

**ALEKSANTERI INSTITUTE
SPRING 2011**



Thursday, 3 March 2011 at 14:15 Aleksanteri Institute, Unioninkatu 33, Meeting room 2nd floor
[Victoria Hudson](#)

The 'Russian World' Foundation: Contemporary Russian Soft Power in Motion?

ABSTRACT:

Ukraine's 'Orange Revolution' of 2004 served as a catalyst for the renewal of Russia's soft power capacity and to advance efforts to reconstruct a credible identity as a major world power. Since then, a number of major Russian national strategy documents have reflected engagement with the methods of soft power in foreign and security policy. Correspondingly, a number of policies, structures and organisations have been established with the aim of supporting the development of Russian culture and perspectives, and their promotion in the wider world.

Victoria's thesis seeks a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the Russian soft power through an evaluation of the extent to which Russian attempts to create an attractive image and to promote its own worldview resonate among members of the post-Soviet generation in Ukraine. These insights will be sought through focus groups of young leaders conducted in three cities across Ukraine. The research project makes an interdisciplinary contribution to the scholarly debate on the role of identities in foreign and security by applying methodologies developed in the field of communication research to assess the impact of Russian initiatives to exercise of 'soft' power over the creation of knowledge.

The presentation to the Aleksanteri Institute will focus on the 'Russian World' Foundation, established by Presidential decree in 2007 to promote Russian language and literature abroad, as an example of initiatives to renew Russia's soft power. Although only a single example, this case may prove demonstrative of how Russian tools of public diplomacy position themselves in relation to the Russian state and their target societies. Narratives presenting contemporary Russia will be explored, showing how a reframing of Russia's image is attempted. In addition to the grants provided for a wide range of events and initiatives supportive of Russian culture and language across the globe, the foundation also functions as a network node, which may offer considerable potential for a multiplier effect beyond the impact of its own activities.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:

Victoria Hudson is a doctoral researcher at the Centre for Russian and East European Studies (CREES) at the University of Birmingham, UK. Her thesis explores Russian initiatives to renew soft power capacity in its foreign policy, which a particular focus on the case of Ukraine. Her research interests include Russian foreign policy, particularly relations with Ukraine, soft power, identities, security studies, and communication research. In 2009 Victoria published "Sovereign Democracy as a

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Discourse of Russian Identity" in Philipp Casula and Jeronim Perovic(eds.): *Identities, Discourses and Politics: The Foundations of Russia's Stability*, ibidem-Verlag, Stuttgart.Prior to her studies at Birmingham, Victoria obtained an MSc in International Politics, with a focus on Security Studies and Post-Colonial Politics, from the University of Wales, Aberystwyth.

Victoria's stay as a Visiting Doctoral Researcher at the Aleksanteri Institute is sponsored by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) of the United Kingdom, as is her fieldwork, due to be conducted in Ukraine and Moscow during 2011.

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