

Part II. GLOBAL AND REGIONAL RELATIONS AND PROCESSES

Soft Power as a State's Foreign Policy Resource

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The article examines the 'soft power' concept which is treated as a state's foreign policy resource and a specific tool for latent governance of international processes. The work gives an insight into the content of soft power, its goals and objectives and defines its features. The author explores the content of soft power in a number of European countries, African states as well as in Russia. The article considers the conditions for implementation of Russia's soft power, the objectives to be attained to implement it, and methods to increase its efficiency.

Keywords: *hard power, soft power, foreign policy resource, latent governance, impact, influence, attraction.*

The twenty-first century sees the expanding channels through which a state affects international processes and other countries. Today a country's economic success, ideological persuasiveness, and cultural attractiveness are often more important factors than its military power and possession of nuclear weapons.

It is the hard power that was quite recently considered to be almost the key tool of foreign policy. Hard power, as is well-known, is a policy of coercion resting on a threat of use and/or use of military force against a given country. However, in the globalizing world in the context of global interconnection and interdependence it is no longer effective to use outdated political tools, including nuclear weapons, which may result in a total economic collapse of the country that has initiated a nuclear attack (except for the 'rogue states' that are not included in the global economy). A threat or use of hard power (warships cruising along the coast or planes patrolling sky above a country) is rather ineffective because it entails more negative side effects than potential doubtful gains for the aggressor. This is well exemplified by Libya, Afghanistan and Iraq. In any case it is fraught with serious losses of reputation capital, which may subsequently prove detrimental to quite tangible capital.

Today the global world is gradually fragmented into macroregional systems comprising several countries led by a strong regional power. Possessing simultaneously parameters of economic, political and military poles, such regional systems may well claim the status of global power centers in the future. With such a configuration of the geopolitical space, a potential aggressor should be aware that it will have to deal not with one particular country, but with a whole regional system whose economic, political and military potential can compare with or surpass the aggressor's potential.

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Soft Power: Essence, Goals, and Objectives

Soft power is a foreign policy resource and a specific tool of latent governance of international processes, which is brought into focus in the era of globalization.

Latent governance objects are international processes and relations as well as individual countries and regions of the world. Such latent governance has its own distinctive features: firstly, the governance subject's influence is converted into the governance object's action motivation; secondly, there are no formal institutes, methods and levers of governance.

Globalization processes cause the geopolitical space to reformat, a new hierarchical system (poles, power centers and regional powers) to form and new geopolitical axes to emerge. Such conditions make it necessary to shape a foreign policy appropriate to new realities, look for new tools and methods to attain the state's strategic goals and fulfill national interests.

Soft power allows even those countries which have a limited range of traditional influence resources (*e.g.*, states non-members of the UN Security Council, non-nuclear-weapon states or states on the geographic periphery) to latently influence international processes. In the context of a multipolar, polycentric world, any country, regardless of its position in the global hierarchy, can latently influence international processes going on within a given macroregion or even globally, provided that it makes efficient use of soft power tools.

While reasoning on soft power, they tend to refer to Joseph Nye's work (Nye 2004) whose title has not been quite adequately translated into the Russian language. According to Nye's concept, soft power is a derivative from the state's three resources: its culture, political ideology and foreign policy. Our treatment of this term is broader: soft power is a set of *external and internal factors of the state*.

External factors include the following: foreign policy and its authority in international affairs; a state's position in the global hierarchy and its geopolitical status; civilization status (there is national culture in all countries, but not all countries are successors of a specific *civilization*); political and economic development model of a state; state's development strategy and ability to put it into practice; a country's information resources, its communicative mobility and position on the Information superhighway. Internal (sociocultural) factors are represented by the following parameters: ideology, life style, quality and standards, values (including the national ideas); the national mentality; national culture (art, literature, film industry, theatre, show business); the state's creative potential, ability to generate ideas and technologies, including the creative power of a nation. Soft power is where a country's national idea and its mission in the global world are expressed.

In total, these factors contribute to an attractive and effective *image* of a country. However, since complete clarity as to the relationship between the categories of 'image' and 'soft power' remains yet to be achieved, there are two viewpoints on the issue. According to the first one, soft power is a tool to build the image. The second point of view regards the image as one of soft power components. The difference between these categories is that soft power is a strategy of action and the image is something that appears with social interaction as well as in the process of implementing this strategy.

Soft power can also be defined as *an impact by influence*. The essence of soft power is a country's ability to exert influence based on attractiveness and appeal of its image. This is how the essence of soft power is manifested:

- use of intangible assets to realize its interests and implement strategies in the global world;
- a method to achieve the desired result in foreign policy by peaceful means;
- a method for non-violent fulfillment of national interests in the global world.

The possibility to exercise soft power is based on the principles of sympathy, attractiveness, appeal and voluntary participation.

One of the critical tactical *objectives* of soft power is to create attraction, for example, by building an effective image of the country and influencing the governance object. Taking into account the definition suggested above, we can determine the strategic *goal of soft power* as motivating the governance object to act and make a political decision through an impact by influence.

The most important tools of soft power are information flows, political PR intended for foreign audience, global marketing, country's positioning in the global hierarchy, country's language and its rating in the world, people's (public) diplomacy, tourism, sport and cultural exchanges, system of education and student (youth) exchanges, ability to wage media wars, migration policy, national expatriate community, and cultural dialogue. Efficient use of the soft power tools may foster *an illusion* of mutual interest, trust, respect and mutual understanding, and provide possibilities for a given state to influence political and humanitarian processes in the world and particular countries.

There are significant differences between the concepts and practical application of soft power and hard power, a study of which provides a deeper insight into the essence of the category under consideration. In particular, soft power influence methods are voluntary participation of another country in basic foreign policy arrangements of the influenced state and its geopolitical projects, acceptance of common aims and illusion of achieving the common result, as well as intensive communication flows. The hard power methods rest on armed violence (armed intervention), economic pressure, intimidation (military, political, energy, raw materials, food, *etc.*), and bribery of the national political elite.

There is a flexible balance of applying soft power and hard power methods in the modern world. Soft power and hard power use different ways to obtain authority which may vary depending on the country's status. Typically for a rogue state, such influencing methods include a threat of use of force, for a satellite country these are remunerations or economic incentives; and for a partner or ally these are methods from the soft power tool package, that is declaration of common interests and goals and promising to achieve the common result with a 'fair' distribution of preferences.

Soft Power Influence Limits

Soft power has its limits. A natural limiter of soft power impact is the cultural and historic tradition of influence object.

The liberal concept of soft power has its limitations in the non-Western world. Some constituents (as formulated by Nye) of soft power have no effective influence in the Eastern World countries. Due to peculiar political culture of the Eastern countries, some political values of liberal democracy, such as the idea of liberal democracy, human rights and freedom (as treated in the West) are not favored there. However, the idea of charity and social support of vulnerable social strata (constituting the essence of the social state concept) are understood there rather well.

As for consumer preferences, despite the universal diffusion and really global intervention of Coca-Cola, Sneakers, MacDonal'd's, jeans, innovative devices (mobile phones, iPads, tablet PCs) and technologies (including software), the Eastern society remains the same regarding its culture and essence.

Limiting line of soft power goes along the so-called 'tectonic fault of civilization plates'. Natural limiting factors of soft power are *civilization filters and civilization barriers*.

Civilization barriers select (sort out) economic, political and sociocultural phenomena that are most inauthentic for the civilization matrix of a given country. Civilization barriers operate on the level of national consciousness archetypes and flatly reject (or fail to accept) certain phenomena of economic, political or cultural life invading from outside.

In Russia, such civilization barriers are exemplified by our society not accepting the enforced cult of the strong personality, Lone Ranger and sexual revolution (in Islamic republics) as well as imposed benchmark 'career, money, success' (as shown by social survey data, young people give more preference to family values). The doctrines of free market and monetarism approaches, positioning of such spheres as education and healthcare as a service sector, *etc.* are deemed negatively.

Civilization filters are mechanisms for interpretation and adaptation of exported economic, political and sociocultural phenomena that, although inauthentic for a given civilization matrix, may have certain elements getting in tune with civilization algorithms and may be adopted thereto. Such civilization filters functioning can be exemplified by the special Russian interpretation of the theory and practice of the Western parliamentary system, democracy, presidency institution, election system, party system, banking system, *etc.*

Where the soft power effect ends, political technologies are employed. However, most often soft power and political technologies methods are used simultaneously. In the broad sense soft power is a part of global political technologies. When a controversy arises between the *necessity* and *opportunity* to use soft power, political technologies are also put into play.

National Features of Soft Power

Recently, the political discourse has used the notion of *smart power* interpreted as a balance of hard and soft power. It allows us, therefore, to single out the following governance mechanisms and influence tools intended for international processes, applied in the modern global world: soft power, hard power, smart power and also wise power (that is usually attributed to China). Each country forms its own soft power content determined by political, economic and sociocultural differences between different countries of the world. We suggest that *these national varieties of soft power* should be called dominant power of the USA, attractive power of Europe, wise power of China, sophisticated power of India and mysterious power of the East.

How is Russia's soft power to be denoted? Different options may be offered: reserved, mild, calm, unbending power of Russia. Or probably, an unobvious one? The question remains open.

Russia's soft power

Soft power policy enables Russia to render active those resources of its external influence that may turn out to be more efficient in the modern global world. Today Russia has no coherent concept of soft power, nor clear understanding of this phenomenon. And according to sociological surveys, the image of Russia abroad is mostly negatively stereotyped.

While giving no due attention to soft power as a foreign policy resource, Russia positions itself in the global world as a military pole, drastically increasing its defense budget. Russia possesses nuclear weapons. It ranks second after the USA by sales of its weapons to the third countries. Among our partners one finds Venezuela, Algeria, Egypt, Syria, Azerbaijan, Iran, Indonesia, India, China, and Vietnam. The 2013 national budget provides 2.1 trillion rubles for the National Defense purposes (to be increased to 3 trillion rubles, *i.e.* by one third, by 2015). Over 2 trillion rubles accounts for the National Defense and Law Enforcement Activities. Both items total over 30 per cent of the budget (Argumenty... 2012). Such military reinforcement may compensate Russia's weaker positions in the economic and technological spheres and preserve its image of a strong player.

In order to implement its soft power Russia has to create its logical connection that would comply with Russia's image and mission in the complex multipolar world. This may be a logical connection 'Russia – the guarantor of safety'. The mission of Russia is to guarantee safety and stability in the region, on the continent and in the global world in general, disregarding privations and needs of its own people and sparing no effort and money. Such a mission can be exemplified by Russia's prudent initiatives on Libya, Syria, and Iran *etc.*

Here we can also refer to the thesis saying that Russia is an orthodox country striving to follow Christian commandment: 'Blessed are the peacemakers...'

It is important to emphasize Russia's status as a civilization pole. Parameters of such a pole in the multipolar world are thought to be as follows: definite civilization identity; potential of sociocultural influence; definite particularities of national mentality; identifiable civilization algorithms; civilization filters and barriers in the course of sociocultural integration of the countries in the globalizing world; consolidation based on a uniting national idea shared by all citizens; protection of national interests, values and ideals; assurance of national security; and a coherent national project.

The state's civilization resource is a rather sustainable, almost indestructible and constantly renewing resource available to our country at present. Availability of a set of civilization pole parameters may be converted into soft power.

Notwithstanding the negative stereotype of perceiving its domestic and foreign policy, Russia undoubtedly has some soft power, although in a *latent state*. In addition to conventional elements of cultural influence (Russian ballet, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, Shostakovich), the concept of Russia's soft power may include the following components: membership in the UN Security Council, energy and raw material resources, dramatic history and great victories, unique fusion of cultures of multi-ethnic Russia, unprecedented experience of interaction and cooperation of peoples of our country and dialogue of confessions, space power status, renowned weapon brands and new military developments, its vast territory and astonishingly beautiful nature.

Positioning Russia as a dynamically developing country, whose leaders are invariably among the world's top influential people, a BRICS member and leading state of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization will undoubtedly increase appeal of Russia's soft power.

References

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