country or region: e.g. ethnic Muslim communities in Europe or ethnic Russian minorities in post-Soviet countries. [N.M.]

3 Excluding mother tongue.

4 *National broadcaster* means a broadcaster, whose program broadcast by a terrestrial radio or television network is received within a territory inhabited by more than 60 % of Lithuania's population (LRTC, 2006).

5 Biggest regional TV channel. [N.M.]

6 LTV also broadcasts *Vilniaus Albumas* (Vilnius Album) in Polish, *Vilniaus Sasiuvinis* (Vilnius Magazine) in Belarusian, and *Labas* (Hello) – a program in Lithuanian about ethnic minorities. [N.M.]

7 Time rounded to hours in decreasing order.

8 Information agency "Regnum" is one of the founders of this publishing house and Mr. Kolerov is the founder of IA Regnum. [N.M.]

9 Sbornik "Tragedia Litvi: 1941 - 1944. Sbornik arhivnih dokumentov o prestupleniah litovskih kollaboratsionistov v gody vtoroi mirovoi voiny", M.: Izdatelstvo «Evropa», 2006; Sbornik "Latvia pod igom nacizma: sbornik arhivnih dokumentov", M.: Izdatelstvo «Evropa», 2006; Sbornik arhivnih dokumentov "Estonia. Krovavij sled nazitsma: 1941-1944 gody", M.: Izdatelstvo «Evropa», 2006.