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**Could Effective Usage of Social Media Increase Soft Power of the Small States?  
Estonia`s Example**

Master`s Thesis

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis seeks to draw attention to the changing nature of power and diplomacy in the age of increasingly networked and digitalised society of 21<sup>st</sup> century. Having a large army of soldiers and tanks could help to win a battle, but in order to be the winner in a war there must be other capabilities as well. Moreover, some smaller states do not have an opportunity to spend enormous resources on military – they have to find other ways to achieve their foreign policy goals. Today the battlefield is located inside people`s heads – the ability to attract and influence is crucial for achieving desired outcomes.

After giving an overview about different facets of power the discussion continues with the examination of how the soft form of power could be made to work in reality. The author argues that the most fundamental aspect of this is proper communication with the focus on digital diplomacy – using digital tools (like social media) for engaging with foreign audiences and making public diplomacy. The main conclusion from theoretical part is that states which are ready to face these new challenges are most probably more successful in reaching their foreign policy objectives in the near and long future. In other words, digital diplomacy and effective communication are crucial steps for small states in turning soft power resources into actual influence.

Empirical part of the thesis concentrates on a small state that could be considered a digital success story, namely Estonia. Analysing the usage of social media by Estonian foreign policy actors, the thesis seeks to point out how active and successful these actors have been in using social media for digital diplomacy and for engaging with foreign audiences. The results suggest that while there are some positive examples among these actors, there are also many shortcomings – some actors still seem not to understand the growing importance of digital diplomacy nor they do not make the most use of the opportunities social media offers. The thesis concludes with the Estonian case studies on digital diplomacy and with the discussion on potential benefits that using social media could bring with – like countering Russian propaganda and ensuring the coherence in Estonian society.

**Keywords:** soft power, digital diplomacy, social media, Estonia, foreign policy

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# INTRODUCTION

Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Estonia's President, started his Twitter account back in May 2012 with the words "Help! I'm being followed ;)". Now, more than 3 years later one could say that President Ilves with his approximately 56 300 followers<sup>1</sup> on Twitter (and near 95 000 page likes on Facebook) is the most important foreign policy actor on social media in Estonia. At least in terms of followers no other Estonian politician or institution has more than 17 000 followers on Twitter. Ilves's popularity raises the question what kind of role do social media play in foreign policy activities of a small state. Does it make any difference how many followers one has on social media? Should President Ilves be happy that he is followed by so many (strangers)?

The author of this thesis believes that social media is becoming increasingly important in conducting foreign relations and is therefore worth researching in greater depth. There is strong evidence that many foreign policy actors (as states, its institutions and diplomats) put great emphasis on social media – it is hard to find a president or prime minister that has no social media account. Possible exceptions are some African and totalitarian states where access to Internet is not so common.

As social media could be mostly seen as a tool for communication there is danger of falling into the public relations category. Rather than seeking to analyse the usage of social media from nation branding or public relations perspective (although both are equally important as well), this research will focus on notions of power and influence in 21<sup>st</sup> century international relation environment. The focus will be on the question – if at all and what kind of benefits could the effective usage of social media provide for foreign policy objectives of small states using concept of digital diplomacy.

Furthermore, with the help of concepts of public diplomacy and soft power the true essence of international relations will be taken into discussion and looked at from technological revolution's point of view – what kind of impact have the recent and very rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICTs) had on conducting foreign relations and on society in general. The author believes that whereas society is transforming into more network-like structure where most of the communication takes place online and by using digital

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<sup>1</sup> Here and onwards: all numbers that concern followers, page likes, retweets and other numerical data are taken as July-August 2015. Therefore there could be some variations depending on exact date the data is collected.

tools, this transformation has had a profound effect on power hierarchies and on conducting diplomacy. Therefore this topic is very actual and worth studying.

The first part of research will give an insight into theoretical literature about power-theories and development of diplomacy. Its main goal is to analyse the changing nature of power in contemporary context where processes like globalisation have brought everything closer turning the world into a network-like structure. It is interesting to look at different factors that seem to be the most fundamental for small states in this ever-changing environment of international politics. Russia`s violation of international law and annexation of Crimea in 2014 have made some smaller states to look more at military means to at least somehow deter Russia from threatening their independence. However, brutal force has never been the solution for the problems. Instead, effective communication, which is central part of digital diplomacy, is argued to be the most important asset of small states.

The second part of the thesis will look at empirical data. By analysing how effectively foreign policy actors in Estonia are using all these opportunities social media offers it is possible to draw some conclusions about its impact on Estonia`s soft power. In other words the aim is to underline all the positive examples how Estonian political figures and institutions use social media in order to help Estonia achieve its foreign policy goals. In similar vein all the challenges and negative practices will be presented that seem currently not working or simply pointless in terms of resources spent on them.

Therefore this thesis seeks to explain how and to which degree recent changes concerning usage of ICTs have affected the way diplomacy works in general. Furthermore, how well Estonian foreign policy actors have reacted to these new opportunities and challenges is another question that will be answered during research. Keeping in mind that Estonia is holding presidency in the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2018 useful tips on how to gain as much power and influence as possible during these 6 months are presented. Also from a different perspective the topic is important because of information war and propaganda that could undermine state`s defence capabilities. Social media offers an opportunity to expose and counter false information.

However, there are some shortcomings that should be clarified. Firstly, as will also be pointed out later social media is not the most important source of soft power or public diplomacy – states need to be active on other fronts as well. As soft power is difficult to measure it is rather impossible to say what kind of exact impact the usage of social media has had on

soft power in Estonia`s case. However, current research seeks to analyse it from the theoretical perspective and pays extra attention to potentialities that are only partially in usage. Ignoring social media entirely would be an enormous mistake by any Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) or politician.

Secondly, this research takes into account first and foremost the actors actively engaged with conducting foreign affairs in the name of the state. These actors include (in Estonia`s case) the President, the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the official embassies and representations. Of course there are other actors as well (who will be mentioned later) but in order to keep this research well focused only the most important actors are analysed.

Thirdly, social media means various networks that are widely used – Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Google+, VKontakte, LinkedIn, Reddit, Pinterest, YouTube to name some. Probably the first 2, Facebook and Twitter, are the most popular among politicians and heads of state – if someone wants to be well-known and be able to get through to foreign and domestic audiences, he or she should have an account on at least one of these social media platforms, or, even better, on both. The author chose to use Twitter as the central social media platform for research. It is not because of Twitter being more prestigious or more widely used by research subjects but instead because of Twitter being more orientated for quick information exchange for professionals. Although both platforms are somewhat similar concentrating only on one makes research better structured and understandable. However, in some instances the data from Facebook is also pointed out in order to offer comparison with Twitter. What is more, some foreign policy actors do not have an account on Twitter, but have it on Facebook which is also worth analysing. Further reasons will be provided before empirical research.

Both quantitative and qualitative analysis will be used to answer the research questions. The research methods and questions will be described in detail in the empirical part.

# **1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: DIFFERENT FACETS OF POWER; PUBLIC AND DIGITAL DIPLOMACY**

International relations are to a large extent relations between states and this has been the underlying principle for international affairs since Peace of Westphalia which was signed in 1648. Although there are many other participants in international arena, states still remain the most important and influential of them. Though numerous international organisations and institutions are gaining power, it is still difficult to see any of them restructuring classical international order that is first and foremost shaped by sovereign states.

These states differ in many aspects – territorial size, population, size of the economy, military strength, international influence, etc. Throughout the history there have been states (or naming them properly - empires) that have sought to dominate and control the world. Some of these attempts have been successful while others have lacked resources, leadership or ambition. What are states trying to achieve in contemporary world? How and why do states differ in this respect?

There are no clear answers to these somewhat philosophical questions. Looking at recent events in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine in order to analyse their causes, one could point out that Russia has started thinking imperially again or at least has started to make these imperial ideas work in reality. At the same time another former empire, People`s Republic of China, has advocated for a `peaceful rise` which could be seen as totally opposite to Russia`s approach. In Russia`s case the motives behind its recent behaviour could be associated with the `greatest geopolitical catastrophe of 20<sup>th</sup> century` and with the wish to regain influence and attention in world affairs by modernizing its military and showing its military capabilities.

In case of China the drive for `peaceful rise` comes mostly from its economy and population, both being world`s largest. These examples indicate to the fact that there are states which are looking for a power – they wish to be influential and dominate at least one part of the world or not to let other superpowers to do this. As it was already pointed out, the resources to achieve this plan vary depending on the state. Some states spend enormous sums of money on military budgets while others are focusing on developing their economies and technological industries.

However, these examples cover only a small part of close to 200 states, meaning that most of them are functioning with much more limited resources and therefore with lesser significance in international affairs. In order to achieve their foreign policy objectives, they have to focus

on something different than pure military or economic power. Nordic countries are good examples with their culture and society that seem to attract many foreigners each year. Norway has its Nobel Prize, Sweden is the home country for world-known brands like IKEA and Volvo.

There are various possibilities for smaller states to be influential in the world. One of those is cooperating with larger and more powerful states or alliances that gives the necessary guarantee for the continued existence of their sovereignty. Another possibility could be that this state has a fundamental place in the world's political, economic or cultural life and therefore it has a kind of invisible power. The world's public opinion would not let this kind of state to be attacked or to be destroyed. Witness Switzerland or Sweden for example.

Hence the principal starting point would be to investigate the meaning and essence of the concept of 'power'. This would give us better understanding what are the motives behind states' actions and what sort of resources are needed. Power is essentially a contested concept which means it has several meanings with no single and generally accepted definition – it means different things to different people.

Steven Lukes argues that there are other two problems with the concept of power: (1) the meaning of the term cannot be easily explained, because power is a 'primitive concept' (like the notion of 'interests', which is as troublesome as the term 'power'); (2) how power is conceived by particular actor can have an enormous (political) effect – “it has a performative role in our discourse” (Lukes 2007: 83). Although there are also other issues with the meaning and usage of the concept, these three are probably the most urgent ones. What follows is a basic and compact overview of the main ideas of power among theorists whose contribution offers additional explanation for the topic. In other words, how small states should understand 'power' and which facets of power are most important for them.

To start off, Felix Berenskoetter points out three dimensions of power that have their roots in the ideas of Max Weber, Robert Dahl, Steven Lukes, David Baldwin, Michel Foucault and many others (Berenskoetter 2007: 4-12). The first dimension – named “winning conflicts” – is classical zero-sum perspective which “resonates particularly well with the realist assumption of states as competing entities and of power as the ability to win wars” (ibid: 5-6). Nevertheless, some states with plentiful resources are still not able to win conflicts as these states are not willing to use their full potential.

Therefore it is difficult to provide one simple answer to the question what is power – it can be the resources one state has or it can be the actual outcome of conflicts. As Lukes notes,

“power is a potentiality, not an actuality” (Lukes 2007: 84). States are not less powerful, if they choose not to attack with nuclear warheads for example. The fact that they have that kind of potential makes them powerful. Also, inactive use of power – like non-intervention – could be seen as form of power, especially in cases where this inaction brings on remarkable consequences (Lukes 2007: 85). In the same vein, “to act can be a sign of weakness (for instance, conforming to the demands of repressive regimes – such as voting in a Communist election in Soviet times) and the index of an actor’s power can be his ability to avoid or resist performing positive actions” (ibid).

The second dimension is named “limiting alternatives”. Its main idea lies behind the structural approach – “how environment structurally (dis)advantages one side...[where]...power works more indirectly through both actors being positioned in an institutional setting and the ability of A to influence this setting ‘against’ B” (Berenskoetter 2007: 7-8). This dimension broadens the concept of power and introduces new perspective where states are not any more in the central stage.

Processes of globalization and institutionalization have brought many new actors to the arena of international politics, although some of them are also left behind by these processes. For example, there are certain quotas for joining particular international organizations (Estonia could not join OPEC, because it has no oil as natural resource). Here is also the question whether the states are in control of these institutions or have these institutions their own capabilities to control the states. Hence, power is not only about military capabilities, but also about the agenda-setting and access to decision-making.

The third dimension is called “shaping normality” and it is associated with discourses of normality – it “highlights the forces giving and controlling the meaning of ‘normality’” (Berenskoetter: 10). Here the focus is on how to make others want something or act in a way that is most preferable. Influence, manipulation, propaganda, public diplomacy, soft power are some of the key words for understanding this dimension of power. These concepts are analysed in greater detail shortly.

Perhaps better known facet of power is the distinction between the hard and soft power, the latter being most profoundly touched upon by American liberalist Joseph S. Nye Jr. Before turning to soft power, there should be some mentions about hard power which is mostly seen and analysed from realist perspective. Indeed, the anarchic nature of international arena, as realists view it, suggests that states’ first motive is to secure its security and survival. If a state

appears weak and without any significant (military) resources, then it probably will be conquered by others. Therefore states need enough resources in order to secure their security and send appropriate signals to others that there is no point in trying to attack them. This is called a deterrence.

### **1.1. Classical realism and power**

Brian S. Schmidt argues that there are 3 different approaches to power from realists' perspective (Schmidt 2007: 48-60). The first is classical understanding of realism that has been also neatly stated in "The Melian Dialogue" by Thucydides: "(...) the standard of justice depends on the equality of power to compel and that in fact the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept" (Thucydides 1954: 85). This classical realism is comparable to the first dimension of power as mentioned earlier – the power depends on the national resources (like military and economic industries). The more the state has the power, the more its security is protected and its survival secured.

Schmidt refers to Hans Morgenthau who believed that states are like men who constantly seek power, because the 'drive to survive' and the 'desire to dominate' are deeply rooted in man's as well as state's mind (Schmidt 2007: 51). Consequently, accordingly to classical understanding of realism, the power is located in national resources that states are trying to maximize in order to survive and dominate over others.

If to think back to Cold War times, then this kind of thinking had enough political leverage at that time because of the struggle for power between the United States and Soviet Union. However, in contemporary world most of the states are not seeking to maximize their national resources at any cost. Instead, they have different strategies how to maintain relevant amount of power without losing in security. To give an example, it would be unthinkable that every state had its own nuclear weapon – otherwise the life on Earth would not exist anymore. What is more, the states would focus only maximising their military (mostly) and economic capabilities leaving the well-being of its citizens without particular attention. Although it is also difficult to imagine a state without any military capabilities, there are another ways of developing power which is not pure material power.

## **1.2. Structural realism and power**

The second approach to realism's thinking of power is concerned with structural causes of power. As Schmidt writes: "Structural realists shift the locus of the struggle for power from human nature to the anarchical environment that states inhabit" (Schmidt 2007: 53). This indicates to the fact that states seek for power not because of human nature, but because of absence of superior authority which points to self-help system. As long as states are themselves responsible for their security and survival, they must develop necessary capabilities for protecting themselves and deterring other states. Structural realists (like John Mearsheimer and Kenneth Waltz) are primarily concerned with military power of states – the more military might means also more power in international arena (Schmidt 2007: 56).

These two approaches are rather similar to Nye's reading of 'hard power' concept where "military and economic might often get others to change their position" (Nye 2004: 5). This is mainly done with the help of "inducements ("carrots") or threats ("sticks")" (ibid). As it turns out, the military and economic resources are important parts of power, but there is also another part of power which is perhaps even more important in today's world. The reason behind this is that military and economic resources do not produce always desired outcomes. There are certain conditions under which these resources could be successfully used. For example back in 2013 when Ukrainian parliament was discussing the Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement, there was heavy pressure from Russia not to move towards the EU and instead choose Russia-led Customs Union. Later in that year according to a deal between Mr Putin and Mr Yanukovich Russia reduced the price of gas for Ukraine by more than 130\$ per 1000 cubic metres (from more than \$400 to \$268.5) and promised to buy Ukrainian government bonds worth \$15bn (BBC News, 17 December 2013). Although 'thanks to' economic and later also military pressure from Russia, Ukraine has not joined Customs Union nor tightened relations with Russia and most probably it will not happen in near future either. Instead, Russia's steps have produced rather different outcome – Ukraine and its people have turned their faces to Europe.

## **1.3. Neoclassical realism and power**

Finally, the third approach to realist understanding of power is referred to as neoclassical realism, which is more concerned with inter-state level actors as well as agency. According to Schmidt neoclassical realists "incorporate unit-level factors such as the personalities and

perceptions of statesmen, state-society relationships and state interests into their explanation of international politics” (Schmidt 2007: 58). Unit-level factors have mostly been put aside by classical and structural realists which has not allowed to analyse concept of power in greater depth. What is interesting in this approach is that “rather than describing states as either power-maximising or security-maximising entities, neoclassical realists such as [Fareed] Zakaria prefer to describe states as ‘influence-maximisers’. (...) Just as the interests and ambitions of states vary, so do their objectives. The relative power that a state possesses continues to be a key indicator of a state’s foreign policy, but neoclassical realists argue that there is no direct transmission belt linking material capabilities to foreign-policy behaviour” (ibid: 60). This gives some hope for states that are not capable of possessing vast military nor economic resources. In fact, most of the states in contemporary world are security-seekers in contrast to security-providers, latter indicating to states which have enough capabilities to help to ensure the security of self and also of allies (in cooperation with others). What is more, neoclassical realism and its focus on influence and unit-level factors gives better understanding of the concept of power, especially concerning motives behind states’ actions.

#### **1.4. Soft power**

Moving on to the “soft” domain of power, and also to another dimension of power, it is needed first to clarify the meaning of the concept. Soft power is described by Nye as “getting others to want the outcomes that you want (...) because other countries – admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness – want to follow it” (Nye 2004: 5). Importantly, soft power could be seen as power of attraction that is not dependent on military resources, although there may be states that find kind of attraction in military power too. Instead, soft power resources include state’s “culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its 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: 11).

As soft power ‘works’ through attraction then it is essential to have enough resources for appealing to others. It is not enough to have one world-known composer living in a country, if there is nothing else attractive about this country, or even worse, if country promotes or acts according to values that are not accepted by target audience. Every state has its own resources of soft power, the main difference lies in how successfully state is able to communicate this resources to the audiences. Although states are not in control of soft power as much as of hard

power, they nevertheless have significant influence on how successfully country`s soft power is projected and implemented. Not to mention the fact that most of the country`s so called `soft power agencies` are state-financed (as Confucius Institutes, Goethe-Institut, Alliance Française to name a few). Consequently there is a clear connection between state`s economic resources and its ability to promote its soft power in the world.

As Craig Hayden rightfully points out in his book “The Rhetoric of Soft Power”, soft power could not work in every society as public opinion is not taken equally into account in foreign states (Hayden 2012: 7). In authoritarian and totalitarian states the ruling elite often decides solely on political and on other matters. Hence, the aim of the soft power is not to democratise the planet. Even more, in these states where information flows are centrally managed and controlled, the positive aspects of soft power often remain to the background. In order to influence people`s behaviour in these states, other methods have to be used.

### **1.5. Other forms of power**

In addition to hard, economic, and soft power, there are also other forms of power, which represent different facets of power. Nye`s concept of soft power has been developed during aftermath of Cold War era and the falling of bipolar world system when United States had just lost its `significant other` – namely Soviet Union. This resulted in identity crisis for United States. After the terrorist attacks of 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2001 and subsequent invasion of Iraq, world`s dominating military power (the U.S.) found it difficult to achieve its foreign policy goals relying solely on military power. A conservative George W. Bush with his `war on terror` policy had overestimated the real power of military means. Against this background the concept of `soft power` gained considerable popularity among the U.S. scholars.

In Europe, however, despite the devastating two world wars of 20<sup>th</sup> century, society had become more civilian-orientated. European Community (in the form of European Coal and Steel Community, European Economic Community, and European Atomic Energy Community) was established already in 1952. Since then the main driving forces behind cooperation and unification of European society have not been military purposes, but interests in economic prosperity and values of human rights. This has led to discussions about the EU as a `normative power` – “power that is able to shape conceptions of the `normal` [and which] works through ideas, opinions and conscience” (Diez & Manners 2007: 175). Hence, normative power seeks to set standards through particular kind of policies with the aim to shape others`

opinions and actions (ibid). Thus normative power is primarily associated with the EU as the most successful normative actor in contemporary world whose values and standards are acceptable to more than 500 million people that live in the EU countries. What is more, there are numerous states that find the EU's model of supranational union and close (economic) cooperation very attractive. These states are themselves interesting in joining the EU in close future with the aim to achieving similar level of economic well-being.

It is worth briefly noting what the difference between normative and soft power is. Both concepts are somewhat similar as they are focused on 'soft' dimension of power in contrast to hard military means. However, when soft power could be seen as a mean for achieving foreign policy objectives, then "normative power is an explicitly theoretical concept requiring an understanding of social diffusion and normative practices" (Diez & Manners 2007: 179). Although there are times in history when the U.S could be also characterised as normative power (during inter-war period), today the most visible and explicit example of normative power is the EU (ibid: 187).

In addition to distinguishing between hard and soft power, Nye also has coined the term 'smart power' which is about "finding ways to combine resources into successful strategies in the new context of power diffusion and the "rise of the rest"" (Nye 2011: 207-8). He indicates to the fact that states can only possess meaningful amount of resources, where too many nor too few is preferable. Smart power approach combines both hard and soft power strategies because deploying neither alone is not effective. Also states need to make decisions which objectives they want to achieve. In order to make right decisions states need to know the context and have proper strategy. Promoting e-democracy and online solutions is probably not the best solution for most of the African countries as infrastructure for information technologies and internet penetration level is relatively under-developed, but giving them development aid and participating in educational programmes could have long-lasting positive effect on state- and society-level relations. In the age of smart phones, smart power seems to be the right one for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **1.6. Changing nature of power in 21<sup>st</sup> century**

The nature of, as well as resources for, power have rapidly changed during last decades. Power capabilities that once helped to secure the victory in a battle or in a war (like use of cavalry or gunpowder) give no significant advantage today as much of these resources are

widely available. Although the quantity and quality of these weapons may differ depending on resources, the outcome of a conflict is not decided solely based on military power. The fact that some states enjoy the privilege of owning weapons of mass destruction (like nuclear and chemical weapons) does not mean that they are ready to use them in a conflict situation. Mutually assured destruction is not what states want to achieve. Hence, there are other methods for accomplishing desired outcomes on national level.

Another aspect of military power is that the technological progress have “gradually increased the political and social costs of using military force for conquest” (Nye 2004: 18-19). In modern democracies the use of military force “requires an elaborate moral justification to ensure popular support, unless actual survival is at stake” (ibid: 19). Generally, people are not interested in fighting and war games, because this could mean that their own well-being suffers as resources are limited. Politicians and state leaders need to `sell` these conflicts for publics in order to gain support. In addition to domestic publics, who are directly responsible for re-electing their politicians, there are foreign audiences that need to be remembered in this matter.

Fighting a war that is seen as unjust and unnecessary in the eyes of foreign states, could undermine state`s values and attractiveness – it could have political and / or economic consequences. Some states could decide to discontinue strategic partnership. Witness relations between France and Russia after events in Crimea and Ukraine in 2014 concerning the deal about Mistral-class warships. Governments in democratic countries must take into consideration public opinion, general attitude towards particular state, and position of its allies. However, in autocratic regimes state leaders are freer in their decisions – events in Ukraine did not prevent China to make a gas deal with Russia.

States cannot achieve their objectives when relying solely on military power (or in other words, on first facet of power). Other dimensions of power need to be considered carefully as well. Greater number of tanks do not ensure always the victory in a conflict, as Vietnam War (1955-1975) and Iraq War (2003-2011) have proven. Instead, what is needed is multidimensional approach to power that takes into account in addition to military forces also other forms of power. Nye compares the 21<sup>st</sup> century context of power to three-dimensional chessboard, where on the top board is the military power (where he sees United States as unipolar actor), in the middle board economic power (where he sees United States, Japan, China, Europe and other raising markets as making up multipolar system), and finally bottom board of transnational relations (where there are vast number of state and non-state actors with widely diffused power; Nye 2011: xv). Today the power is not so much about domination, but

about engaging with others. Together states are stronger and more effective in achieving their goals. Not to mention that many issues are global by their nature, so they need global attention and engagement as well. No state could fight with environmental issues, terrorist organizations nor epidemics alone and hope for significant results.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has brought about information revolution, where the cost and the time with which information flows have been reduced to minimum. This have had and continues to have an enormous effect on power and international politics in general. As Nye argues: “The countries that are likely to be more attractive and gain soft power in the information age are those with multiple channels of communication that help to frame issues; whose dominant culture and ideas are closer to prevailing global norms (which now emphasize liberalism, pluralism, and autonomy); and whose credibility is enhanced by their domestic and international values and politics” (Nye 2004: 31-32). Information is the most important resource of (soft) power in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. States that are able to control, frame, and target information are likely to be more successful in achieving their goals in international arena.

As mentioned earlier, states need support for their policies in order to accomplish their goals and strategic use of information has a fundamental role in this process. Politicians and state leaders are to a large extent restricted by public opinion, which means that state policies usually have to have support from the majority of population (especially in democratic regimes). When half a century ago the governments and state leaders were the only one with relevant and up-to-date information (as possible as this was at that time), then nowadays the monopoly of information has disappeared in many spheres. Instead, now everyone has the opportunity to collect, analyse, and produce information that is widely available. What does this mean for power?

There are many more actors besides governments and state leaders, who can form an opinion and gain attention from public. This means that soft power (or third facet of power) is not only in the hands of statesmen, but other actors are involved as well. Therefore states need to focus more thoroughly on framing issues and presenting them as something existentially important. Otherwise people will not care about these issues and they are less likely to support their governments` policies. This is not an issue only with domestic support, but increasingly significant is also communication with foreign audiences. As Nye argues: “Politics [in a global information age] then becomes in part a competition for attractiveness, legitimacy, and credibility. The ability to share information – and to be believed – becomes an important source of attraction and power” (Nye 2004: 31). There are vast number of states and non-state actors

who are interested in promoting their ideas and gaining support for their policies. Consequently some states are able to enjoy much more attention than others, which means that they are in better position to secure their interests. How does this work and through which practices, is described in next section.

### **1.7. Public diplomacy**

Diplomacy is well-known practice of conducting (foreign) relations between states (or other actors such as non-governmental and international organizations). If previous discussion focused on the nature of power in world politics, then diplomacy is a form of carrying out foreign policy activities that would increase (or in some instances also decrease) state`s power. Although diplomacy as such has many different dimensions that would be interesting to research, current analysis is mainly concerned with one part of diplomacy which has become increasingly important during recent decades, namely public diplomacy. How the traditional diplomacy differs from public diplomacy, is explicitly stated by Jan Melissen: “the former is about relationships between the representatives of states, or other international actors; whereas the latter targets the general public in foreign societies and more specific non-official groups, organizations and individuals” (Melissen 2005: 5). Hence, public diplomacy could be defined as public communication with foreign audiences with the purpose of informing and persuading them.

However, the definition for public diplomacy provided above is only one of the many. The term itself is believed to been first used in modern understanding by Edmund Gullion in 1965: “Public diplomacy ... deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications” (Cull 2006). Before 1965 public diplomacy could instead be understood as diplomacy carried out and represented to ordinary people publicly (in contrast to `private` diplomacy) or was it equated with international information and propaganda (ibid).

In fact, G. R. Berridge in his book *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice* argues that public diplomacy could be seen as “propaganda about propaganda” – or in other words, public

diplomacy is the new euphemism for propaganda (Berridge 2010: 179). The new concept was needed, because the term `propaganda` carried negative connotations from the times during World War II and after that, when propaganda was used to manipulate people by providing falsified information. Soviet Union as well as Western states found it attractive to use radio broadcasts to spread their messages to the ordinary people of their enemies and thereby weakening their opponent from inside. This practice continues even today, especially in authoritarian states, where information is centrally controlled and published. Nevertheless, propaganda and public diplomacy are somewhat similar in their aims – both are directed to foreign audiences with the intention to influence people`s thinking and behaviour. As Melissen puts it: “public diplomacy is similar to propaganda in that it tries to persuade people what to think, but it is fundamentally different from it in the sense that public diplomacy also listens to what people have to say” (Melissen 2005: 18). This `two-way communication` is a significant aspect of modern day `new public diplomacy`, where states actually listen to what foreign audiences have to say.

Though Berridge states that “listening to foreigners is one thing; giving equal weight to what they say is another” (Berridge 2010: 182). As it turns out, scholars have not reached consensus yet whether propaganda is only a part of public diplomacy or is it exactly the same phenomenon with different title. The author of this thesis agrees more with Melissen, because propaganda includes also falsified information and its purpose is simply to manipulate with people`s minds and opinions. Public diplomacy, on the other hand, seems to be much more complex process, which aims to create long-lasting relationships and favourable environment for home state`s policies. Credibility is what differentiates the two – propaganda lacks it, but public diplomacy must have it in order to be efficient.

Finally reaching closer to the topic of this thesis, public diplomacy `works` through communication. As public diplomacy is aimed at influencing public opinion among target audience, the most important question to which all public diplomacy practitioners have to answer is how to reach them. Before coming to this fundamental question, there are 2 background conditions that should be kept in mind. Firstly, public diplomacy is most effective when it tries to enforce already existing beliefs and opinions of people, who`s standpoint is not yet strongly established (Berridge 2010: 183). However, the role of Western radio stations and other media channels` efforts to fasten the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe should not be underestimated (ibid). Although it was not probably the most important factor leading to fall of Soviet Union, it still was one of the main driving forces behind positive attitudes towards

the West. Another counterargument from much recent time is associated with Arab Spring events in 2010-2012 when demonstrations and revolutionary movements spread across the Arab world. It is debatable what kind of role did public diplomacy play during Arab Spring, but the goals of the movement like democracy, human rights, and regime change would indicate to the Western values that had found positive reflection on Arab societies. Internet could be a powerful tool, whether in the hands of people or government.

Secondly, public diplomacy is directly connected to the practices and policies of a state and its reputation. Activities that are seen by general public as negative and unacceptable (for example unauthorized nuclear program, violations of human rights, repression of its citizens) can be counterproductive to the public diplomacy goals. Similar pattern could be seen following Beijing Olympics in 2008 and Sochi Winter Olympics in 2014. China and Russia spent enormous amounts of money on organizing `the most successful and spectacular Olympics ever`, but their successive actions concerning crackdown on human rights activists in China or Russian invasion of Crimea largely undermined China`s and Russia`s soft power (Nye 2013). Credibility is a crucial source of soft power: “Politics has become a contest of competitive credibility. (...) Governments compete with each other and with other organizations to enhance their own credibility and weaken that of their opponents” (Nye 2004: 106). Actions speak louder than words.

As Berridge notes “the means of delivery (which are to a large extent similar too) have improved and developed rapidly: from “printed texts and photographs” to “radio broadcasting in indigenous languages”, and to “television and the internet”” (Berridge 2010: 182-183). Current analysis takes the Internet as central tool of delivery of information that provides also an opportunity to engage in a dialogue with politicians and public institutions. When once people were only consumers of information in the form of newspapers, radio and television broadcasts then now they have also become information producers and providers with the help of various web 2.0 solutions (that enhance user-generated content) like blogs and social media. What kind of effect does it have on public diplomacy and soft power?

### **1.8. Why does soft power matter?**

As mentioned earlier relying solely on hard power assets does not guarantee success or influence in world affairs. This summer (2015) Portland Communications published report (*The Soft Power 30 Report*) that took closer look at 30 countries and their soft power. Jonathan

McClory, who is the author of the report, writes that “In terms of the importance of soft power, this shifting landscape is being driven by two megatrends. The first is the rise of networks as the driving force in global affairs. The second, and closely related trend, is the digital revolution, which means world events – large and small – increasingly play out online” (McClory 2015: 11). According to McClory the reasons behind this first megatrend are: (1) the rapid diffusion of power between states; (2) the erosion of traditional power hierarchies; and (3) the mass urbanisation of the world`s population (ibid.). The world has not seen only the rise of secondary powers like Brazil, China and India, but also different non-state actors have gained more and more power – the European Union, NATO, but also Greenpeace and other international organisations have been very active on world affairs meaning that states solely cannot decide international relations anymore.

Digital revolution has brought world events closer to general public which means that governments and institutions have to cope with digital challenges as well. When the whole world is communicating online, then staying away from online communication would be wrong strategy. Diplomats and other foreign policy actors should take the most out of the opportunities that social media offers for them – effective usage of social media would make it easier to reach to people`s minds and hearts. “Foreign policy has never been simple, but in an increasingly multi-polar world – with more actors, more platforms, and more interests all vying for global influence – international relations have become a fast-changing labyrinth. Opportunities still exist for states of every size to achieve their aims, but success depends more than ever on the ability to attract, persuade, and mobilise others. In this new complex world, a critical foreign policy lever is soft power” (McClory 2015: 15). Hence, critical question is: how to attract, persuade, and mobilise others? This could be done through effective communication.

States that are not rich in resources must find other ways how to increase their influence. Foreign policy objectives are difficult to achieve without suitable resources or cooperation. “The ability to shape a compelling narrative, maintain the connections required to assemble an international network, and radiate the attractive pull needed to inspire others to collaborate towards a shared objective, all rests on soft power” (ibid.). Therefore, without soft power and infinite resources states could be in great trouble – economically, politically, and militarily. Perhaps there is no direct threat to their survival, but in a networked world states are not able to make their foreign policy dreams to come true.

The means of communication are different. As also mentioned earlier, diplomats have been using printed texts, newspapers, radio and television broadcasts, and lately internet to deliver

their messages to domestic and foreign audiences. Current research takes social media as its central focus in analysing how effectively foreign policy actors have been able to use social media for public diplomacy, and therefore also, for soft power purposes. This is called digital diplomacy – “Done well, digital diplomacy ought to be the use of technology to engage in meaningful dialogue between states and peoples, where views are exchanged and understanding is gained. Digital platforms allow governments to broadcast messages to larger audiences, but that does not equate to dialogue, nor is it any guarantee of influencing those audiences. Ideally, digital diplomacy should allow diplomats to engage directly with wider audiences of both state and non-state actors to improve understanding and, eventually, to deliver better policy” (McClory 2015: 33). However, this idealistic picture is yet to become a reality, because most often social media is being used only as a platform for giving out information, instead of engaging with audiences. These practices or examples, where genuine dialogue has taken place, have been rather rare. Proper communication is the most important aspect of public diplomacy and soft power.



*Figure 1: Converting Soft Power into Influence (Source: The Soft Power 30 Report, page 41)*

As seen from the Figure 1, in order to convert soft power resources into influence, there is 6-step process that has to be taken into account. “The relationship between soft power, communications, and influence is interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Soft power resources are the building blocks of reputation; communications strategies bring those resources to the fore; and when done effectively, the result is greater international influence. Without the

ability to shape soft power resources into a compelling narrative, or leverage them in pursuit of a specific objective, they will have little impact on a country's influence" (McClory, 2015: 40). It is not enough to have only soft power resources as some states have spent enormous amounts of money on soft power activities, but without proper communications this has not returned wanted outcomes in international influence. For example, China came to the last (30<sup>th</sup>) place on the aforementioned list of countries in the soft power report (The Soft Power 30 Report).

Perhaps not going in depth about this six-step process, but instead pointing out only most relevant. Firstly, a country needs to know, what kind of soft power resources it has in order to deploy them effectively. Secondly, suitable strategy will help to connect soft power resources with desired objectives. Thirdly, action indicates to the new policies and initiatives that help build credibility and strengthen soft power resources. Fourthly, effective communication helps to engage with target audience and affect their behaviour. Fifthly, evaluation is used to measure impact, which then helps to make adjustments (sixth step) to strategy, action, and communications when necessary (McClory 2015: 41). Also, digital diplomacy, which is central part of this thesis, is increasingly important among communication practices. More in detail about this in upcoming chapters.

## **1.9. Digital diplomacy**

As Figure 1 indicates, communication is the most crucial step in converting soft power resources into influence. Current research focuses not so much on soft power resources nor on other steps in the converting process, which are equally essential, but instead this thesis seeks to analyse the communication practises of a particular state, namely Estonia and its foreign policy actors. Of course, communication involves other actors as well as other means, but concentrating specifically on social media would hopefully provide helpful insights about today's networked and digitalised diplomacy.

How social media has been used in conducting diplomacy is probably best described with the Twitter fight between Russian and Canadian NATO Twitter-accounts. Canadian's Joint Delegation to NATO Twitter account (@CanadaNATO) posted a map showing territory of Ukraine with the text on it "NOT RUSSIA" and tweet: "Geography can be tough. Here's a guide for Russian soldiers who keep getting lost & 'accidentally' entering #Ukraine"<sup>2</sup>. This

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<sup>2</sup> The tweet can be found from here: <https://twitter.com/CanadaNATO/statuses/504651534198927361>

tweet followed the news in which captured Russian soldiers allegedly crossed the Ukrainian border “by accident” (BBC News, 26 August, 2014). However, Russian delegation to NATO (@natomission\_ru) sent their answer about 24h later – there was a map showing Crimea as a part of Russia (both being the same colour and text “Russia” written on Crimean peninsula) and tweet said: “Helping our Canadian colleagues to catch up with contemporary geography of #Europe @CanadaNATO”<sup>3</sup>. Although there were no significant consequences to this Twitter fight, this story shows explicitly how social media could be used for making diplomacy. Online and offline diplomacy is increasingly interconnected and foreign ministries need to adopt to these changes in diplomacy.

Social media is being used for positive reasons as well. Some state leaders are very active social media users, which have helped them gain the office and communicate their messages to the world. The U.S President, Barack Obama, is one example here. Also, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has effectively used social media to inform the audiences about “light-hearted content and serious information” (McClory 2015: 35). Greeting President Obama with the hug, which became a social media hit, is not probably anything unprecedented. However, different encouragements and social media campaigns have not only gained a lot of attention, but they have helped to make India a better place to live. For example, in June 2015 Narendra Modi led the exercise when thousands of yoga lovers gathered in New Delhi (and also all over the world) to celebrate International Yoga Day (The Telegraph, June 21, 2015). On Twitter hashtag #YogaDay was used to draw attention to this event and get more people attending. Other example of Modi`s initiative is #SelfieWithDaughter campaign which was meant to promote the rights of females in India, where sex-selective abortion and other measures are rapidly deteriorating India`s child sex ratio in the favour of boys (The Wall Street Journal, June 30, 2015). State leaders, who are actively and effectively using social media, could gain a lot of positive international attention to themselves as well as to their countries.

The same could be true for ambassadors, who often work in difficult environments to say the least about some states located at Middle East. Lebanon and United Kingdom may have constructive relations, but UK`s ambassador to Lebanon, Tom Fletcher, has done more during his time as an ambassador than expected. As he mentioned in his farewell blog entry this includes “four marathons, 100 blogs, 10 000 tweets, /.../ two #OneLebanon rock concerts” and many more things<sup>4</sup>. This blog entry has received many favourable comments by Lebanese

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<sup>3</sup> The tweet can be found from here: [https://twitter.com/natomission\\_ru/status/505052838184370176/](https://twitter.com/natomission_ru/status/505052838184370176/)

<sup>4</sup> The blog post could be found from here: <http://blogs.fco.gov.uk/tomfletcher/2015/07/31/19389/>

people, someone even suggesting he should run for Lebanon presidency (The Telegraph, August 05, 2015). He also runs a blog named “Naked Diplomat”<sup>5</sup> where he discusses the changing nature of diplomacy – how to engage more with foreign audience and how digital technology transforms diplomacy. He has named as “The Maven of Digital Diplomacy”<sup>6</sup> meaning that his new approach to digital diplomacy is early trend-setting approach that should be followed by other diplomats.

These examples represent new age politicians and diplomats who are innovative in their ways of conducting foreign relations. These examples are worth mentioning, because in the 21<sup>st</sup> century diplomacy is as much about engaging as it is about meeting with colleagues behind closed doors. In a report “Diplomacy in the Digital Age”, published in July 2015, Brian Hocking and Jan Melissen point out four different, but in some instances also overlapping, perspectives on digital diplomacy (Hocking & Melissen 2015: 26):

#### 1) Changing foreign policy environment

This perspective sees digital media as changing foreign policy environment, which means *enhanced velocity of events, complex flows of information, and changing power configurations*. Non-state actors are reinforced by new communication technologies. Similarly, non-hierarchical means of policy-making help to shape agendas and make social power even more important. These processes mean that diplomats and other state actors have less control over information flows. Also they need new skills and structures that help to carry out diplomacy under new circumstances. (ibid)

#### 2) Knowledge and resource management

The key question under this perspective is how to manage and analyse growing information flows. Digital diplomacy is seen as *utilising the Internet and other digital technologies to manage diplomacy in a more resource-efficient fashion*. (ibid)

#### 3) Cyber policy agendas

This perspective focuses on the *digital revolution as a set of policy agendas focusing on such issues as Internet freedom, cyber security and cyber warfare*. (ibid)

#### 4) E-governance and e-participation; Changing diplomatic structures, functions and needs

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<sup>5</sup> The blog could be found from here: <https://nakeddiplomat.wordpress.com/>

<sup>6</sup> Direct Diplomacy: „The Maven of Digital Diplomacy“. <http://directdiplomacy.net/2014/05/27/tom-fletcher-maven-digital-diplomacy/>

This perspective focuses on *governments` responses to digital technology in terms of delivering services and encouraging broader participation*. Also, *enhancing broader patterns of participation in foreign policy* is one form under this perspective. Most often, *digital technologies offer new tools to diplomatic actors for achieving policy objectives and performing services*. This means *new channels for communication in public diplomacy and possibilities for reputation management*. (ibid)

Consequently, digital diplomacy could mean many different things. On the one hand, it could be viewed as changing foreign policy environment, where foreign ministries and embassies have to find ways to cope with increasing flows of information and deal with new actors who are reinforced by new communication technologies. On the other hand, digital diplomacy could also be understood as cyber policy agendas, where Internet freedom, cyber security and cyber warfare take the central stage. In current thesis the first approach is taken and discussed with implications for Estonia`s foreign policy.

Ilan Manor, who runs a webpage named “Exploring Digital Diplomacy”<sup>7</sup>, suggests that digital diplomacy could be defined as “the growing use of ICTs and social media platforms by a country in order to achieve its foreign policy goals and practice public diplomacy” (“What is Digital Diplomacy?”, digdipblog.com). Therefore this definition entails both perspectives – it is a new tool as well as a new way of thinking of diplomacy in the form of dialogue rather than monologue. The potential for dialogue seems to be the key in defining what the digital diplomacy is all about.

Tom Fletcher, British Ambassador to Lebanon as mentioned earlier, points out that successful digital diplomacy is about “authenticity, engagement and purpose” (“Engagement is Not Just About Cute Cats and Hashtags”, May 09, 2014). All these qualities are needed to stand out among other diplomats, to reach out to audiences, and to achieve desired objectives. Firstly, authenticity means that when someone uses social media (“... while we all make mistakes on social media, the biggest mistake is not to be on it”), he or she must be as true himself / herself as possible – “If you don`t really care about football, you should not pretend that you do as a means of seeming more approachable” (ibid.).

Secondly, engagement is about listening what others are saying about yourself as well as about everything else. As stated elsewhere: “The use of the technology is restricted too often to amplifying offline events, rather than making a real impact on audiences online. The content

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<sup>7</sup> The webpage could be found from here: <http://digdipblog.com/>

on various social media channels is consistently talking about what happened elsewhere – the meeting to which the public were not invited, the conference that took place without input from wider audiences online. The record of two diplomats shaking hands in front of an oil painting or of an exhibition of an approved artist is not digital diplomacy. It is simply a concession to modernity without the risk that greater engagement or transparency entails.” (The Soft Power 30 Report 2015: 34). People all over the world are now equipped with the tools that enable them to speak out and engage in meaningful dialogue, if they have got a chance for this. Unfortunately, there are only a handful diplomats who are willing to actually listen what their audiences are saying.

Thirdly, purpose indicates to the ultimate goal or achievement that engagement and authenticity should bring with. “Much cute cat social media does not need purpose, and it would be killjoy to suggest it does. But if we`re doing it on business or government account, it needs to add up to something” (“Engagement is Not Just About Cute Cats and Hashtags”, May 09, 2014). Reaching to foreign audiences is one thing, but changing their behaviour is much more complex process that is only possible when authenticity, engagement, and purpose is taken into account.

Of course, it should be kept in mind, that digital diplomacy is only a part of diplomacy (some would say it is only the peak of the underwater ice-mountain) that should not be overestimated. Similarly, underestimating it would be even harder mistake with significant consequences. And this is not only Western practice: “The US Embassy in Jakarta has over 600 000 likes on its Facebook account, and European embassies in Beijing use the Chinese microblog Sina Weibo to engage with swathes of the population out of their reach in the age of offline diplomacy. The Chinese leadership encourages its embassies throughout the world to take advantage of Twitter, while the US-based platform is blocked at home” (Hocking & Melissen 2015: 11).

Digital diplomacy is everywhere and as the access to new communication technologies as well as to smart phones rather increases than decreases, especially in non-Western rising power states (BRIC-countries for example), foreign ministries and diplomats have to adopt to these new opportunities and challenges in order to be able to reach their audiences and achieve their foreign policy objectives: “(...) those countries that can better connect their citizens to the digital world, as well as engage with international audiences through effective digital diplomacy will find it easier to both generate and leverage their soft power” (The Soft Power 30 Report 2015: 38).

Hocking & Melissen point out two trends in foreign policy management that happen simultaneously and affect the nature of foreign ministry: “*fragmentation* as sectoral ministries acquire enhanced international functions and *concentration* reflecting the importance of central agencies, particularly prime ministerial and presidential offices. The MFA can thus be seen as a distinct *subsystem* of the NDS [national diplomatic system] comprising two key elements: the centre (the ministry `HQ`) and the diplomatic network – or `peripheries`” (Hocking & Melissen 2015: 44-45). Fragmentation refers to increasing international reach of other ministries and state institutions which somewhat lessens the workload of MFA as these other ministries have the needed resources and capabilities themselves. However, this fragmentation makes it more difficult to coordinate foreign policy and messages. Concentration indicates to the central role of state leaders to conduct foreign policy. Therefore, MFA must establish firm relationship with other ministries as well as with state leaders.

Similarly, the growing importance of social media is clearly reflected in some states` practice of employing defence forces to engage with social media and control its content (ibid: 45). For example, the British army created “a special force of Facebook warriors, skilled in psychological operations and use of social media to engage in unconventional warfare in the information age” (The Guardian, January 31, 2015). How the content of social media could be important security-wise is touched upon at the end of empirical part.

Indeed, with the changing environment for diplomacy, where information is not centrally controlled nor manipulated, this kind of complex flows of information that is out of control of MFA may create controversies in some public institutions. The central question here is – how much freedom diplomats should get for conducting foreign policy? How strict are the guidelines for social media and whether some posts / tweets need MFA`s approval or not? Perhaps it is suitable to repeat what Tom Fletcher, British Ambassador to Lebanon, already mentioned earlier: “(...) while we all make mistakes on social media, the biggest mistake is not to be on it” (“Engagement is Not Just About Cute Cats and Hashtags”, May 09, 2014).

## **2. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS: USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY FOREIGN POLICY ACTORS OF ESTONIA**

The second part of my thesis will focus on empirical findings about the usage of social media by foreign policy actors. As described earlier politicians and states increasingly turn extra attention to social media activities. However, as human factor plays an important role in using social media, then it is worthwhile to examine the differences among users coming from particular state. This is the reason why the researcher chose to concentrate only on certain state and analyse the research problem with the case study method. Although it would have been possible to conduct comparative study and analyse social media practices by, for example, Estonia and Latvia or Estonia and Finland, then presumably this kind of research would have not given so much information about the differences in attitude and understanding of the importance of social media and digital diplomacy within the state.

Baltic state, namely Estonia, has been taken as an example and analysed thoroughly. Estonia was chosen because this country is well-known for its numerous start-ups and digital technologies that have found their ways into everyday life of Estonian people. Hence, it is worthwhile to study whether this digital thinking has been part of diplomatic activities as well. Special attention has been paid on deployment of social media tools with the aim to make public diplomacy more effective and far-reaching and therefore also increase Estonia`s soft power.

If the first part of this research concentrated on theoretical literature about power, soft power and (digital) diplomacy, then this empirical part seeks to analyse how effectively social media have been used by a particular state. By bringing out positive and negative examples of usage of social media by Estonian main foreign policy actors this analyse offers hopefully an useful point of view how a part of foreign relations could be managed in 21<sup>st</sup> century.

By answering to the research questions inside the conceptual and theoretical framework of soft power and digital diplomacy that was articulated in the theoretical part, this analysis provides an answer to the question stated in the title of this thesis (“Could Effective Usage of Social Media Increase Soft Power of the Small States? Estonia`s Example). The research questions are meant to describe and analyse how much attention Estonian foreign policy actors turn on digital diplomacy. This helps to understand (to some degrees) what their attitude towards digital diplomacy is. Similarly, digital diplomacy and public diplomacy are first and foremost communication practices. Communication, however, is increasingly important in

today`s networked and digitalised world as well as it is crucial when converting soft power resources into influence (see Figure 1).

Consequently, effective (digital) communication is not only essential for diplomatic practices, but through soft power for international influence too. Therefore, the aim of this empirical part is not only investigate the usage of social media by Estonian foreign policy actors and offer comparison with each other, but also to look further and give some reasons why digital diplomacy and soft power are instrumental in making Estonia`s independence more secured. Let`s not forget that Estonia regained its independence thanks to the idea that lived in people`s heads during Soviet occupation. This idea of open state is one of the Estonia`s strongest arguments for security.

## **2.1. Estonia`s foreign policy actors**

Before turning to RQ 1 the term `foreign policy actors` should first clarified. What is meant by this term are the actors who are primarily responsible for conducting foreign relations in Estonia. As Estonia`s Foreign Relations Act states, according to § 4 (`Bodies conducting foreign relations`) foreign relations are conducted by (1) the *Riigikogu* [the parliament]; (2) the President of the Republic; (3) the Government of the Republic; (4) the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; (5) other state agencies and local governments according to their competence (Foreign Relations Act, § 4). Taking into account current act and the fact that in foreign relations personal charisma is equally important as country of origin, here are listed 8 foreign policy actors (without any meaningful order) that are included to the analysis:

### **1) Toomas Hendrik Ilves – President of Estonia**

Although in Estonia president has mostly representational role to play, President Ilves has been very active on Facebook as well as on Twitter commenting daily on political, diplomatic, and digital matters. Thanks to his fluency in English and rather straightforward comments he is quite popular among foreign journalists and media. Being the most important politician in Estonia with rather representational role in terms of foreign relations President Ilves deserves his place in this list. He is considered to be a specialist on cyber security and on digital agenda issues, which makes him appropriate figure to examine. Although he should have some kind of help provided by his PR team, enough authenticity and engagement should be found from his social media posts.

## **2) Taavi Rõivas – Prime Minister of Estonia**

As Prime Minister of Estonia, Taavi Rõivas is actively engaged in policy-making, taking part in meetings at European Union and NATO level. Leader of the Government of Estonia should also be included to the analysis.

## **3) Marina Kaljurand – Foreign Minister of Estonia**

Marina Kaljurand was only very recently appointed to the Foreign Minister of Estonia (in July 2015). However, during her previous career as Estonian ambassador to Moscow and Washington it is interesting to see how she has coped with digital challenges. To put it in other words – how well she is able to represent Estonia using digital diplomacy tools?

## **4) Keit Pentus-Rosimannus – former Foreign Minister of Estonia (November 2014 – July 2015)**

As former Foreign Minister of Estonia Keit Pentus-Rosimannus is also worth analysing – how active she was during her time as Foreign Minister and whether she continues to be active now, when she is Member of Parliament.

## **5) Urmas Paet – former Foreign Minister of Estonia (2005-2014)**

Urmas Paet, who is former Foreign Minister of Estonia, should also be included into the analysis because he has many connections from the time he was in office – he served as Foreign Minister of Estonia over 9 years. Now he is working as Member of European Parliament. As someone with good expertise in international relations he is often targeted by different media channels to give comments on daily foreign policy issues.

## **6) Hannes Hanso – Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the *Riigikogu***

As newly appointed chairman, Hannes Hanso's social media activities could provide useful insights about his connections with digital diplomacy. Also Foreign Affairs Committee of the *Riigikogu* is actively engaged with foreign and security policies making it worth analysing.

## **7) Marko Mihkelson – former Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the *Riigikogu* (2003-2005, 2011-2015)**

Marko Mihkelson as former Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the *Riigikogu* has included into the list because of his long-time engagement with foreign policy. Like Urmas Paet he should have an excellent knowledge about soft power, public diplomacy and therefore

also about the usefulness of social media. He is also often asked to comment on daily foreign policy issues by various media outlets. He is currently appointed as Chairman of Defence Committee of the *Riigikogu*.

### **8) Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

Perhaps the most important institution, that is first and foremost responsible for conducting foreign relations, is Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As Foreign Relations Act states in § 9 it has twice as much competence as other actors named in the act. Some foreign (diplomatic) missions (like embassies and official representations to international organisations) are also classified under this heading.

Of course this list is not conclusive – there are many other actors, who contribute to Estonia`s foreign policy outcomes, but including them all to the analysis would be not reasonable as some actors are more well-known than others. Similarly, foreign audiences are more likely to engage with persons or institutions that are more relevant and high-profile. Andrus Ansip, who is former Estonian Prime Minister and currently working as a European Commission Vice-President for the Digital Single Market, would have been an interesting addition to the list, but as he is right now serving mostly interests of whole European Union and not those of Estonia`s, then he has left out. Also Enterprise Estonia (EAS) and Estonian Institute were the potential candidates for the list, but neither of them crossed the barrier of significance nor interest. Therefore above list is well-justified for the purposes of this research.

## **2.2. RQ 1: How actively are research subjects using social media?**

First research question (RQ) hopes to give an overview about the quantitative usage of social media by Estonia`s foreign policy actors (FPAs). This knowledge would help one to realise whether or not FPAs consider social media as an important platform for communicating with domestic and foreign audiences. Moreover, it would give a good insight about FPAs` understanding of public diplomacy and soft power. Of course, much of the diplomacy is done behind closed doors or at personal meetings, but totally neglecting the importance of social media in today`s networked and digitalised society would be a serious mistake.

Consequently, this RQ will consist of three sub-questions:

- (1) Does the FPA have an account on Facebook and on Twitter; if yes, then since when?
- (2) How many posts have the FPA done in July 2015 on Facebook?

(3) How many tweets<sup>8</sup> have the FPA done on Twitter overall? How many of them in July 2015?

**Toomas Hendrik Ilves – President of Estonia**

Facebook account: <https://www.facebook.com/thilves/>

First post: 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2009; number of posts on July 2015: 25

Twitter account: <https://twitter.com/IlvesToomas>

First tweet: 15<sup>th</sup> of May 2012; number of tweets on July 2015: 302; overall tweets: 17111

**Taavi Rõivas – Prime Minister of Estonia**

Facebook account: <https://www.facebook.com/troivas/>

First post: 12<sup>st</sup> of May 2009; number of posts on July 2015: 38

Twitter account: <https://twitter.com/TaaviRoivas>

First tweet: 29<sup>th</sup> of November 2011; number of tweets on July 2015: 166; overall tweets: 4655

**Marina Kaljurand – Foreign Minister of Estonia**

Facebook account: none

Twitter account: <https://twitter.com/MarinaKaljurand>

First tweet: 10<sup>th</sup> of July 2015; number of tweets on July 2015: 21; overall tweets: 21

**Keit Pentus-Rosimannus – former Foreign Minister of Estonia (November 2014 – July 2015)**

Facebook account: <https://www.facebook.com/keitpentusrosimannus/>

First post: 28<sup>th</sup> of May 2008; number of posts on July 2015: 2

Twitter account: <https://twitter.com/KeitPentus>

First tweet: 9<sup>th</sup> of February 2009; number of tweets on June / July 2015: 36 / 11; overall tweets: 578

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<sup>8</sup> Tweets and retweets are considered as of similar value as Twitter counts them equally for number of overall tweets.

### **Urmas Paet – former Foreign Minister of Estonia (2005-2014)**

Facebook account: <https://www.facebook.com/urmas.paet/>

First post: 29<sup>th</sup> of November 2011; number of posts on July 2015: 36

Twitter account: <https://twitter.com/UrmasPaet>

First tweet: 23<sup>rd</sup> of February 2013; number of tweets on July 2015: 88; overall tweets: 2438

### **Hannes Hanso – Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the *Riigikogu***

Facebook account: <https://www.facebook.com/hannes.hanso>

First post: 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 2014; number of posts on July 2015: 1

Twitter account: none

### **Marko Mihkelson – former Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the *Riigikogu* (2003-2005, 2011-2015)**

Facebook account (personal): <https://www.facebook.com/mihkelson>

First post: 12<sup>th</sup> of November 2007; number of posts on July 2015: 17

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Marko-Mihkelson/67831337066>

First post: 12<sup>th</sup> of October 2014; number of posts on July 2015: 12

Twitter account: <https://twitter.com/markomihkelson>

First tweet: 19<sup>th</sup> of March 2009; number of tweets on July 2015: 86; overall tweets: 4365

### **Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

Facebook account: <https://www.facebook.com/valismin>

First post: 13<sup>th</sup> of March 2009; number of posts on July 2015: 15

Twitter account: <https://twitter.com/valismin>

First tweet: 18<sup>th</sup> of May 2009; number of tweets on July 2015: 217; overall tweets: 3578

As it turns out, only with some exceptions all the FPAs are represented on Facebook and Twitter (only Marina Kaljurand does not have a Facebook account and Hannes Hanso is not

present on Twitter). However, the activity differs greatly – when the most active users make in total nearly 200-300 posts / tweets in a month, then the least active users make only one or couple of posts / tweets during the same time period. It is difficult to say whether this inactivity could be explained with lack of interest or time to use social media or simply some FPAs do not consider social media as an important medium for communication. Similarly, some FPAs could think that their personal social media account is only for personal usage and hence it should not be used for Estonia`s foreign policy interests. Yet, as all above listed actors are public figures, who are in public service, they should give their best in order to help small state like Estonia to increase its influence in the world.

As statistics about activity on social media networks indicates, pointed out above, most FPAs have had social media account already more than 5 years. It should be noted that current analysis took as a starting point not the date when social media account was made, but instead the date when the first post or tweet was made. For example, only very recently appointed Estonia`s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Marina Kaljurand, told that she used Twitter only for following others until she became a Minister in July 2015 (Postimees.ee, 28.07.2015)<sup>9</sup>. What is also interesting to see is that former Estonia`s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Keit Pentus-Rosimannus, has been rather inactive on Twitter after stepping down from Minister`s seat – she made more than three times fewer tweets in July than in June 2015 (11 vs 36). Perhaps she has been on vacation in July or the reason could be also that serving as a Minister of Foreign Affairs compels to be active on social media. This later reason could also be true concerning Marina Kaljurand and start of her active Twitter life only very recently. However, considering the fact that Keit Pentus-Rosimannus still has quite a lot followers on Twitter (nearly 3000), probably many of them foreigners from the time she served as a Minister of Foreign Affairs, there is potential that could and should be used.

As someone would expect, the most active users on social media are the President and the Prime Minister of Estonia, Toomas Hendrik Ilves and Taavi Rõivas respectively. Both are active on Facebook as well as on Twitter. Although it should be noted that their accounts are most probably also managed by their teams as well as by themselves. It seems like Toomas

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<sup>9</sup> On 28th of July 2015 Estonia`s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Marina Kaljurand, answered electronically to questions that were posted as comments by readers of Estonia`s biggest daily newspaper Postimees. The author of this thesis also used this opportunity and asked a question about digital diplomacy. The question and answer could be found on Appendix 1. The article in Estonian is found from here: <http://arvamus.postimees.ee/3274225/otsekusitlus-valisminister-marina-kaljurand-vastas-lugejate-kusimustele>

Hendrik Ilves is himself more responsible for his Twitter posts, leaving his Facebook account for his PR team.

Similarly, Urmas Paet and Marko Mihkelson could consider themselves as active users of social media. In order to get comparable data there is listed number of posts and tweets that were made during July 2015. This particular month was chosen without any significant purposes, perhaps the only reason was that this made the data collection a bit easier for the researcher. The ones who were not active at all during July 2015 were Hannes Hanso, Keit Pentus-Rosimannus and Marina Kaljurand. While Hannes Hanso and Marina Kaljurand have not been active on social media at all, then Keit Pentus-Rosimannus has used at least Twitter more or less frequently during her time as Minister of Foreign Affairs. This gives some hope that Marina Kaljurand will also take more active stance towards social media in the near future as she promised that also in the recent interview pointed out previously (see Appendix 1).

In addition to all the personal social media accounts already mentioned, there are Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs` social media accounts as well, which could be kept separately from the previous analysis as these accounts are managed by professional PR persons. Also as Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is public institution rather than particular person, it makes sense to analyse it with different standards. Compared to the most active social media user, President Ilves, Estonian MFA has been a bit less active (about 100 tweets less in July 2015). When looking at statistics<sup>10</sup> then on weekends there are hardly any tweets done, which is a pity because people use social media on weekends as well. Similarly, most tweets have been made during working hours (9:00-17:00), when most people are at work and they do not have an opportunity to spend their time on social media networks meaning the reach and influence of these tweets is rather low.

Estonian MFA has many foreign missions that could be looked at. Estonia has overall 46 representations and missions abroad<sup>11</sup> – 45 of them has webpage<sup>12</sup>, 23 of them has a Facebook page, and 3 of them has a Twitter page. On Facebook most active are the Estonian Embassy in London<sup>13</sup> and Estonian Embassy in New Delhi<sup>14</sup> – 25 and 23 posts respectively on Facebook

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.tweetstats.com/graphs/valismin/zoom/2015/Jul>

<sup>11</sup> Accordingly to Estonian MFA (in Estonian): [http://vm.ee/sites/default/files/content-editors/Eesti\\_esindatus\\_2015\\_ja\\_2015+.pdf](http://vm.ee/sites/default/files/content-editors/Eesti_esindatus_2015_ja_2015+.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> The list of webpages is on Estonian MFA`s homepage: <http://vm.ee/en/estonian-embassy-web-pages>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/estemb.london>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/EstonianEmbassyInNewDelhi>

during July 2015. It should be noted that both Facebook pages belong to top three according to number of page likes among Estonian embassies.

On Twitter one can find Estonian Embassy UK<sup>15</sup> and Estonian Embassy US<sup>16</sup>. Besides these two embassies there are also two ambassadors, who are actively using social media – Lauri Bambus<sup>17</sup> (Estonian Ambassador to the United Kingdom) and Mart Tarmak<sup>18</sup> (Estonian Ambassador to Brazil). Lauri Bambus has made 274 tweets during July 2015 (interestingly, he made his first tweet only 8 months ago and since then he has made more than 3200 tweets, meaning that on average he does about 400 tweets in a month). Mart Tarmak made 30 Facebook posts during July 2015, which also indicates to the active usage of social media. While the Estonian Embassy US made only three tweets in July 2015, then its UK counterpart made 68 tweets during the same time. There are also other Estonian ambassadors who have a social media account, but the ones pointed out above are probably most active.

Another very active Twitter account belongs to Permanent Representation of Estonia to NATO<sup>19</sup>. Its first tweet was made on 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2014 and by now, 8 months later, there are more than 6000 tweets, meaning on average 750 tweets in a month. That is more than one could expect. Only negative thing being that “@estNATO” has no Facebook page, so only users on Twitter are directly connected to this account.

In the next paragraph there is discussion about how to make the usage of social media effective and beneficial. The-more-the-better approach is definitely justified over the more infrequent use of social media in the era of networks and digital diplomacy. Although there are no written rules about how active should be on social media, the minimum rate is one social media post per day. This includes tweets, retweets and all Facebook posts. With couple of exceptions this is true for all the Estonia`s FPAs listed previously. Time will tell whether Marina Kaljurand will also start using social media more actively. For Estonia and its e-narrative it would be highly useful as well as for public diplomacy and soft power purposes. Representing internationally a country that is well-known for its e-services and technological development, having a social media account is a must.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://twitter.com/estembassyuk>

<sup>16</sup> [https://twitter.com/Estonia\\_in\\_US](https://twitter.com/Estonia_in_US)

<sup>17</sup> <https://twitter.com/LauriBambus>

<sup>18</sup> <https://twitter.com/mrttrm>; he is even more active on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/mart.tarmak>

<sup>19</sup> <https://twitter.com/estNATO>

### **2.3. RQ 2: How effective is the usage of social media by research subjects?**

The second research question seeks to analyse the qualitative usage of social media by research subjects, namely Estonian foreign policy actors (FPAs). As previous discussion proved, most of FPAs are rather active users of social media. However, without certain characteristics this activity could be pointless – if someone makes about 30 tweets in a day, but he or she has only 50 followers on Twitter, most of them being former colleagues from local supermarket or classmates, then this kind of activity will not help Estonia to increase its influence in the world. Therefore it is important to take a closer look at statistics as well as at the content of these social media posts / tweets.

This RQ will consist of three sub-questions:

- (1) What is the number of Facebook page / account likes and how many followers one has on Twitter?
- (2) What is the engagement rate<sup>20</sup> for Twitter posts that were made in July 2015?
- (3) What is the content of these social media posts? In which language (in Estonian or in English) they are made and what are the most common words / hashtags that are used?

To start with, it is worth looking at how popular the FPAs are in social media. Although the number of “fans” may be closely related to the amount of time given FPA has been active on social media, it is still a good indicator – how large is the audience that is interested to read what a FPA is saying or sharing on social media. Similarly, it is difficult to say, what the percentage of the audience that is primarily located outside of Estonia is. For example, Estonia’s MFA Facebook page has approximately 7900 “fans”, but only 3673 of them are following this page from Estonia. This means that more than half of “fans” are located outside of Estonia (53% of “fans” are located outside of Estonia and 47% of “fans” are located inside Estonia). Of course, among those who are located outside of Estonia, there could be many emigrated Estonians who want to keep in touch what is happening in their homeland. Unfortunately the researcher could not find any working software that would help to map Twitter followers geographically. However, as in today’s networked world one could meet an Estonian at every possible country, then it is still difficult to clearly distinguish between Estonians and foreigners.

Here are the statistics<sup>21</sup> about Facebook “fans” / friends and about Twitter followers:

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<sup>20</sup> Here the statistics about Twitter is only used because this data was available for the researcher.

<sup>21</sup> These statistics are gathered on 4th of August 2015.

### **Toomas Hendrik Ilves**

Facebook page likes: 95 189

Twitter followers: 56 902; followers ratio<sup>22</sup>: 68.39

### **Taavi Rõivas**

Facebook friends: 1977; Facebook followers: 3472

Twitter followers: 16 580; followers ratio: 26.92

### **Marina Kaljurand**

No Facebook account

Twitter followers: 820; followers ratio: 8.12

### **Keit Pentus-Rosimannus**

Facebook friends: 4448

Twitter followers: 2959; followers ratio: 5.75

### **Urmas Paet**

Facebook friends: 3462

Twitter followers: 8429; followers ratio: 16.46

### **Hannes Hanso**

Facebook page likes: 3327

No Twitter account

### **Marko Mihkelson**

Facebook friends: 4939; Facebook page likes: 1654

Twitter followers: 3903; followers ratio: 5.89

### **Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

Facebook page likes: 7901

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<sup>22</sup> How many followers one has per 1 following. Stats accordingly to Twitter analytics foller.me.

Twitter followers: 11 312; followers ratio: 23.23

These numbers represent the potential size of the audience that could be directly reached. In addition to this, as social media works through networks, users are able to see what their friends “like” or share on social media. This could mean that posts that have many “likes”, shares or retweets (on Twitter), could reach to enormous audiences. Having many “fans” or followers is a good starting point to spread your message and therefore increase influence.

As above number represent, most popular social media user is Toomas Hendrik Ilves with little more than 150 000 (Facebook and Twitter accounts counted together)<sup>23</sup> people directly reached by his posts on social media in every day. Also, President Ilves has the biggest followers ratio, meaning that he has about 70 times more followers on Twitter compared to number of his followings. In other words, the bigger the ratio, the more influential one is, especially with large follower base. If President Ilves could be considered in a class of its own, then after him come Taavi Rõivas and Estonian MFA. Both have similar sizes of audience (about 20 000) and Twitter followers ratio (27 and 23 respectively). Other FPAs have already smaller audiences. Marina Kaljurand, as the only person on the list who has not been active on politics nor has she run for Estonian Parliament or for other elections, has the lowest audience.

Secondly, the effectiveness of social media usage by FPAs could be characterised by the engagement with social media posts. The researcher has chosen to look here at only Twitter posts (tweets), because Twitter gives better insights about engagement as all the statistics is public. On Facebook one can send private messages, which are not available for the researcher and therefore could not be included into the analysis. Although there is an option for private message on Twitter as well, mostly conversations are public because of @username function. Also, behavioural patterns on Twitter by FPAs are most probably similar on Facebook too.

Table 1 represents the engagement rate for FPAs according to four statistics that is gathered with the help of free online software named Twitonomy. In the first column are listed 7 FPAs with their Twitter usernames – Hannes Hanso is not included as he does not have a Twitter account. Second column describes the percentage of retweets in the total number of tweets – the higher the percentage, the more user interacts with others. Third column also describes the interaction with other users – it shows what the percentage of replies (@username) is in the total number of tweets.

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<sup>23</sup> The researcher is aware of the fact that to some extent the Facebook “fans” and Twitter followers may overlap.

<b>Twitter account / Statistics</b>	<b>Percentage of retweets</b>	<b>Percentage of replies</b>	<b>Nr of links per tweet</b>	<b>Nr of retweets by others</b>
@IlvesToomas	61	4	0.35	18.98
@TaaviRoivas	65	8	0.04	7.66
@MarinaKaljurand	5	64	0.14	8.44
@KeitPentus	26	25	0.03	10.86
@UrmasPaet	54	8	0.01	5.05
@MarkoMihkelson	53	9	0.26	4.14
@valismin	68	1	0.17	7.09

*Table 1: Twitter statistics about engagement by FPAs (Hannes Hanso not included as he does not have a Twitter account). Source: Twitonomy.com; date: August 05, 2015.*

Taken together, Estonian MFA and President Ilves have the highest percentage of retweets. On the one hand, the high percentage of retweets shows that both are actively interacting with other users and accounts, but on the other hand neither has been too active in replying to others. One reason behind this inactivity could be that these accounts are often attacked by Internet trolls who are not worth an answer. Also, the time is a limited resource and people tend to ask all kinds of pointless questions that are difficult to answer.

The counterexample is Keit Pentus-Rosimannus` Twitter account, which has given fair amount of replies – 25% of all her tweets have been replies. However, as President Ilves has made over 17 000 tweets, his total number of replies is still bigger than Keit Pentus Rosimannus` (~700 vs ~25). What is also interesting about her Twitter usage is that retweets make up only 26% of overall tweets, meaning that she has used Twitter to mostly share her own thoughts and activities. Going a bit further, as fourth column indicates only 3% of her Tweets contain links on average. This means that she has not used an opportunity to be a source of information for others. As column four indicates, Toomas Hendrik Ilves and Marko Mihkelson are among those who`s tweets contain most links. This shows that both are as an important sources of information for others, or in other words, their tweets contain useful materials that are worth reading / watching. This helps to spread viewpoints that are Estonia-friendly and beneficial.

Fifth column represents the average number retweets that are retweeted by others. The higher this number, the more valuable source of information the user is considered to be. Also this statistics provides knowledge about the influence – people tend to retweet something that

is interesting, valuable and meaningful for them. Therefore the higher number of retweets by others is a clear sign of influence. The tweets by President Ilves are retweeted on average ~19 times, which is about twice as those by the next on the list – the tweets by Keit Pentus-Rosimannus are retweeted on average ~11 times.

Overall, and taking into consideration all the statistics, President Ilves has most engaged with other Twitter users. Other FPAs have done also reasonably well in terms of engagement, perhaps Marko Mihkelson, Estonian MFA, and Taavi Rõivas a bit better than the rest. It should be noted that this statistics, pointed out above, measures only one part of engagement and therefore it cannot be used to draw final conclusion. It offers fairly good description of how well FPAs have used the potential of social media for engagement.

Thirdly, the content of social media posts also gives some information about how effective the usage of social media has been. For example, the usage of language determines whether the message is meant for foreign or domestic audience. Without the help of Google Translate the posts made in Estonian are rather impossible to understand for foreigners, who have not studied Estonian language. While President Ilves makes his posts on Twitter mostly in English, then on Facebook the primary language used is Estonian. The reason behind this could be that his Facebook account is used more for official communication (with posts with pictures from different meetings) that is most probably managed by his PR-team. Moreover, this indicates to the fact that his Twitter account is a primary source of information for foreign audiences.

On the one hand, this could sometimes lead to misperceptions about Estonia`s official position on certain matters, especially when President Ilves tweets about something sensitive or arguable. This was the case 3 years ago with the “high-class Twitter feud” with the Nobel-winning economist Paul Krugman (The Washington Post, June 7, 2012)<sup>24</sup>. On the other hand, being an active user of social media, President Ilves helps to confirm the e-narrative that Estonia is seeking to actively promote. Moreover, being easily reachable via Twitter makes him stand out among his fellow state leaders – “Ilves must be one of the most accessible presidents in the world. When I [journalist] first contacted him on Twitter earlier this year, I got a response within a couple of hours” (Reuters, July 22, 2015). But maybe President Ilves answers only to the journalists and to other high politicians.

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<sup>24</sup> Full story can be found from here: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/reliable-source/post/estonian-president-hammers-paul-krugman-on-twitter/2012/06/07/gJQApU0zLV\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/reliable-source/post/estonian-president-hammers-paul-krugman-on-twitter/2012/06/07/gJQApU0zLV_blog.html)

When analysing other FPAs, then there could be see similar pattern as with President Ilves – on Twitter FPAs tend to post in English, but on Facebook in Estonian. Also, both social media networks are used for sharing stories and articles on relevant topics, which are mostly in English. Perhaps most uses Estonian Taavi Rõivas in his social media posts on Facebook and as well on Twitter. Similarly, as Twitter allows only 140 characters long messages, some FPAs use Facebook for giving longer comments on certain issues. These longer posts are mostly in Estonian and they are meant to inform Estonian audience. Urmas Paet and Marko Mihkelson are the examples of this kind practice.

The content of social media posts is analysed using an application that counts together all the hashtags used in Twitter posts. Pointing out four most used hashtags will provide primary understanding what kind of topics are most relevant for FPAs. The results are represented on Table 2.

<b>Twitter account / most used hashtags</b>	<b>1.</b>	<b>2.</b>	<b>3.</b>	<b>4.</b>
@IlvesToomas (941)	#ukraine (319)	#russia (303)	#estonia (196)	#nato (123)
@TaaviRoivas (57)	#estonia (28)	#healthsystems 2013 (11)	#esm (9)	#tervem_elu (9)
@MarinaKaljurand (7)	#eu (2)	#welles (2)	#fac (2)	#mh17 (1)
@KeitPentus (51)	#estonia (21)	#ukraine (11)	#nato (10)	#estonian (9)
@UrmasPaet (278)	#ukraine (97)	#estonia (75)	#mh17 (72)	#russia (34)
@MarkoMihkelson (796)	#ukraine (462)	#russia (172)	#eu (89)	#estonia (73)
@valismin (783)	#estonia (422)	#foc14 (171)	#nato (96)	#ukraine (94)

*Table 2: Most used hashtags for FPAs (Hannes Hanso has not included as he does not have a Twitter account). Source: Tweetstats.com; date: August 06, 2015.*

The number in the brackets shows how many times particular hashtag has been used by the user. The number behind the Twitter username shows, what is the sum of four most used hashtags. Perhaps not so surprisingly the most used hashtags by FPAs have been #ukraine, #russia, and #estonia. Using a hashtags helps others more easily to find information about particular topics and therefore increase the reach of posts. Estonian MFA (@valismin) has used

its most popular hashtags for 783 times – #estonia for 422, #foc14 for 171 times, #nato for 96 times, and #ukraine for 94 times. The #foc14 indicates to The Freedom Online Coalition`s conference that was held in Tallinn in last year`s April. President Ilves has tweeted mostly about Ukraine, Russia, Estonia and NATO.

As it turns out, Estonian FPAs are mostly tweeting about security-related issues. Recent crisis in Ukraine has also greatly affected the content of these tweets. For a small country like Estonia the war in former Soviet republic has been very worrying. Tweeting about Russia and Ukraine would help to show solidarity with Ukraine and condemn Russia`s behaviour. In the same vein, introducing Estonia and informing the world about all the positive aspects Estonia has is equally important. In some instances, cultural “ambassadors” could achieve more with one night than some foreign embassies with years of work. Therefore it is crucial to promote everyone and everything spectacular that could be found (i.e. start-ups), seen (i.e. untouched nature), or heard (world-known composers like Arvo Pärt) in Estonia. Culture is an essential resource of soft power which should not be forgotten. Estonian FPAs with their significant size of social media audience must be aware of this kind of promotion work they also have to do. The more there are people in the world who know about Estonia and who share its values, culture, tradition, etc., the more Estonia`s independence is secured.

To draw some conclusions about the effectiveness of social media usage by FPAs there are some positive as well as negative examples. As expected, President Ilves stands out as most active and effective social media user – he has made most tweets / posts and he has most followers. Although he gets some help from his PR team, he still sets an excellent example of successful social media usage.

Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs could be placed second on this virtual list of FPAs. As its Twitter signature says, its main focus is “news, activity, engagement, #publicdiplomacy #foreignrelations” (Twitter.com/valismin). One could say that these goals have been achieved. What is more, Estonian embassies, representations, and ambassadors have also, in some instances, been active and effective social media users. Some of them, like @LauriBambus (Estonian Ambassador to the United Kingdom) and @estNATO (Permanent Representation of Estonia to NATO) have joined Twitter only very recently. However, with this little more than 8 months, both accounts have been actively using Twitter and gained popularity in terms of Twitter followers – @estNATO has more than 3000 followers, which is a good result for this

short time. When taking a closer look at statistics<sup>25</sup>, then one could see that this Twitter account has been used 24/7 – some tweets have been even made during night time (in fact, most tweets have been made at 8pm, when the traditional working day should be over) and on weekends. Also, nearly 74% of the tweets are made using Twitter`s iPhone application. Lauri Lepik, Permanent Representative, is probably behind this great commitment. However, other ambassadors and representatives could follow the trend and start engaging more with the audiences where they are located at.

Marko Mihkelson, former Chairman of Foreign Relations Committee of Estonian Parliament, has proven himself as a capable user of social media. Managing two Facebook accounts and a Twitter account at the same time, and doing it alone, must be a difficult challenge. However, decent amount of followers, fans and friends (about 10 000 in total for Facebook and Twitter) would indicate that he has done a good job. Likewise, Urmas Paet, who has used Twitter only for 2.5 years, has slowly adopted a more active stance towards social media. Serving as a Foreign Minister of Estonia for 9 years, he has probably many useful connections that should be kept on social media as well as in real life. Estonia needs friends. In terms of content of his social media posts, he has kept critical attitude towards Russia, especially after crisis in Ukraine and kidnapping of Estonian officer from Estonian soil by Russian Special Forces<sup>26</sup>.

Estonian Prime Minister, Taavi Rõivas, has professionally played his role as a leader of Estonian government. His social media posts also reveal that his main focus is Estonia`s well-being (#tervem\_elu which means *healthier life* in Estonian) and *security* (#julgeolek). Also, he has taken part in meetings of European Council (Council of the European Union) as his most used hashtag (#euco) refers to. He has a decent number of followers and fans (in total about 20 000), but he has mostly only informed them about his meetings and other events, where ordinary citizens cannot go. As statistics shows, his engagement with others have been rather low – he mostly shares on Facebook his Twitter posts, many of them being in Estonian and therefore without significant international reach. Users that try to be active on both social media networks, should think about keeping one of them for domestic audience and other for international audience. This would help to optimise the posts for particular audiences and

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<sup>25</sup> <http://www.twitonomy.com/profile.php?sn=estNATO>

<sup>26</sup> Eston Kohver, an Estonian Internal Security Service officer, was kidnapped on 5th of September (only 2 days after U.S President Barack Obama visited Tallinn) near the Estonian-Russian border by Russian special agents. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/03/forget-eston-kohver-150315112432470.html>

purposes – whether would be it to introduce Estonia and promote its brand, or to give information about government policies and activities.

Regarding Estonia`s current Minister of Foreign Affairs and her predecessor, namely Marina Kaljurand and Keit Pentus-Rosimannus, they have been very passive with respect to using social media. Although Keit Pentus-Rosimannus has about 7000 followers and fans in total, she has not engaged with them in convincing ways. Marina Kaljurand has been only taking her first steps on social media, so it will take at least half a year or even longer, before her activity on social media will become more effective and strategic. Her first weeks as a Minister would not indicate the very active attitude towards social media. The same is true for Hannes Hanso (Chairman of Foreign Relations Committee of Estonian Parliament), who has his own Facebook page, but its content is rarely updated and meant specifically for domestic audience.

#### **2.4. RQ 3: What kind of (measurable) benefits could the usage of social media provide for Estonia?**

When previous analysis pointed out quantitative and qualitative usage of social media by Estonian foreign policy actors, then this research question seeks to look at potential benefits that the effective usage of social media could bring with. As direct effects of social media on particular examples is rather difficult to measure, this paragraph discusses potentiality in conditional sense. Something that is not easily defined, is also difficult to measure. Witness the different ratings about soft power, where every new report suggests that soft power should be evaluated using new methodology. Sometimes experts` opinions matter most or in other cases general public opinion is taken into account. Similarly, the success or failure of using social media is rather hypothetical with its own positive aspects and limitations. The researcher is aware of these limitations and tries to be explicit about them.

##### **2.4.1. Case study about Eston Kohver**

To start off with the case that was also mentioned earlier, it has been almost a year since the kidnapping of Estonian Internal Security Service Officer Eston Kohver. Latest news speak about up to 16 years of imprisonment for “espionage, illegal border crossing, carrying illegal firearms and trafficking illicit merchandize” (news.err.ee, August 07, 2015). Estonian official

position is that he was illegally taken prison from Estonian soil by Russian Special Forces who used special equipment during this operation. Estonian government and diplomats have tried to raise the issue on every possible level with the aim to get public attention on it. How has this been done on social media?

First of all, when writing “Eston Kohver” on the Twitter search box, then there are many results, which is a good sign. Estonian MFA and others are constantly posting updates about the “trial”, which helps to keep the issue on the agenda. In the same vein, Estonian diplomats work also offline and meet with their colleagues to discuss the issue on highest possible level. The European Union, OSCE and the United Nations Human Rights Council have all been included to the call to release Kohver immediately and to guarantee his safe return to Estonia, not to add here numerous embassies and diplomats who have done the same using their Twitter accounts. What happens during private meetings behind closed doors remains mostly unavailable for the public. However, as social media works through networking and content sharing then it is possible to see what has been done by Estonian side.

Perhaps most visible have been the hashtag #FreeEstonKohver and couple of pictures with this text on them. One of the pictures, which could be also found from President Ilves` Facebook page as a cover photo, portrays a boy holding little Estonian flag and looking at the blue sky<sup>27</sup>. The text says #FreeEstonKohver and under that “Support Eston Kohver, who was kidnapped by Russian FSB from Estonian soil!”. Analysing the choice of picture and text then the first thing to mention is that instead of picture of Eston Kohver, the Estonian MFA (presumably the author of the picture and the text on it) has decided to use the picture of a boy, thus representing a child who has been hurt and done injustice by unlawful authorities (namely Russian FSB). This picture engenders sympathy in viewers as this boy symbolises an innocent child with the hope for freedom. Also the text itself leaves no room for fantasy who are the good and who are the bad guys.

There is also another picture which has been used on Twitter by Estonian MFA. This portrays wall of a castle with a small window and behind that blue sky<sup>28</sup>. The text is the same as in previous picture. The window with blue sky symbolises the route to freedom from prison (behind castle wall). Both pictures were at first introduced (tweeted) at 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of June 2015, when Estonians celebrated their Victory Day. Again, this is emotionally powerful choice

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<sup>27</sup> The picture could be seen from here: <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/CIKxofPW0AASd0h.jpg:large>

<sup>28</sup> The picture could be seen from here: <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/CIUc8ZWWUAAgggl.jpg:large>

for the date as well as the symbolic meaning of the pictures, especially the first one with the little boy.

During July 2015, the name “Eston Kohver” was mentioned on Twitter in more than 40 different tweets, meaning that every day at least someone tweeted about him. Most of these tweets got several or even tens of retweets meaning that the figures for engagement and impressions are probably relatively high. The more the people engage themselves with the issue, the better are the chances that Eston Kohver could soon be released from the prison. Social media is suitable tool for keeping the issue on the agenda and thereby add leverage to the diplomacy between Russia and the rest. Estonian MFA, Urmas Paet and Toomas Hendrik Ilves among others have done the right thing to actively support Eston Kohver on social media. This have helped emotionally to bind with the issue and remind to the world the true essence of Putin`s Russia.

Of course, it would be an exaggeration to think that Russian authorities let themselves to be influenced by the content on social media – the decision whether and when Eston Kohver will be released depends on many other things. However, raising the issue on every possible level as well as posting constant updates on social media is an excellent example of digital diplomacy – Estonian MFA has not relied solely on offline meetings with their counterparts or with other influential politicians, but it has taken more engaging path. Communication with foreign audiences have been successful as many have engaged themselves with the issue (in the form of retweets or tweeting by themselves using #FreeEstonKohver hashtag). As digital diplomacy is increasingly important in converting soft power resources into influence, one could argue that this kind of successful examples of digital diplomacy would also enhance country`s soft power. When thinking about soft power as the ability to persuade others to want the same outcomes as you, then digital diplomacy works best to attract audiences.

#### **2.4.2. Case study about Russian propaganda**

Another example of the potential utility of social media could be found when thinking about Russian propaganda, which has been especially explicit during recent years in Ukraine as well as in the Baltic states. Without going too much in detail about the spheres-of-influence theory nor question of Russia`s near abroad, the resources spent on different Russian news agencies have been steadily increasing. In his book “Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible: Adventures in Modern Russia”, Peter Pomerantsev describes extensively the situation

inside the media landscape of today`s Russia (Pomerantsev 2015). Propaganda is not just directed outside of country, but as well to domestic audience who wants to hear and watch happy stories. As the title of the book refers to, the goal of the Russian propaganda is to construct infinite number of truths, which cultivate mess and confusion in people`s heads. This kind of information-psychological “wars of the future would be fought not on the battlefield but in the minds of men” (The Guardian, April 09, 2015). It has been also called as hybrid war where there are all kinds of methods in usage to achieve military objectives.

As Pomerantsev concludes his article: “In information-psychological war there are no clear victories, no flags to be planted and borders to be redrawn, only endless mind games in the `psychosphere`, where victory might be the opposite of what you initially supposed. Is the purpose of RT [Russia Today], for example, to spread news, conspiracies and opinions? Or is its purpose to project an impression of Russian strength and confidence – which means that talking constantly about its brazen attitude only augments that perception?” (ibid).

How Estonia and its foreign policy actors could counter this kind of threat? This threat would not be directed towards diplomats but rather towards ordinary people, especially the ones who are located mentally and physically, in some sense, between Estonia and Russia. Initiatives to offer for numerous Russian-speaking population that lives in Estonia, TV and radio broadcasts in their native language are of course welcoming, but even more important would be to generate trust in Estonian government and diplomats. In terms of life quality and available opportunities there is no question whether to choose Estonia or Russia, but when one state is run by “fascists” and other by mythological Putin, then there could be some doubts about that choice. It takes time to build trust, but by turning gradually attention to Russian-speaking population would help to reach to these “foreign” audiences that are located closest to Estonia. Similarly, by finding innovative ways for communicating with these audiences would enhance coherence in Estonian society, which is a strong evidence in support of its security.

### **2.4.3. Case study about the Estonian e-residency program**

Third and final case study is about something more positive. Namely it is about Estonia`s initiative to attract businessmen and (start-up) entrepreneurs to become virtual citizens of Estonia. This is called the e-residency program<sup>29</sup>, which offers an opportunity to use

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<sup>29</sup> More information about the program could be found from its homepage: <https://e-estonia.com/e-residents/about/>

Estonia`s convenient online solutions for setting up a company, banking, giving digital signatures and for other services. When searching on Twitter for #eResidency then there are many tweets from the journals, newspapers, blogs or other sources, which describe the program. Also there are some joyful people who have applied for e-residency and have gotten their ID-cards – according to the latest count, there are 4043 e-residents of Estonia, which is twice as much as was Estonia`s goal for year 2015 (as stated on official e-residency`s Twitter account<sup>30</sup> on 12<sup>th</sup> of August 2015). As e-residency is specifically meant for foreigners, then this program could be viewed as a successfully working initiative of digital diplomacy.

Why this case study is worthwhile to analyse from digital diplomacy`s perspective is because its goals and tools for achieving these objectives are similar to that of digital diplomacy. Taking into account the popularity that has sent the e-residency program among foreigners, perhaps there is something that could be kept in mind when Estonian FPAs engage themselves with digital diplomacy? Moreover, could both conceptions of digital nature of society reinforce each other? One could argue that trust in Estonia and belief in digital society are central in both cases. Whereas the aim of the digital diplomacy is to generate mutual trust and understanding with the foreign audiences with the longer purpose of influencing their behaviour in favour of Estonia, then e-residency program, which has the same objective, has somehow already managed that when looking at those little more than 4000 e-residents of Estonia.

One reason behind this could be that it is Estonia`s soft power that is the main cause for this popularity with e-residency program – Estonia feels like attractive, trustworthy and suitable partner. Also, communication must have been moving in right directions or otherwise people would not have been heard about this program. Relying on Estonia`s narrative as tech-savvy state with most start-ups (and supermodels) per capita, as stated on the webpage of Estonian Investment Agency<sup>31</sup>, is a strong soft power resource. Using right communication methods and tools would ensure that this resource will turn into actual influence.

Lesson from e-residency program that could be taken with by Estonian FPAs is that emphasised should be those attributes which reinforce already existing beliefs and opinions (like Estonia`s narrative of being successful IT-state). In this manner, building trust and finding new friends for Estonia is easier, when social media posts is not so much about Russia and Ukraine but instead about positive aspects of Estonia. This would not mean that turning

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<sup>30</sup> The Twitter account could be found from here: [https://twitter.com/e\\_Residents](https://twitter.com/e_Residents)

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.investinestonia.com/en/business-opportunities/gaming-industry>

attention to increasing militarization of Baltic Sea Region would not be acceptable or appropriate. What the main idea is here is that Estonia must attract foreign audiences with positive aspects of its country and not with negative trends that are actively articulated. People need positive stories and Estonian FPAs must offer them for their audiences. This would help to increase Estonia`s soft power.

## CONCLUSION AND FURTHER SUGGESTIONS

Power in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not any more so much about military, economic nor political resources, but about the ability to get others want the outcomes you want. For small states like Estonia this gives some leverage when digital diplomacy is effectively used. Therefore, as previous discussion has proved, the answer to the research problem posed in the title of the thesis would be positive – effective usage of social media could indeed increase small state`s soft power. Although it is rather difficult to offer waterproof empirical evidence for this statement, not to mention the fact that there is no consensus on how to measure soft power itself, focusing on theoretical analysis and examples of successful practices of digital diplomacy one could offer remedy for this kind of measurement trap. Concentrating on communication practices and on engagement with foreign audiences is the key for converting soft power resources into actual influence.

In the empirical part of the thesis three research questions were asked in order to closely examine the usage of social media by Estonian foreign policy actors. These questions helped to realise what is the general understanding and attitude towards digital diplomacy. In some instances, as also pointed out during Questions & Answers session in Estonian daily Postimees, Estonian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Marina Kaljurand acknowledges the importance of digital diplomacy and social media, but when looking at her activity on Twitter then there is a huge gap between her words and reality (see Appendix 1 for her comment). Her only excuse could be that she only started tweeting on Twitter after she became a Minister of Foreign Affairs in the middle of July 2015 and therefore she needs more time to learn how Twitter works. Hopefully, President Ilves and Estonian MFA seem to have pretty good understanding about digital diplomacy as both are using social media actively in their everyday activities. Consequently, the first research question concerning actors` activity on social media revealed that despite of some success stories there are still plenty of space for development.

The same could be said about the second research question which investigated the effectiveness of social media usage by Estonian FPAs. As one could expect, the ones who use social media more actively, are the ones who are also able to accomplish better results in the form of engagement and influence. However, it should be noted that President Ilves and Estonian MFA have their own PR people, which means that they have more resources to use. Similarly, these two actors are mostly posting in English (at least on Twitter), therefore their tweets and posts could be understood also by the people located outside of Estonia. Choosing

one social media network for communicating with foreign audiences (preferably Twitter) and the other for domestic audiences would seem to be the best option. In terms of content, using hashtags about Ukraine, Russia, NATO, Estonia and about others, the Estonian FPAs are mostly posting on similar topics. This indicates to the shared understanding over certain issues, which has the potential to magnify Estonia`s positions.

Third research question focused on case studies and on potential benefits that social media could offer. Its main purpose was to give some second thoughts on the utility of social media. In the context of constant flow of misinformation about Estonia from different Russian news-services, social media could help to depict this misinformation as untrue. Similarly, in the age of networks reaching out to as many people as possible and finding friends for Estonia would be as powerful guarantee for security as those couple of U.S. tanks that visited Estonia during summer of 2015.

Further suggestions would include paying even more attention to activities on social media. These activities should not be only about posting pictures or sharing stories more often but instead to find innovative ways for communicating with foreign audiences. Estonia is holding the EU`s presidency in 2018, when this Baltic republic also celebrates its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence. Successful usage of digital diplomacy could help to turn this period a success-story that will be long remembered. What is more, Estonia is today well-known for its e-services and digital development. Therefore it already has a slight advantage over others to become a trend-setting example of successful user of digital tools in order to make better and more efficient public diplomacy.

Implications of hybrid warfare cannot also be forgotten as Estonia is situated next to unpredictable neighbour with imperial thoughts growing in the heads of its ruling elite. Internet trolling on social networks and other similar practices need to be taken seriously as well, because the importance of hard power resources has been gradually decreasing while “the role of non-military means of achieving political and strategic goals has grown” (War on the Rocks, July 30, 2015). Social media could not be used only for promoting values, but for defending them as well.

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Marina Kaljurand

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## APPENDIX 1

On 28th of July 2015 Estonia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Marina Kaljurand, answered electronically to questions that were posted as comments by readers of Estonia's biggest daily newspaper Postimees. The author of this thesis also used this opportunity and asked a question about digital diplomacy. Here is the question and the answer translated into English by the author.

### **Question (Martin Naggel):**

*Allegedly, digital diplomacy is becoming increasingly important in today's world. Digital diplomacy means using digital solutions (like social media) for diplomatic purposes – whether for foreign relations, for public diplomacy or for something else. During Your previous career You have proven Yourself as a very good diplomat with good one-on-one communication skills. How competent do You think You are considering digital diplomacy and do You think that foreign policy actors in Estonia should put more emphasis on digital diplomacy? For example, I could not find any Facebook account with Your name and on Twitter You have made only very few tweets since becoming a Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia.*

*Thank you and good luck in this challenging position!*

### **Answer (Marina Kaljurand):**

*Digital diplomacy is important and is becoming even more important. I saw it myself when I work in Washington as an ambassador, where we often used embassy's Facebook page and Twitter account for communication. I agree, that more emphasis should be put on digital diplomacy and we plan to do so in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. That is true that I do not have a personal Facebook account. I would leave it to every diplomat to personally decide, whether or not and how he or she should engage with social media. Until I became a Minister, I used Twitter only for following others. I did my first tweet when I was appointed as a Minister and I plan to use Twitter actively in the future. You can follow me @marinakaljurand.*

Source: <http://arvamus.postimees.ee/3274225/otsekusitlus-valisminister-marina-kaljurand-vastas-lugejate-kusimustele>

# KOKKUVÕTE

## *Kas sotsiaalmeedia efektiivne kasutamine väikeriikide poolt võiks aidata kaasa nende pehme jõu kasvule? Eesti näide*

Antud magistritöö eesmärk on uurida sotsiaalmeedia kasutamist Eesti peamiste välispoliitika tegijate poolt fookusega digitaalsele diplomaatiale. Antud uurimisprobleemi tähtsus seisneb ennekõike selles, et tänapäeva ühiskond on paljuski võrgustunud ja digitaliseerunud, mille ilminguteks on uute tegutsejate esiletõus rahvusvahelisel areenil (nagu näiteks rahvusvahelised organisatsioonid ning mõjukad mittetulundusorganisatsioonid, aga ka teatud nn *tõusvad* riigid) ja üha suurema osa suhtluse kolimine interneti. Sestap on muutumas ka diplomaatia kui selline, mis nõuab senisest suurema tähelepanu pööramist dialoogile välismaise auditooriumiga.

Töö algabki ülevaatega erinevatest jõu / võimu (inglise keeles *power*)<sup>32</sup> teooriatest, mis aitavad mõista võimu erinevaid tahke. Mõeldes ajalooliste näidete peale, siis suuremas osas ajaloost on riigid keskendunud just oma sõjalise võimekuse maksimeerimisele, mis nende nägemuses pidi aitama saavutada edu konfliktides ja sõdades ning seeläbi tagama soovitud eesmärkidele jõudmise. Seega võrdus võim paljude jaoks just sõjalise võimekusega – mida tugevam ja suurem on sõjavägi, seda rohkem võimu arvati olevat antud riigil. Kuigi ajaloost võib leida ka palju näiteid selle kohta, kuidas arvuline ülekaal ei taganud alati edu lahinguväljal, siis on hakatud alles 20. sajandi lõpus rohkem arutlema võimu teistsuguste olemuste üle.

Üheks võimaluseks on võimu kirjeldada kolme dimensiooni abil (Berenskoetter 2007). Selle kohaselt on võimu esimeseks dimensiooniks *võimekus võita konflikte*. Taoline klassikaline realistlik arusaam riikidest kui omavahel sõdivatest üksustest on ehe näide sellest dimensioonist. Teiseks saab võimu vaadelda kui *alternatiivse limiteerivat* nähtust. Põhiline idee seisneb siin selles, et teatud juhtudel võib võimuks pidada ka osalemist teatud institutsioonide töös ning seeläbi omada võimekust nii päevakorra kujundamisel kui ka otsuste tegemisel. Tegu on struktuuraalse arusaamaga võimusuhetest, kus keskkond, milles riigis tegutsevad, on kesksel kohal. Kolmandaks dimensiooniks on suutlikkus *kujundada normaalsust*. Antud lähenemine arutleb selle üle, kuidas panna teised käituma nii, nagu oleks kõige eelistatum. Mõjutamine,

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<sup>32</sup> Eesti keeles võib antud sõna tõlkida nii võimuks kui jõuks. Siinne autor eelistab küll kasutada just viimast varianti ehk edaspidi on näiteks *soft power* tõlgitud kui *pehme jõud*, kuid mõndadel juhtudel on antud sõnu kasutatud samatähenduslikult.

propaganda, avalik diplomaatia ja pehme võim on need märksõnad, mis selle lähenemise juurde kuuluvad.

Samuti saab võimu jagada kolmeks lähtuvalt realistlikest võimu teooriatest (Schmidt 2007). Realistlik koolkond rahvusvahelistes suhetes on siinkohal oluline just seetõttu, et antud koolkond iseloomustab kõige lähedasemalt ja põhjalikumalt kõva jõu olemust – pehme jõu mõistmiseks on tarvis selgelt välja tuua, mille poolest see erineb kõvast jõust. Esiteks, *klassikaline realism* näeb võimuna ennekõike just looduslikke, militaarset ja majanduslikke ressursse, mille maksimiseerimise tulemusena on riik kaitstud ja võimeline domineerima teiste üle. Teiseks, *struktuuralne realism* käsitleb riikidevahelist võitlust võimu pärast põhjustatuna anarhisest keskkonnast, milles riigid tegutsevad. Anarhiline tähendab siinjuures ülemvõimu puudumist ehk riigid peavad ise leidma mooduse ellujäämiseks.

Erinevus klassikalise realismiga seisneb selles, et kui esimesel juhul vaadeldakse riike kui inimesi, kellele on sisse kodeeritud oma võimu maksimeerimine ellujäämise nimel ning teiste üle domineerimine, siis teisel juhul on riikide selline käitumine põhjustatud anarhisest keskkonnast ehk struktuurist, milles riigid tegutsevad. Kolmandaks, *neoklassikaline realism* käsitleb riike kui üksusi, mis proovivad ennekõike maksimeerida mitte oma võimu ega julgeolekut, vaid just oma mõju. Kuna enamuse riike tänapäeva maailmas on julgeolekut otsivad (mitte julgeolekut pakkuvad) riigid, siis püüab antud lähenemine vaadelda neid riigisiseseid tegureid, mis aitavad mõista riigi käitumist rahvusvahelisel areenil.

Liikudes kõva võimu juurest edasi selle pehmema poole juurde, siis esmalt tasuks tuua välja pehme jõu olemuse. Joseph S Nye, kes on pehme jõu kontseptsiooni autor, näeb pehme jõuna suuresti suutlikkust panna teisi tahtma samu asju nagu isegi (Nye 2004). Pehme jõu atribuutideks on riigi kultuur, poliitilised väärtused ning välispoliitika. Kuna pehme jõud töötab paljuski atraktiivsuse kaudu, siis on oluline omada piisavalt pehme jõu ressursse. Kuigi paljud ressursid, eriti kultuurilised, on väljaspool otsest riigi kontrolli, siis on riikidel ikkagi võimalik panustada enda pehme jõu edendamisse. Seda tehakse seeläbi, et rajatakse üle maailma mitmesuguseid instituute, mis peavad tutvustama antud riiki, selle keelt ja kultuuri. Hiina, Saksamaa ning Prantsusmaa on siinkohal ehk kõige paremateks näideteks.

Käesoleval sajandil võib märgata mitmeid tendentse, mis viitavad võimu olemuse muutumisele. Tänapäeval ei seisne võim enam niivõrd domineerimises, vaid suutlikkuses teistega teha koostööd. Kuna paljud probleemid on oma olemuselt riigiüleised või globaalsed, siis on nendega tegelemiseks vaja teha koostööd mitmel eri tasandil. Võitlus Ebola, terrorismi

ning kliimamuutustega on siinkohal sobivaks näiteks. Samuti on informatsioonirevolutsioon endaga kaasa toonud info leviku kiiruse ja maksumuse langemise miinimumini, mis on suurendanud info levikut ja kogust. Samal ajal on info ülekülluse valguses suurenenud riikidevaheline konkurents tähelepanu tõmbamisel olulistele probleemidele. Lisaks sellele on info laialdaselt kättesaadav, mistõttu on lisaks riikidele ja poliitikutele esile kerkinud teisi tegutsejaid, kes omavad pehmet võimu. Riigid, mis suudavad edukalt suhelda nii kodumaise kui välismaise auditooriumiga, on paremas positsioonis oma huvide tagamisel.

Avalikku diplomaatiat võib kirjeldada kui avalikku suhtlust välisauditooriumiga, mille eesmärgiks on inimeste informeerimine ja veenmine (Melissen 2005). Tänu info- ja kommunikatsioonitehnoloogiate plahvatuslikule arengule ja üleüldisele info levikule on avalik diplomaatia järjest enam muutumas pelgast informeerimisest kahepoolseks suhtlemiseks teiste riikide kodanikega. Kommunikatsioon on kõige selle alus. Samuti peavad riigid üha pingsamalt jälgima, missugustena nähakse neid maailmas – riikide reputatsioon ja poliitika on järjest olulisemad, kuna riigid võistlevad omavahel usalduse saavutamise nimel. Toetumine üksnes kõvale jõule ei taga edu rahvusvahelises suhtluses.

Pehme jõu olulisus seisneb just suutlikkuses saavutada oma välispoliitilisi eesmärke ka olukorras, mil riigi materiaalsed ja sõjalised ressursid on piiratud. Kõige olulisem osa antud protsessis on efektiivsel kommunikatsioonil. Avalik diplomaatia ühes oma digitaalse allharuga näib olevat kõige sobilikum meetod pehme jõu suurendamiseks. Kuid selleks, et pehme jõud realiseeruks ka soovitud mõjuna, tuleb läbi teha 6-etapiline protsess (ressursid-strateegia-tegevus-kommunikatsioon-hindamine-kohandamine), mille kõige tähtsamaks etapiks on just kommunikatsioon (McClory 2015; vt Joonis 1).

Antud töö eesmärkiks on keskenduda just sellele, kommunikatsiooni käsitlevale, etapile, mis loob eeldused pehme jõu suurendamiseks. Muidugi pole kommunikatsiooni juures tegu üksnes digitaalse diplomaatiaga (ega üksnes sotsiaalmeedia kasutamisega), kuid kahtlemata on tegemist üha olulisemaks muutuva valdkonnaga, mistõttu tasub sellele eraldi ja põhjalikult tähelepanu pöörata – toimub ju suur osa tänapäevasest suhtlemisest digitaalseid vahendeid kasutades.

Digitaalne diplomaatia on võrdlemisi uus nähtus diplomaatia tegemisel, mistõttu pole just väga palju säravaid näiteid diplomaatidest, kes sotsiaalmeediat kasutades oleksid märkimisväärseid tulemusi saavutanud. Üheks erandiks võib pidada USA praegust presidenti Barack Obamat, kes 2009. aastal, mil ta presidendiks valiti, ehitas oma valimiskampaania

suuresti üles just sotsiaalmeediale. Töös on välja toodud mõningad üsna hiljutised näited võrdlemisi ainulaadsest ja uuenduslikust lähenemisest diplomaatialle. Üheks selliseks võib pidada Venemaa ja Kanada NATO esinduste vahelist Twitteri-kismat, kus teineteisele anti õppetunde kaasaegse geograafia kohta. Ehkki antud vaidlus tänapäeva Euroopa riigipiiride kohta ei toonud endaga kaasa väga tõsiseid tagajärgi, oli siiski tegu ilmeke näitega, kuidas sotsiaalmeediat kasutati diplomaatilise tööriistana.

Lisaks sellele võib edukate sotsiaalmeedia kasutajatena vaadelda (praeguseks hetkeks juba endist) Suurbritannia suursaadikut Liibanonis, Tom Fletcherit, ning India peaministrit Narendra Modit. Mõlema sotsiaalmeedia kasutamist võib kirjeldada kolme märksõna abil, mis on digitaalse diplomaatia puhul vahest ehk kõige olulisemad: autentsus (iseendaks jäämine), seotus (teiste inimeste kuulamine ning nende arvamusega arvestamine) ning eesmärk (mingisuguse tulemuse saavutamine). Digitaalne diplomaatia on tulnud selleks, et jääda. Kaasaegsed diplomaadid ja välisministeeriumid peavad kiiresti uute nõudmiste ja võimalustega kohanema, et armutus infoküllases keskkonnas olla suutelised oma eesmärgi saavutama. Töö empiirilises osas uuritakse, kuidas see Eesti puhul on seni õnnestunud.

Eesti peamiste välispoliitika tegijatena on vaadeldud järgmisi inimesi ja institutsioone: Toomas Hendrik Ilves (Eesti Vabariigi president), Taavi Rõivas (Eesti Vabariigi peaminister), Marina Kaljurand (Eesti välisminister), Keit Pentus-Rosimannus (Eesti välisminister 2014-2015), Urmas Paet (Eesti välisminister 2005-2014), Hannes Hanso (Riigikogu väliskomisjoni esimees), Marko Mihkelson (Riigikogu väliskomisjoni esimees 2003-2005, 2011-2015), Eesti välisministeerium. Esimeseks uurimisküsimuseks on, kuidas aktiivselt antud isikud sotsiaalmeediat kasutavad. Nagu selgub, siis üksikute eranditega on nii Facebook`i kui ka Twitteri kontod kõigil olemas (üksnes Marina Kaljurannal puudub Facebook`i konto ning Hannes Hansol Twitteri konto).

Samas on aktiivsuse osas erinevused üsna suured – kui aktiivsemad kasutajad (nagu näiteks Ilves, Rõivas ja välisministeerium) tegid käesoleva aasta juulis enam kui 200-300 säutsu, siis passiivsemate puhul küündis antud number vaevu paarikümneni. Marina Kaljurand, ühena neist, hakkas aktiivsemalt Twitterit kasutama alles pärast välisministriks saamist juuli keskpaigas. Üldplaanis on aktiivsuse puhul olukord hea, üksnes välisminister kui riigi üks tähtsamaid saadikuid välissuhtluses, võiks sotsiaalmeedias senisest enam vaeva näha.

Teine uurimisküsimus püüdis iseloomustada sotsiaalmeedia kasutamise efektiivsust. Siinkohal võeti arvesse nii jälgijate ehk auditooriumi suurust, teiste inimeste kaasatust kui ka

postituste sisulist poolt. Nagu eeldada võis, on kõige suurem auditoorium president Ilvesel, kelle aktiivne jälgijaskond küündib 150 000ni. Välisministeerium, Rõivas ja Paet on samuti arvestatava jälgijaskonnaga. Statistika näitab, et kõige tugevamini on teiste Twitteri kasutajatega seotud samuti Ilvese ja välisministeeriumi kontod, mis tähendab et nende poolt tehtud säutsud jõuavad arvatavasti rohkemate inimesteni kui teiste puhul. Postituste sisulise poole pealt võib märgata seda, et inglise keeles postitavad üksnes (mõningate eranditega) Ilves ja välisministeerium. Üheks põhjuseks võib olla see, et ülejäänute puhul on tegu ikkagi poliitikutega, kes peavad kodumaise valijaskonna ees vastust andma ning neid oma tegevusega kursis hoidma. Ilmselt tasuks teistelgi järgida Ilvese praktikat, kes postitab Twitteris inglise ja Facebook`is eesti keeles.

Twitteri postituste sisu analüüsidest võib märgata, et küllalt palju võetakse sõna Venemaa, Ukraina, NATO ja Eesti teemadel. Mõneti on see arusaadav, kuna viimase pooleteise aasta vältel on Venemaa-Ukraina konflikt pidevalt päevakorral olnud. Efektiivsuse suurendamiseks tasuks lisaks keeleliste aspektidele ka postitamine muuta märgatavalt tihedamaks. Samuti võiks mõelda uuenduslike lähenemiste peale, kuidas senisest enam suhelda välismaise auditooriumiga ning kaasata neid aruteludesse. Kolmanda uurimisküsimuse juures analüüsitud *#FreeEstonKohver*, mida võib ühest küljest vaadelda kui sotsiaalmeedia kampaaniat, on siinkohal heaks näiteks. Samuti tasub meeles pidada muid võimalusi, mis sotsiaalmeedia kasutamisega avanevad – olgu selleks siis Venemaa propagandale vastu seismine või Eesti ühiskonnas sidususe suurendamine.

Kokkuvõtteks jõudis töö järeldusele, et digitaalne diplomaatia üheskoos efektiivse kommunikatsiooniga on järjest olulisem riigi pehme jõu suurendamisel ning seeläbi ka välispoliitiliste eesmärkide saavutamisel. Ennekõike on see oluline just Eesti-suguste väikeriikide puhul, mille majanduslikud, militaarsed ning poliitilised ressursid on piiratud. Eesti diplomaadid ja teised välispoliitika tegijad on küll kasutamas erinevaid võimalusi, mida sotsiaalmeedia neile täna pakub, kuid nii aktiivsuse kui ka kaasamise osas on jätkuvalt palju arenguruumi. President Ilvest ja Eesti välisministeeriumi võib siinkohal pidada teistele eeskujudeks, kuid kasutamata potentsiaali on neilgi. Töö autor loodab, et digitaalne diplomaatia leiab üha sagedamini tee erinevatesse poliitilistesse ametijuhenditesse ning poliitika dokumentidesse, kuna 21. sajand on ennekõike võrgustike ning digitaalse suhtluse päralt.