
THE IMAGES OF THE BALTIC STATES IN THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA UPON ACCESSION TO NATO AND THE EU

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Abstract

This article presents an analysis and comparison of the images of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia in the international press upon accession of the three states to NATO and the EU. Similarities and differences of the images of the three Baltic States in thematic and evaluative categories are analysed applying the method of quantitative and qualitative content analysis. By considering the concept of image in relation to the concept of identity, regional identification of the Baltic States is analysed and the key aspects defining the “Baltic States” as a region are identified.

Introduction

Although countries have attempted to present themselves to the world as positively as possible in all times, in the past few decades the state image has gained even greater importance. This has been to a large extent determined by certain economic and cultural aspects of globalisation: today, countries are bound to compete in major fields that can be expressed quantitatively such as attraction of foreign investment, conquering foreign markets, and attraction of tourists, whereas the rise of a global culture determines the desire to maintain cultural diversity and emphasise one’s uniqueness. Other important aspects of this process include the informational revolution, rise of the “shrewd” global media, and the events of September 11, which made not only the USA but also other states take closer care of their image in the world.

Image is especially important for the so-called *new states*, which formed or returned to the international arena after the dissolution of the USSR. In the past 15 years, the Central and Eastern European states (hereinafter collectively

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referred to as the CEE states) have had a really difficult task to accomplish, i.e. to position themselves in the European and global “geographical and mental map as democratic, politically stable, market economy countries.”¹ The fact that they managed to do so is evidenced by their accession to NATO and the EU, although, according to W. Olins², these countries are little known, are hardly distinguished from one another, and are often related to the negative image of “post-Soviet” or “post-communist” states.

Over the past few years, discussions on Lithuania’s state image strategy have intensified in the Lithuanian public life. It should be noted that, more often than not, when talking about the image of Lithuania (for instance, in the Lithuanian media), it is compared with the images of Estonia and Latvia: these two countries are mentioned as more advanced in this sector and as taking better care of their images. Estonia’s achievement in the process of image creation is also acknowledged by international experts.³ The qualitative study conducted by TNS Gallup⁴ shows that Lithuania is viewed as the least known of the three Baltic States and as being far behind in terms of image creation compared to the other two. This article aims at clarifying whether Lithuania is less visible and less “interesting” for the Western media compared to the other two.

On the other hand, it’s often stated that the image-related problem of the Baltic States lies in the fact that these countries are not distinguished one from another and lack a “distinct *own* face”, whereas it is important to be distinguished as the Baltic States compete in their attempts to attract more tourists and foreign investment, gain greater political influence, etc. Furthermore, it is important to take a look at the images of the Baltic States not only through the prism of competition (i.e. to consider which country is more visible and more attractive), but also through the prism of image as identity. Analysing the

¹ Szondi G., “The role and challenges of country branding in transition countries: The Central and Eastern European experience.” *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 3, 2007, p. 1. <<http://www.palgrave-journals.com/pb/index.html>>, February 1, 2007.

² Olins W., *On brand. Prekės ženklas*. Vilnius: Mūsų knyga, 2006, pp. 164-165.

³ For instance, Szondi (note 1), p. 13; Gardner S., Standaert M., “Estonia and Belarus: Branding the Old Bloc”, <http://www.brandchannel.com/features_effect.asp?pf_id=146#more>, October 30, 2006.

⁴ Four target groups (travel organisation and media experts, foreigners holding a permit to reside in Lithuania, foreign tourists coming on holiday, and foreigners coming for business purposes (a total of 52 respondents)) were surveyed. “Creation of the Lithuanian tourism and business trademark. A qualitative research report”, <http://www.tourism.lt/lt/LT_Ivaizdis_KOK_Ataskaita.pdf>, February 1, 2007.

discourse of the Baltic political leaders in his study, M. Jurkynas came to the conclusion that in the case of each country the key regional identification element, even after the double enlargement, remains the “Baltic States” element.⁵ This article poses the question of whether the same regional identification is reflected in the media read by the Western elites, and whether, for instance, Estonia is viewed as a Nordic country, whereas Lithuania – just as a Central European country. It should be noted that Estonia, in the process of recreation of its image, would like to get rid of the epithet “Baltic”, as the said epithet is often identified with “a Soviet Baltic Republic”,⁶ while in the Estonian tourism image strategy the country is presented as a “Nordic country with a twist”.⁷ To Latvia, the epithet “a Baltic country” doesn’t seem negative, and in the 2003 image strategy it is proposed to position Latvia as a “real Baltic State.”⁸

This article aims at revealing the images of the Baltic States – the images of each of the three states individually, and collectively as a region – as portrayed in the international media. Applying the content analysis method, the images of the Baltic States presented in the Financial Times (FT) and The Economist are analysed. The choice of the aforementioned periodicals was determined by their influential nature and target audience (they are among the “opinion leaders” and decision-makers in Europe and the USA), as well as their availability all over the world (global nature of the periodicals). The selected research period is after accession of the Baltic States to NATO and the EU, i.e. from 2004 until the end of 2007. EU and NATO membership may be considered as the crucial point, whereby Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia became true members of the transatlantic community and returned to the European and world political maps.

The units of this research analysis are the articles in which the key words “Lithuania”, “Latvia”, and “Estonia” are mentioned. Four hundred fifty-two articles from the Financial Times and 63 articles from The Economist were taken, in which Lithuania, Latvia or Estonia (each of them individually, any

⁵ Jurkynas M., *How deep is your love? The Baltic brotherhood re-examined*. Vilnius: Institute of International Relations and Political Science, Vilnius University, 2007, p. 171.

⁶ Brüggemann K., “Leaving the ‘Baltic’ States and ‘Welcome to Estonia’: Re-regionalising Estonian Identity”. *European Review of History*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2003, p. 343.

⁷ Priks E., “Destination Estonia. Activities through branding 2008–2010,” <<http://www.tourism.lt/informacija/PTO%202008%20vasaris/ELIN%20PRIKS%20-%20DESTINATION%20ESTONIA%20-%20VNO%2028-02-08.ppt>>, April 21, 2008.

⁸ Frasher S., Hall M., Hildreth J. et al, “A Brand for the Nation of Latvia,” 2003, p. 21. <<http://www.politika.lv/index.php?f=113>>, March 13, 2008.

two of them, etc.) were mentioned in a significant manner.⁹ Prior to presenting the research results, the theoretical interrelation of the image and international relations will be discussed in brief.

1. What do image and international relations have in common?

It must be acknowledged that the issues of state image creation are more of interest to public relations experts rather than international relations academicians, regardless of the fact that public diplomacy is deemed as one of the key methods of creation and maintaining a state's image. Although these two academic communities are interested in similar concepts such as globalisation, identity, and the ever-changing nature of power in international politics, the two rarely communicate with each other.¹⁰

Peter Van Ham, one of the few international relations scholars taking interest in states' images, states that image is related to power and identity.¹¹

Image as power. According to Van Ham, a shift from the modern geopolitical world idea to the idea of a postmodern world of image and influence is noticed in political paradigms. In such an environment, power arises not only from persuasion or coercion, but also from information dissemination and perceived attractiveness.¹² In other words, victory can be won by an actor whose story seems the most believable rather than by an actor who is more active in "clanging arms." J. Nye calls "soft power" a state's capacity to achieve the desired result based on the state's attractiveness, reputation, and credibility.¹³

The concept of soft power may be identified with a positive and attractive state image. A positive image can increase a state's significance in international

⁹ "In a significant manner" means that the mentioning of one of the three Baltic States comprises at least five percent of the entire text of the relevant article, when counting the number of sentences.

¹⁰ For instance, in journals such as *Place branding and public diplomacy* the article authors, more often than not, are experts in the fields of marketing, public relations, and creation of state image rather than political scientists.

¹¹ Van Ham P., "Place Branding: The State of the Art," 2008, p. 6. <http://www.clingendael.nl/publications/2008/20080300_cdsp_art_ham.pdf>, April 16, 2008.

¹² Van Ham P., "The Rise of the Brand State: The Postmodern Politics of Image and Reputation," *Foreign Affairs*, 80 (5), 2001. <<http://www.foreignaffairs.org/2001/5.html>>, October 30, 2006.

¹³ Nye S. J., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: Public Affairs, 2004, pp. 30-31.

relations and the influence of the state on the international community in the state's seeking to protect its interests. A negative state image (lack or absence of "soft power") may determine disagreement with the state's actions and blocking or even ignoring of its initiatives. State image is important not only in political, but also in economic terms. Image influences the state's position on the global market: if a state is little known (lacks an image) or has a negative image (based on erroneous, outdated stereotypes), this determines little interest in the state on the part of other states, weakens the state's opportunities to compete on the international level, and prevents it from attracting direct foreign investment and developing the tourism and exports sectors.

Image as identity. According to Van Ham, the creation of a state's (or location's) image as an international relation phenomenon can be best explained by the constructivist theory of international relations. Constructivists emphasise norms, values, and identities as the key and necessary elements of international politics. Identity may help to diagnose certain actions of a state in relation to other states.¹⁴ Identity has an influence on interests, whereas interests determine a state's foreign policy.

According to A. Wendt, "structures and states have multifold meanings for different actors, based on their own intersubjective perceptions and practices."¹⁵ Identities change and depend on various contexts. Thus it is the constructivists who provide for states' opportunity to construct their image and role in the international arena.

According to constructivism supporters, a state's opportunities to choose an identity/role are not unlimited. The opportunities are restricted by other actors' perceptions, identities, and interests dominating in the historical context in question.¹⁶ According to N. Rengger, actors exist in a network of social practices, expectations, political parameters, and institutions, which limit the choice of the state roles; the states' "mental maps are filled with concepts such as

¹⁴ Hopf T., "The promise of constructivism in international relations theory." *International Security*, 23, 1998, p. 190. Cited from: Van Ham (note 11), "Place Branding: The State of the Art," p. 21.

¹⁵ Wendt A., *Social theory of international politics*, Cambridge University Press, 1999. Cited from: Van Ham (note 11), "Place Branding: The State of the Art," p. 20.

¹⁶ Hopf, p. 177.

trust, suspicion, history, and reputation.”¹⁷ Image-building specialists also often remind us that image creation will be successful only when it has a real ground, i.e. when it is based on identity. Image creation is also called the articulation of identity (the understanding of what one is) and projection of identity (communication of that understanding to others).¹⁸ Thus both identity and image are constructed in the interrelation with other actors, and both identity and image exist to the extent they are recognised by other actors.

2. The images of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia: a comparative analysis

The images of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia were studied considering the articles published in the Financial Times daily and The Economist weekly in 2004–2007. An attempt was made to study the images of the three states considering different aspects; therefore, the analysis units (articles) in which Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia are mentioned were grouped as follows:

- By thematic categories, i.e. instances of mentioning a state were assigned to one of the following six categories: “Economy,” “EU,” “Politics,” “Energy Sector,” “Social Issues,” and “Culture and Tourism”;
- By evaluative categories, i.e. instances of mentioning a state were assigned to one of the following four categories: “Positive,” “Negative,” “Mixed,” and “Neutral.”

The main principle for assigning articles (or, more precisely, for assigning instances of mentioning, as, more often than not, only a portion of articles was dedicated to a particular state) to a category (both in terms of themes and evaluations) was that instances of mentioning were assigned to a category consider-

¹⁷ Rengger N., “The Ethics of trust in world politics.” *International Affairs*, 73 (3), 1997. Cited from: Van Ham (note 11), “Place Branding: The State of the Art,” p. 21.

¹⁸ Melissen J., “Wielding Soft Power: The New Public Diplomacy,” Netherlands Institute of International Relations: Clingendael, 2005, p. 24, <http://www.clingendael.nl/publications/2005/20050500_cdsp_paper_diplomacy_2_melissen.pdf>, October 30, 2006;

Georgescu A., Botescu A., “Branding national identity.” Lund University, Lund, 2004, p. 22. <<http://theses.lub.lu.se/archive/sob//soc/soc04020/SOC04020.pdf>>, October 30, 2006.

ing the dominating theme or dominating evaluation. For instance, if the entire article talked about the Latvian economy, yet in some sentences its policies were mentioned as well, the article was categorised as belonging to the “Economy” category. The same principle was applied when grouping various instances of mentioning as “Positive,” “Negative,” “Mixed” or “Neutral.” Instances of mentioning were evaluated based on the overall impression created. For example, if positive messages dominated, and one negative aspect was mentioned, the article was categorised as “Positive.”

With a view to conducting a maximum-precision image analysis and comparison, it was decided to assign to each of the articles in which any of the three Baltic States was mentioned a “weighted coefficient” based on “how much” a specific state was mentioned. Thus the volume of text on each of the three states (in sentences) was compared with the entire text (in sentences), i.e. in each case the percentile ratio of sentences about a state and the entire text was calculated. For instance, if an article comprised 20 sentences, and one of them talked about Lithuania, this meant that Lithuania “gained” five percent, if two sentences were dedicated to Lithuania – it “gained” 10 percent, and if the entire article talked about Lithuania – then Lithuania “gained” 100 percent. It should be emphasised that when performing the grouping (by thematic and evaluative categories) and summarising the data, the weighted coefficients showing the ratio of the instances of mentioning a country to the entire text rather than texts as units were calculated.

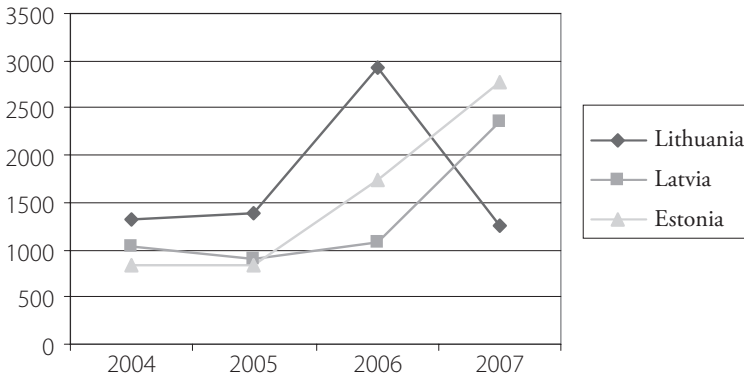
2.1. The visibility of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia in the international press

In 2004–2007, *The Economist* paid more attention to Estonia, whereas the *Financial Times* – to Lithuania, although upon summarisation of the results from both periodicals Lithuania was the most visible, closely followed by Estonia, whereas Latvia received the least attention. Visibility was calculated by adding the weighted coefficients of the instances of mentioning of each of the three states.

Increasing the volume of information on individual states at certain times was directly determined by the events taking place in the relevant country such

as elections, visits, conflicts (for instance, the conflict between Estonia and Russia concerning the relocation of the Bronze Soldier statue), international meetings, etc. It may also be stated that the greater visibility of Lithuania and Estonia compared to Latvia was among other things determined by the fact that Lithuania was often mentioned together with Poland, whereas Estonia was often mentioned together with Finland.

Graph 1. Visibility of the Baltic States in the Financial Times in 2004–2007 (calculating in weighted coefficients)



As demonstrated in Graph 1, in 2004–2006 Lithuania was more visible in the Financial Times compared to the other two Baltic States, and its visibility was increasing considerably. The visibility of Latvia and Estonia in 2004–2005 was similar, and increased significantly in 2006–2007, whereas the visibility of Lithuania in 2007 underwent the opposite process and was the poorest of the three Baltic States. The increased number of instances of mentioning of Lithuania in 2006 may be related to the country’s attempt to become a member of the euro zone, whereas the increased number of instances of mentioning of Estonia in 2007 – to its conflict with Russia concerning the relocation of the Bronze Soldier statue.

2.2. Images of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia in different thematic categories

Table 1 presents a comparison of the positive/negative nature of image in different thematic categories by different publications (the categories from the Economist whose overall ratio was very small are not presented). The table specifies whether a particular state's image was more negative or positive: if a state is marked as "+", it means that the number of instances of positive mentioning outweighed the negative ones, whereas if it is marked as "-", it means a negative rather than a positive image. The three states are also compared with each other: for instance, in the "Economy" (FT) category, the images of both Lithuania and Estonia are positive, yet the fact that Estonia's image is more positive is demonstrated by the two pluses by its name, whereas the two minuses show a relatively more negative image (in the other categories). We will discuss the images of the Baltic States in each category separately.

Table 1. Comparison of the images of the Baltic States on the positive/negative scale

Category (name of the periodical)	Lithuania	Latvia	Estonia
Economy (<i>FT</i>)	+	-	++
Economy (<i>Economist</i>)	-	--	+
EU (<i>FT</i>)	++	-	+
EU (<i>Economist</i>)	+	Not mentioned	Mixed
Politics (<i>FT</i>)	-	+	--
Politics (<i>Economist</i>)	--	-	+
Energy Sector (<i>FT</i>)	++	+	-
Social Issues (<i>FT</i>)	-	+	++
Social Issues (<i>Economist</i>)	--	-	+
Culture and Tourism (<i>FT</i>)	+	++	+

2.2.1 The “Economy” category

Economy constitutes an important element of the image of the Baltic States, especially in periodicals interested in business and economy such as the Financial Times and The Economist. In this category, the visibility of Latvia in the Financial Times was the most distinct, whereas that of Lithuania – the smallest; in The Economist, Lithuania was the least visible – four times less than Estonia, which received the most attention in this periodical.

All three states were presented as the “Baltic tigers” experiencing rapid economic growth; however, the potential threats of their economies becoming “overheated” and of the “hard landing” were underlined, which was especially emphasised in the case of Latvia. At the same time, Estonia was distinguished as one of the most competitive CEE states, with especially low taxes and offering very favourable business conditions, due to which it was highly rated on the international level. The Economist emphasised the economic dynamism of Estonia and Latvia, whereas Lithuania seemed to have been “forgotten.” Furthermore, The Economist distinguished Estonia as the “economy star” of the Baltic States and underlined it as an IT business development country even more actively than the Financial Times did.

2.2.2. The “EU” category

One of the main areas of political, economic, and cultural activity of the Baltic States is the European Union; therefore, it is important to clarify what the image of the Baltic States in the EU context is. Lithuania’s visibility in the “EU” category was the greatest both in the Financial Times and The Economist, whereas Latvia was the least visible. Furthermore, The Economist didn’t pay much attention to the Baltic States in this category.

Lithuania and Estonia were praised in the Financial Times for their proper preparation for becoming members of the euro zone, whereas the fact that they didn’t manage to become euro zone members was described as a misunderstanding caused by the EU rules rather than the two countries’ fault. When discussing euro-related issues (in the case of both Lithuania and Estonia), positive aspects about the two states such as rapid economic growth and well-managed public finance were mentioned repeatedly.

Latvia's image in the "EU" category was fairly negative, which was to the greatest extent determined by the recall of the Latvian representative from the European Commission due to non-transparent financing of her party, whereas the image of the Lithuanian European Commissioner Dalia Grybauskaitė was positive. Of the highest ranking politicians, only two heads of state – Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus and now ex-Latvian President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga – were well distinguished on the EU level.

The conducted research has shown that Lithuania was more visible compared to the other two Baltic States when talking about the EU's foreign relations, due to Lithuania's policies in Eastern Europe. The role of Lithuania and Poland in the Orange Revolution in Ukraine received a positive evaluation – it was stated that this way the two countries contributed to the EU's foreign policies:

"The Orange Revolution was a triumph for democracy and a tribute to the influence of an enlarged EU. It was thanks to the new memberstates - Poland and Lithuania in particular - that Leonid Kuchma, the outgoing president, was bullied into declaring the rigged elections of his chosen successor null and void."¹⁹

This event was often mentioned as an example aimed at demonstrating how useful the EU enlargement was in political terms. Furthermore, Lithuania and to a somewhat lesser extent Estonia were revealed in the periodicals in question as important actors in EU-Russia relations, calling for a stricter EU position towards Russia.

2.2.3. The "Politics" category

Both the *Financial Times* and *The Economist* made Estonia the most visible in the "Politics" category, whereas Latvia received the least attention. The number of instances of mentioning of the Baltic States in the "Politics" category was especially dependent on the political events that were taking place in the countries or abroad, i.e. on the internal and foreign policies. It is obvious that if parliamentary elections were taking place in one of the states, the media interest in that state was increasing. Thus in 2004, when presidential and parliamentary elections were held in Lithuania, Lithuania's visibility in the "Politics"

¹⁹ Peel Q, "Europe cannot shrink from enlargement," *Financial Times*, October 6, 2005.

category increased, whereas there were few instances of mentioning Estonia and Latvia. The increased interest in Latvia in 2005 was determined by the decision of Latvian President Vike-Freiberga to attend the Victory Day celebrations in Moscow and the visit to Latvia of US President George W. Bush. Up to 2007, Estonia's image in the *Financial Times* was the least politicised, whereas in 2007 the number of instances of mentioning Estonia went up considerably, which was dependant on the tension in Russia-Estonia relations in connection with the relocation of the Bronze Soldier statue.

The two periodicals paid more attention to Lithuania's internal affairs rather than to its foreign policies, whereas it was the opposite with Latvia and Estonia. Lithuania's negative image in this category was to a great extent determined by internal events and scandals such as the 2004 presidential elections and related scandals (raids of the Special Investigation Service on parties' headquarters), the impeachment of President Rolandas Paksas that took place prior to that, and the victory in the parliamentary elections of the populist Labour Party led by an entrepreneur of Russian origin, Viktoras Uspaskichas. Foreign policies of the three countries were all dominated by the issues in connection with relations with Russia.

We will discuss in chronological order the following key events that received major attention in the articles published in the *Financial Times* and *The Economist*:

- *Celebration of the 60th anniversary of victory over Nazi Germany (2005)*. Articles on this topic revealed not only the foreign policies of the Baltic States, but also their attitudes, positions, and values. It was a chance to remind Europe of the fact of Soviet occupation and of the Baltic States' perception of history, which is different from that of Russia. This was especially important in terms of image as a projection of identity. It should be noted that in the articles dedicated to the celebration the Baltic States were considered as one integral region; therefore, for instance, in the article "History divides the Balts"²⁰ published in the *Financial Times*, we can feel a certain surprised attitude that the three countries, who were always together and seeking a stricter attitude towards Russia on the part of the EU and USA, now took different paths: the

²⁰ "History divides the Balts", *Financial Times*, March 9, 2005.

Latvian President decided to go to Moscow, whereas the Lithuanian and Estonian leaders refused to do so. The *Financial Times* didn't condemn or support the position of any of the three countries; however, one of the positive aspects to be mentioned is the fact that the Baltic States' message that Victory Day for the Baltic States meant the end of one (Nazi) occupation and the beginning of another (Soviet) occupation was communicated clearly and unambiguously. Thus this event emphasised the image of the Baltic States as victims of history. On the other hand, it helped to understand the Baltic States' attitude towards Russia.

- *US President George W. Bush's visit to Latvia (2005)*, which took place when the American President was going to the Victory Day celebration in Moscow, determined an even greater interest in the Baltic States, especially Latvia. It was stated that the US President's visit to Riga demonstrated to Russia the importance of the Baltic States. Furthermore, the pro-American stance of the Baltic States was emphasised, and the possible reasons for that were named. The articles also provided some positive information about the Baltic States (their achievements, accession to the EU and NATO, and economic growth), and some negative information on the tensed relations with Russia in connection with the issues of the Russian-speaking minorities, non-concluded border agreements (at that time, there were no agreements concluded with Latvia and Estonia), and the feeling of insecurity and vulnerability; therefore, such and similar instances of mentioning the Baltic States were categorised as "Mixed." On the other hand, the self-contraposition of the Baltic States to Russia and their perception of Russia as "the other" were felt. For instance, Andrejs Pildegovics, the Latvian President's foreign affairs adviser, was quoted: "We are still on the frontline. We are the easternmost outpost of the west ...I tell ambassadors coming to Latvia, 'You have been sent to the battlefield'.²¹
- *NATO Summit in Latvia, 2006*. This event was named as important both for Latvia and for the Alliance, as it was the first time that a NATO Summit was held in a post-soviet country in the hope that it would "lay

²¹ Wagstyl S., "Baltic states shiver in the shadow cast by Russian occupation", *Financial Times*, May 6, 2005.

ghost of the Soviet era” – Latvian President Vike-Freiberga said that “the last traces of the iron curtain” were meant here.²²

- *Speech of US Vice President Dick Cheney in Vilnius, 2006.* The Summit of Baltic and Black Sea States held in Vilnius, during which Russia was warned “not to use energy for intimidation and blackmailing,” received global media coverage and was cited on front pages. Although Lithuania’s name was mostly mentioned only as the place of the event (the speech), yet a couple of times the event organised by Lithuania – an international democracy promotion conference was mentioned as well. Furthermore, prior to Cheney’s famous speech, the Financial Times took an interest in this conference and interviewed Valdas Adamkus, who criticised Germany for its support of Russia’s controversial plan to build a gas pipeline in the Baltic Sea, and, when talking about the conference itself, emphasised the dissemination of democratic values in the region.²³
- *Estonia-Russia conflict concerning relocation of the Bronze Soldier statue in May 2007.* This event also received wide coverage in the Financial Times and The Economist. The progress of the conflict was described, and the two countries’ statements and accusations towards each other, protests in Tallinn and in Moscow near the Estonian embassy, cyber attacks, and Russia’s economic sanctions with regard to Estonia were discussed. The image of Estonia in this story wasn’t univocal, and the instances of mentioning were often categorised as negative due to the negative emotional load provoked by words such as “protests,” “violence,” “sanctions,” and “attacks.” These events indeed were a blow to the image of this country previously known as a peaceful, modern, fairly non-politicising “business paradise.” On the other hand, a number of instances of mentioning were evaluated as mixed (ambiguous), as Estonia wasn’t condemned, and an attempt was made to understand and explain (but not to justify) its behaviour.

On the whole, it should be noted that Russia doesn’t miss its chance to publicly complain and accuse Latvia and Estonia of disrespect for their Russian-speaking minorities, which has a negative impact on the images of the two states. On the

²² Wagstyl S., “NATO summit in Latvia to lay ghost of the Soviet era”, *Financial Times*, November 23, 2006.

²³ Wagstyl S., “Lithuania’s president hits back at Russia’s policy on energy,” *Financial Times*, May 4, 2006.

one hand, for instance, the Financial Times states that Lithuania-Russia relations are better than Russia-Latvia or Russia-Estonia relations. On the other hand, when discussing the Bronze Soldier statue-related conflict, it is stated that Estonia, unlike Lithuania, has never tried to oppose in its relations with Russia.²⁴

It should be mentioned that when talking about Estonia and Lithuania, their contribution to the NATO mission in Afghanistan, as well as the contribution of and benefit provided by all three Baltic States to NATO was mentioned.

2.2.4. The “Energy sector” category

In this category in the Financial Times, Lithuania was the most visible, while the visibility of Estonia and Latvia was much lower. The Economist rarely mentioned the three countries separately – it discussed in more detail the overall energy security problems of the Baltic States.

A greater interest in Lithuania on the part of the Financial Times was determined by issues related to *Mažeikių Nafta*. The selling of the company to a Polish company received a positive evaluation. Furthermore, the problems in connection with the “politicised” breakdown of the Druzhba pipeline and Lithuania’s attempts to increase its energy security were discussed.

2.2.5. The “Social Issues” category

In this category, Estonia was the most visible in the Financial Times, whereas Lithuania and Latvia received only half as much attention. Lithuania was the most visible in The Economist, yet in a negative context.

In the periodicals in question, Estonia was emphasised for its private universities providing good business and management education. Furthermore, the country’s birth rate increasing policy was also evaluated positively. It was also emphasised that the level of corruption in Estonia was one of the lowest among the CEE states, whereas Latvia and Lithuania had especially high corruption levels. Compared to residents of the other two states, Latvian residents were more often mentioned in the context of criminal activity.

²⁴ Anderson R., “Estonia acts to appease angry Russia,” *Financial Times*, May 12, 2007.

2.2.6. The “Culture and Tourism” category

In the Financial Times, Estonia was the most visible; Latvia was visible to a somewhat lesser degree, whereas Lithuania received the least attention. In The Economist, the Baltic States in this category were mentioned only episodically.

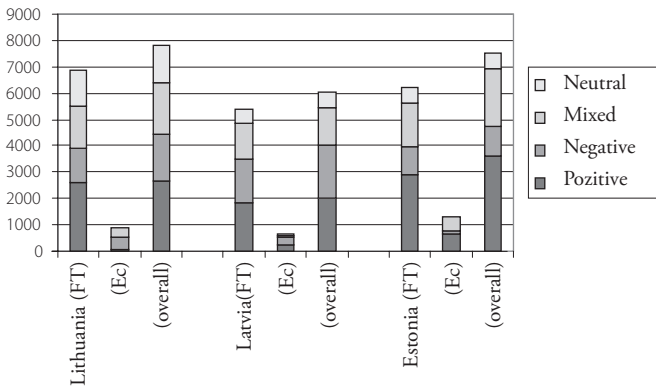
The volume of information on Lithuania was considerably smaller; furthermore, most of the instances mentioned were dedicated to the tourist infrastructure, which were not very significant in terms of image. However, in the case of each of the countries the “genuine” nature was mentioned, which was especially evident when discussing Latvia and Estonia. The “charming architecture” and old towns of the capitals of the three countries were mentioned as well. Lithuania and Estonia were also described as attractive destinations for investment in real estate and purchase of second (holiday) homes.

When talking about culture, it should be emphasised that the musical accent is especially distinct in the images of Latvia and Estonia – folk songs, opera, classical and modern music, choirs, and the countries’ achievements at the Eurovision song contest were mentioned. Some detailed information was also provided about other arts in Latvia and Estonia such as theatre and fine arts. Estonia’s name was mostly popularised by composer Arvo Pärt, Lithuania’s – by writer Czesław Miłosz.

2.3. Comparison of positivity/negativity of the images of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia

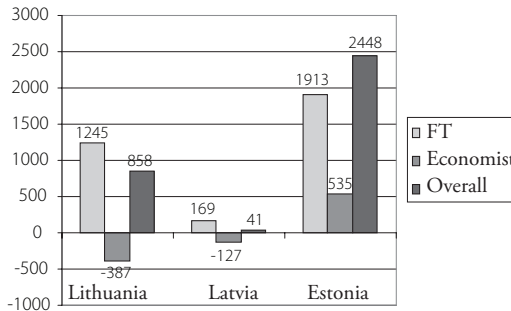
Summarised results of each of the three countries in the categories in the two periodicals being considered are presented in Graph 2; furthermore, an overall result of the positivity/negativity of the images of the three countries is presented as well. Thus we can see that in the Financial Times the images of all three states are more positive than negative, and a considerable volume of mixed information was presented as well. In The Economist, the images of Lithuania and Latvia are fairly negative, whereas that of Estonia is more positive.

Graph 2. Summarised results in the categories being evaluated(in weighted coefficients)²⁵



A useful value allowing a more precise comparison of the positivity/negativity differences of the countries’ images is valence. Valence is calculated by deducting the number of instances of negative mentioning from instances of positive mentioning.²⁵ Graph 3, in which the valence of image of each of the three states is shown, demonstrates that Estonia’s image both in the Financial Times and The Economist was the most positive, and that in the Financial Times Lithuania was very close to Estonia, whereas Latvia’s valence in the Financial Times is the lowest, although it was positive as well. The images of Latvia and Lithuania in The Economist were negative (valence with a negative sign), yet Lithuania’s image was even more negative. The overall result was that Estonia’s image was the most positive, whereas that of Latvia – the least positive.

Graph 3. Valence of the images of the Baltic States



²⁵The *Ec* abbreviation stands for The Economist.

²⁵Manheim B. J., Albritton R.B., “Changing National Images: International Public Relations and Media Agenda Setting.” *The American Political Science Review*, 78 (3), 1984, p. 645.

3. Regional identification of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, and the “Baltic States” image

As already mentioned in section one of this article, a state’s image can be perceived as its identity, because identity is not only how a state perceives and defines itself, but also how it is perceived by other actors. In our case, the concept of “other actors” includes the Financial Times daily and The Economist weekly. Thus in this section the following aspects will be analysed:

- 1) To which area/region Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia are assigned;
- 2) Summarisation of the image of the Baltics as a region – what dominating discourses define this region.

Only the units expressed as articles (instances of mentioning) will be calculated in this section, without regard to the weighted coefficient of each of these instances of mentioning.

3.1. Overall definitions and regional images of the Baltic States

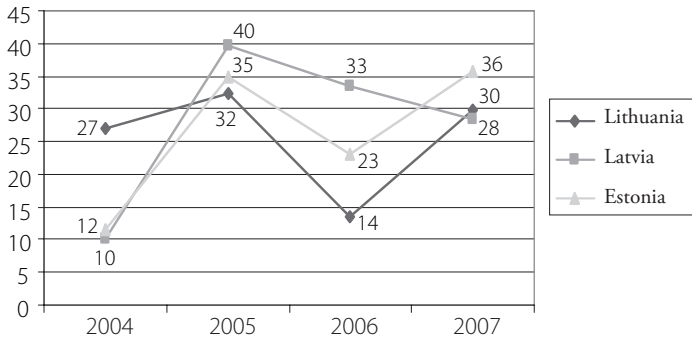
One of the main contexts in which the Baltic States were mentioned was the European Union. Readers were reminded that Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia make up part of the EU not only when discussing EU-related issues, but also when articles were dedicated to economy, business, energy, and social issues. Lithuania was mentioned as an EU member in 57 percent of all articles, Latvia – in 52 percent of the articles, and Estonia – in 51 percent of the articles. It should be noted that, more often than not, the Baltic States, just as other CEE states that entered the EU in 2004, were called “new EU members”/“the new Europe.”

The Baltic States were mentioned as NATO members considerably less: Lithuania and Estonia as NATO members were mentioned in seven percent of all articles dedicated to them, and Latvia – in six percent of the articles.

Although starting from 2004 the Baltic States are transatlantic states and members of the Western community, they continue to be mentioned as former Soviet, post-communist republics. All articles in which the three states were called “post-Soviet,” “post-communist,” “ex-Soviet,” “ex-communist,” and oth-

er similar names (“Soviet-ruled,” “Soviet-occupied”) were calculated. Thus, regardless of membership in NATO and the EU, in 57 percent of the instances of mentioning Latvia, 40 percent of the instances of mentioning Lithuania, and 39 percent of the instances of mentioning Estonia, the Soviet past was remembered. Unlike what might have been expected, with the Baltic States being more integrated in the EU and NATO, they still didn’t manage to get rid of the label of former Soviet republics. Graph 4 shows that, for example, comparing the years 2004 and 2007 in the case of each of the three states the number of articles mentioning the Soviet past had even relatively increased.

Graph 4. The number of instances of mentioning the Soviet past. The Financial Times and The Economist in 2004–2007.



Of course, the Baltic States cannot just “erase” the 50 years of their Soviet past, which constitutes part of their identity; therefore, it is reflected in their image portrayed in the international media. However, if we consider the image in terms of positivity/negativity, the aforementioned phenomenon has a negative impact, because the Soviet and communist past is often related to “backwardness, hopelessness, poverty, and inferiority.”²⁶

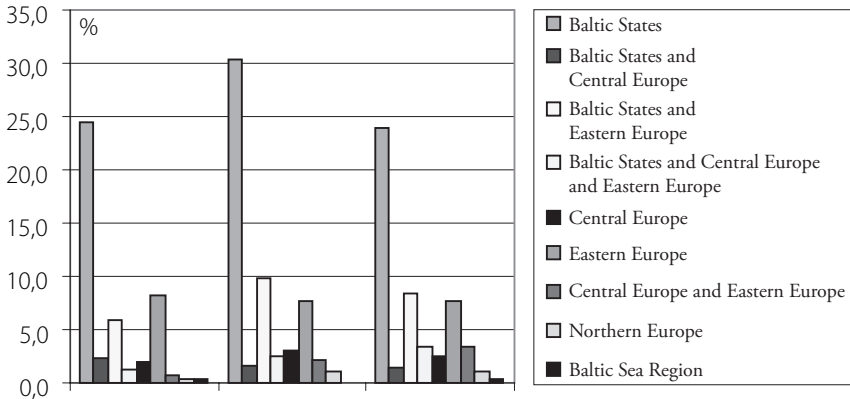
Another important factor defining the Baltic States is the region to which the Financial Times and The Economist assign each of the Baltic States. It should be noted that not all articles categorise Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia as belonging to any region (we do not mean the assigning to the EU or “the new Europe” here). For Lithuania, the regional “assignment” was contained in 45

²⁶ Szondi (note 1), p. 10.

percent of all articles, whereas for Estonia this figure was 52 percent, and for Latvia – 58 percent.

The names of the regions mentioned in the Financial Times and The Economist were fairly diverse and included “Eastern Europe,” “Central Europe,” and “Central and Eastern Europe.” Terms such as “the Baltics” and “the Baltic States” were sometimes mentioned as an individual region, even though sometimes as part of Eastern Europe or Central Europe (for example, “Of the Eastern European economies, growth of the Baltic economies was the most rapid”). Furthermore, the same article could name a state a Baltic State, and an Eastern European state. Thus with a view to reflecting the entire spectre of regional “assignment,” instances of mentioning Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia in the following regional categories were calculated: “Baltic States,” “Baltic States and Central Europe,” “Baltic States and Eastern Europe,” “Baltic States and Central and Eastern Europe,” “Central Europe,” “Eastern Europe,” “Central and Eastern Europe,” “Northern Europe,” and “Baltic Sea Region.” The obtained results (in percent) are summarised in Graph 5.

Graph 5. Regional identification (%) of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia in the Financial Times and The Economist in 2004–2007.



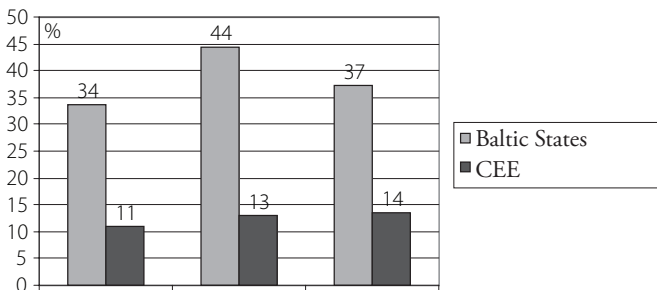
Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia were usually mentioned as “the Baltic States” (24 percent of all instances of mentioning Latvia and Estonia, and 30 percent of all instances of mentioning Latvia respectively). Thus Latvia may be considered

the “most Baltic” among the three Baltic States. The other two categories that were mentioned the most were “Baltic States and Eastern Europe” and “Eastern Europe.” Thus whereas, for instance, Lithuanians perceive Eastern Europe as the EU’s eastern neighbours (Belarus and Ukraine), in the Western media the Baltic States and other new EU members (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, etc.) are considered as Eastern Europe. Furthermore, the obtained results allow us to state that in the periodicals in question the Baltic States were often mentioned as a certain sub-region of Eastern Europe.

Other regional identifications of the three states were not very distinct: only in 0.4 percent of instances of mentioning Lithuania and one percent of instances of mentioning Latvia and Estonia included the states in the “Northern Europe” category. The concept of “Baltic Sea Region” included only 0.4 percent of instances of mentioning Lithuania and Estonia.

In order to insure clarity, all of the most mentioned regional categories were narrowed down to the following two groups: “Baltic States” (including “Baltic States,” “Baltic States and Central Europe,” “Baltic States and Eastern Europe,” and “Baltic States and Central and Eastern Europe”), and “Central and Eastern Europe” (including “Central and Eastern Europe,” “Central Europe,” and “Eastern Europe”).

Graph 6. Regional identification (%) of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia in the Financial Times and The Economist in 2004–2007.



The obtained results (see Graph 6) show that the Baltic States were fairly often identified with Central and Eastern Europe (over 10 percent of all instances of mentioning each of the three states); however, the most important

regional identification was the “Baltic States” category. It should be noted that this is confirmed not only by quantitative analysis, but also by qualitative data: the titles of some of the articles talking about Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia (together or individually) contained the name “Baltic States.”²⁷ In these cases, where only one of the three states was discussed in essence and the title contained the term “Baltic States” with the article being negative in nature (for instance, on the Latvian economy), this was detrimental for the image of the other two states as well (especially if the reader didn’t read the entire article but only the title).

It should be noted that even though Estonia, in the process of creation of its image, would like to get rid of the “Baltic State” epithet because it is identified with a “Soviet Baltic Republic,”²⁸ it is called a Baltic State no less often than Lithuania and somewhat less often than Latvia. It should also be noted that in the periodicals in question the term “Balts” is used not as an ethnic term (i.e. to identify only Lithuanians and Latvians) but as a political term, i.e. like a general name for the residents of the three Baltic States also including Estonians (even though, as is well known, the latter are Finno-Ugric rather than Balts).

Taking into consideration the analysis data, Latvia can be called “the most Baltic” among the three Baltic States. It’s rather interesting to note that in the Latvian image creation strategy the country is advised to position itself as “the most Baltic among the Baltic States,” because, as stated in the strategy, Lithuania is closer to Central Europe (due to its connection with Poland), whereas Estonia is closer to the Nordic States (due to its connection with Finland), therefore Latvia should position itself as the “true” Baltic State.²⁹ With a view to clarifying how often the states closest to the Baltic States, i.e. Poland, Nordic States, and CIS States (excluding Russia), were mentioned next to (together with) Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, all instances of mentioning were counted. The calculation included only those instances of mentioning of relations, com-

²⁷ For instance, *Three small Baltic tigers have leapt to prominence, Baltic blues, Baltic politics eclipses Europe issues* (although only Lithuania was discussed), *Americans warned of Baltic terror* (although only Latvia was discussed), *Baltic states shiver in the shadow cast by Russian occupation, Nordic banks welcome roar of the Baltic Tigers, Baltic boom states face hard landing* (although most attention was paid to Latvia).

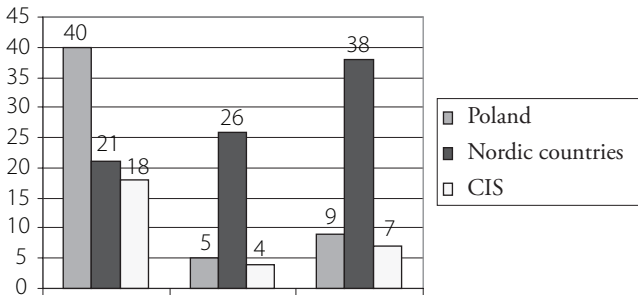
²⁸ Brüggemann (note 6), p. 343; Van Ham (note 12), “The Rise of the Brand State: The Postmodern Politics of Image and Reputation.”

²⁹ Frasher, Hall, Hildreth et al (note 8), p. 21.

mon activity, initiatives, etc. of a Baltic State and the states in question (Poland, Nordic States, CIS).

As we can see from Graph 7, Lithuania was mentioned together with Poland more often compared to the other two Baltic States (political support for Poland in EU-Russia relations, sale of Mažeikių Nafta, etc.), whereas Estonia was mentioned together with the Nordic States more often than the other two states (Estonia was often named as Finland’s economic competitor due to its low taxes). However, Latvia and Lithuania were also mentioned together with the Nordic States sufficiently often (usually in the economic and business context), thus Estonia’s uniqueness in this case was not considerable. Lithuania was also distinguished by the fact that it was often mentioned together with the CIS countries. Lithuania’s role was mentioned in the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, relations with Belarus, and cooperation initiatives in the energy sector with the Central Asian countries. Thus, compared to Latvia and Estonia, Lithuania was mentioned in more diverse regional contexts.

Graph 7. Which countries were mentioned together with Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia (number of articles).



3.2. Image of the Baltic States as a region

The following epithets were usually used to define the Baltic States:

- New EU members;
- Former Soviet republics;
- Tiny Baltic States;
- Baltic tigers;
- Success stories; and
- The new democracies.

These epithets reflect some key, repeated discourses on the Baltic States as a region:

1. “Baltic States” – *political and economic transformation success stories*: from former Soviet republics to members of NATO and the EU (which is often mentioned as a great achievement and an impressive victory won in a short period of time).
2. “Baltic States” are characterised by *the most rapid economic growth in the EU*, and only the second half of 2007 saw concerns about the “overheating” of the economies of the region; furthermore, the “Baltic States” are viewed as a single market and business development region, to which Russia and Ukraine are often related as well. This should be viewed as a positive aspect, because the image of the Baltic States as a springboard to the Eastern markets provides them with a certain competitive advantage.
3. *The image of “victims” of history*. The history of “the Baltic States” is emphasised, as well as the fact that they had disappeared from the political map of Europe for 50 years because of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and Soviet occupation. The Baltic States’ demands to Russia to condemn the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and occupation, to acknowledge Soviet crimes as equal to those of the crimes of the Nazis, etc. were mentioned as well. History has an influence on the “current status of the Baltic States” – it is “history and geography that make the Baltic nations view Russia with more caution compared to other Eastern Eu-

ropeans,”³⁰ as the Baltics were occupied not only by the Soviet Union, but also by the Russian Empire prior to that.³¹

4. *The current relations of “the Baltic States” with Russia are tense and complicated.* “The Baltic States” are mentioned as an example of Russia’s interference with the politics of the former Soviet republics; also it is stated that the Baltic States feel political and economic pressure on the part of Russia. Furthermore, the Baltic States were revealed as highly dependent on Russian energy and due to that as “more nervous” compared to other new EU members from CEE. The Baltic States together with Poland were called the traditional and harshest critics of Russia among the EU members, which aim at the EU becoming stricter with regard to Russia. It was noted that the Baltic States still fear Russian domination; however, the Financial Times and The Economist didn’t directly call the Baltic States Russophobes, even though it was mentioned when quoting other sources, i.e. representatives of Russia and large EU states. The Baltic States were also defined as an obstacle to closer EU-Russia relations.
5. *The Baltic States being especially close to Nordic States due to economic relations.* The common Baltic and Nordic stock exchange market, Scandinavian banks, the Nordic Investment Bank, and other companies actively expanding their businesses in the region were mentioned.

We can notice that the first discourse distinguished the Baltic States from other former Soviet republics, whereas the remaining discourses mentioned the features characteristic of the Baltic States and distinguishing them from other CEE states/new EU members.

³⁰ Wagstyl S., “Peacetime collaboration,” *Financial Times*, May 7, 2005.

³¹ Wagstyl S., “Baltic states shiver in the shadow cast by Russian occupation,” *Financial Times*, May 6, 2005.

Conclusions

An analysis of the images of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia in the international press (the *Financial Times* and *The Economist*) in 2004–2007 has revealed that the image of Estonia was the most positive, that of Lithuania was somewhat less positive, whereas that of Latvia was the least positive. However, the image of Estonia was also the most ambiguous (compared to the images of the other two Baltic States, a greater number of instances of mentioning of Estonia was categorised as “mixed”). Thus the statement that Lithuania’s image was the worst among the Baltic States wasn’t confirmed. Furthermore, the images of all three Baltic States (the overall results) were fairly positive. However, it should be mentioned that *The Economist* portrayed negative images of Latvia and Lithuania (and that of Lithuania was more negative), which are outweighed by the positive images portrayed by the *Financial Times*. These differences in the two periodicals may have been determined by the nature of the periodicals: *The Economist* is more oriented towards presentation of opinions rather than facts, whereas the case with the *Financial Times* is the opposite.

The conducted analysis of the images of the three states enables identifying the following factors which had the most negative and the most positive impact on the image of each of the states:

- Lithuania’s image suffered most from the internal political events (the scandals accompanying the 2004 presidential election, the State Security Department related scandal, etc.). The positive aspect to be mentioned, as paradoxical as it may seem, is the country’s attempt to become a member of the euro zone. Although this attempt wasn’t successful, it attracted considerable attention, and the media portrayed Lithuania as a country defending its position. Lithuania’s active initiatives in increasing its energy security undertaken in the past few years were also reflected in the international media, while the country’s initiatives dedicated to the promotion of democratic values and its eastern policies didn’t receive sufficient reflection and were mentioned only episodically. An important shortcoming of the image of Lithuania in the international media, compared to the other two Baltic States, should be considered the lack of attention to Lithuanian culture and tourist sector opportunities.

- Latvia's image was especially "damaged" by the worsened macroeconomic status and the threat of a "hard landing" (2007), which was also accompanied by a political crisis in the country. The biggest advantages were the NATO Summit held in Latvia and the visit of George W. Bush, which attracted international media attention and enabled presenting the country in more detail. Another considerable advantage of Latvia was the positive image of former President Vike-Freiberga. Furthermore, Latvian culture (especially music) was evaluated and presented positively. This may have depended on the image of a "singing country" formed by Latvia. Still, Latvia's position was the worst compared to the other two Baltic States, as Latvia was the least visible and its image was the least positive.
- Estonia's image suffered the most because of the conflict with Russia concerning relocation of the Bronze Soldier statue. Although this scandal enabled Estonia to become more visible and its position seemed to be understood, the conflict was a blow to the image of this peaceful, modern, non-politicising "golden province" country. The positive aspects of the country's image were as follows: economic competitiveness, innovativeness and advancement of the country (IT business), private university valued on the international level, and, compared to the other two countries, considerable attention received by the country's culture and tourism, as well as positive images of the former and current political leaders.

Relations with Russia are important for all three Baltic States, and, more often than not, these relations have an impact on the images of each of the three countries. Although at times the emphasis of the issue of relations with Russia automatically gives a negative impression, in this way an important explanatory work is carried out, which helps to understand the behaviour of the Baltic States.

Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia are often identified with "Central and Eastern Europe" or "Eastern Europe," yet the most important regional identification even after the double enlargement remains "the Baltic States." It is also true that the Baltic States themselves are often perceived as part (sub-region) of Eastern Europe or Central and Eastern Europe. Estonia, regardless of its desire

to be a “Nordic” rather than a “Baltic” country, is deemed a “Baltic country” in the international media. The concept of “the Baltic States” is sufficiently well known; therefore, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia shouldn’t try to avoid it. Upon more active promotion of the positive and unique history of the region, the “Baltic” brand could aim at reaching the level of a strong brand such as “Nordic.” Although each of the three Baltic States has to attempt to communicate its own values, culture, achievements, etc. to the world, they shouldn’t try to compete among themselves too much. Promotion of the positive image of the Baltic States region in some spheres would enable the three states to become more attractive for foreign investors due to a larger market or a wider consumer network alone, and encourage more interest on the part of foreign tourists.

Furthermore, the Baltic States should attempt to get rid of the image of victims of history (which has a negative load), and try to present their historical experience in a more positive light – as a successful example of political and economic transformation.