



Master Thesis in International and European Relations

Russification of Soft Power

Reconceptualization of soft power in contemporary Russia

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Abstract

This research explores the limits of the concept of soft power by critically examining the reconceptualization of soft power in contemporary Russia. It seeks to highlight the peculiarities of the Russian interpretation of soft power compared to the original Western approach. To this end, it argues that Russia has a dualistic perception of soft power. On the one hand, soft power is understood as an external threat to the country's sovereignty and national security. On the other hand, soft power is seen as a great opportunity to increase the country's efficiency in attaining its foreign policy goals, improve its international image and overall performance in the global arena.

Key words: attraction, foreign policy, image, influence, Russia, soft power, public diplomacy

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Abbreviations

CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIS	The Commonwealth of Independent States
IEA	International Energy Agency
IIFMCG	Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia
IO	International organizations
ISIS	The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
MEPI	The Middle East Partnership Initiative
MFA	The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NDI	The National Democratic Institute
NED	The National Endowment for Democracy
RBTH	Russia Beyond the Headlines
RIAC	The Russian International Affairs Council
TNC	Transnational corporation
UK	The United Kingdom
UN	The United Nations
US	The United States of America
USAID	The United States Agency for International Development
USSR	The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research interest and its relevance

In contemporary world politics, there are many different channels states can use to exert their influence on various international processes and other states. It is interesting to notice, however, that a country's military might that was quite recently considered to be the most important tool of foreign policy is now rather inefficient. Under universal interrelation and interdependence conditions, use or a threat of use of military force usually entails serious losses and negative effects for all the sides of the conflict. In the 21st century, a country's positive domestic model, economic achievements, cultural attractiveness, and ideological credibility come to the fore and become more critical influencing factors in the sphere of international relations. (Leonova 2013:27; Nye 2011:99)

In today's highly globalized and deeply interdependent world, soft power matters a lot. In fact, it matters now more than ever before in the history of international relations. That is why the theoretical conception of soft power introduced by an American political scientist Joseph Nye in the early 1990s is of particular relevance in the 21st century. Despite being comparatively new and practically untested, Nye's theory has attracted much public and scholarly attention. At a recent time, the soft power concept has gained worldwide prominence and popularity though it still remains vague and underdeveloped in many aspects.

Being largely an American-centric concept, soft power first came into use among the American political leadership. Nevertheless, it has quickly spread to the rest of the world and become an integral part of the contemporary international politics. Rawnsley (2012:124) notices that soft power has become "the latest fashionable catch-all term that all governments must claim to do otherwise they are out of step with the times". Both large and small, powerful and less powerful, democratic and non-democratic states try to adopt the concept. Thus, the value of soft power is

today widely acknowledged and recognized at top levels of the political leadership around the globe.

Russian Federation is among the states eagerly trying to adopt the concept of soft power in order to regain positions it lost during the painful reforms and instability of the 1990s. Soft power is a relatively new concept in Russian official and academic discourse; however, it is becoming increasingly popular among politicians, diplomats, scholars, and journalists. In recent years, Russia's soft power has been actively discussed in connection with the Russian G20 presidency in 2013 and G8 presidency in 2014, Sochi 2014 Olympic Games, BRICS presidency in 2015 and, finally, a prolonged Ukrainian crisis started in 2013.

“Who would have expected that someday the term [soft power] would be used by ... Vladimir Putin?” Nye (2013) writes in one of his recent articles for *Foreign Policy*. Nevertheless, Russia has started to develop its soft power instruments since Putin's first presidential term (2000-2004). Considerable effort has been directed toward establishing public diplomacy institutions and developing numerous public diplomacy tools. In 2010, the term “soft power” was mentioned for the first time in the official document called “Basic Directions of the Policy of the Russian Federation in International Cultural and Humanitarian Cooperation” (MFA 2010). Since 2013, soft power has officially become a significant part of the Russian foreign policy concept (MFA 2013).

It is necessary to notice, however, that since the mid-2000s, soft power has been reconceptualized to fit Russia's interests, needs and objectives. In other words, the concept of soft power has been de-Westernized and reinterpreted taking into account Russia's historical, cultural, and socio-political background. Though Nye (2013) criticizes the Russian government for misunderstanding and misuse of his concept, the case of Russia clearly demonstrates that soft power can be seen and wielded differently. Thus, Russia's experience contributes to an overall understanding of how states adapt and implement the concept of soft power in various contexts.

1.2 Thesis aim and research questions

This Master's thesis is written from the viewpoint of our interest in the concept of soft power but also in Russian foreign policy as such. The thesis critically examines both the development of the soft power concept and the reconceptualization of soft power as an integral foreign policy element in contemporary Russia. By doing so it aims to provide a better understanding of Russia's perception of soft power, which may contribute to a general understanding of the limits of the concept of soft power as a whole.

Therefore, the main research questions are the following:

- How has the concept of soft power developed over time?
- How and why has the concept of soft power transformed in modern Russia?

It is also important to add that the two directions taken in this thesis do not exclude each other; on the contrary, they are closely interrelated and mutually supporting aspects of the aim.

1.3 Research design and methodology

The purpose of this part is to describe and discuss the research design and to delineate the methodological approach employed in the thesis. Given the thesis aim and research questions mentioned above, qualitative research design based on a secondary data analysis is utilized, and a case study approach is chosen as the most efficient way to analyze the reconceptualization of soft power in modern Russia.

1.3.1 Qualitative research

This thesis is based on a qualitative research design. In contrast to its quantitative counterpart, qualitative analysis does not rely on numeric data and tends to answer questions “how” and “why” instead of “how many”. Thus, it ideally suits the above mentioned research questions.

Qualitative approach is much more useful than quantitative approach when it is necessary to carry out soft power analysis, mainly because of the fact that there is still no agreement on how to measure soft power. Opinion polls, for example, which are usually used to measure soft-power resources, are considered to be imperfect because the results they show vary significantly depending on the way the questions are formulated, and public opinion tends to change all too often (Nye 2004b:18; Nye 2011:95). There are also various indexes to measure soft power (the IfG-Monocle Soft Power Index, the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index, and Country Brand Index, for example) but all of them are limited to the variables they rely on. It means that any quantitative measurement of soft power seems to be ephemeral.

Qualitative analysis allows researchers “to study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln 2000:3). Qualitative, or interpretive, research aims at understanding events by focusing on the diversity of societies and cultures and the motivations that underlie human behavior (Della Porta & Keating 2008:26). Though it does not offer any statistical validation, it helps to understand and examine specific perceptions of the context that influence phenomena under study. Consequently, qualitative research is appropriate to investigate Russia’s perception of soft power and explore in what way and for what reasons this Western concept has been transformed in Russia in the 21st century.

It is necessary to notice, however, that qualitative research has received a lot of criticism for being prone to subjectivity and incapable of providing precise and measurable outcomes; therefore, qualitative analysis is sometimes seen as “less scientific” than quantitative research

(Murray & Hughes 2008:150). Nevertheless, qualitative approach is widely used in the social science disciplines, which tend by their very nature to be more subjective and less exact. Qualitative research rarely produces clear-cut findings or results. Sometimes it generates more questions than answers. However, it usually involves a critical interpretation of facts and ideas and provides an in-depth analysis of observed phenomena.

1.3.2 Secondary data analysis

This thesis is a desk study based on a secondary data analysis of qualitative data. In contrast to other research designs where original primary data is collected by the researcher using questionnaires, interviews, experiments, or observations, secondary data analysis is an analysis of data that was previously collected by someone other than the researcher. Secondary data analysis is an effective research method if secondary data is available, suitable and enough to answer the research questions. Secondary data analysis can be especially useful when primary data collection is infeasible or too costly.

Today, there is a lot of accessible information on the concept of soft power in general and Russia's soft power in particular. Since the mid-2000s, soft power has become a popular topic in Russia discussed by both politicians and political scientists. In recent years, especially in connection with Sochi 2014 Olympic Games and the annexation of Crimea, Russia's soft power has become an increasingly discussed and debated topic in the rest of the world. Moreover, alternative approaches to soft power taken by such countries as, for example, Russia and China are now of particular interest to academics willing to expand the theory of soft power. Thus, there is enough up-to-date secondary data to carry out this research.

The secondary data used in the thesis has been collected from relevant books, scholarly and newspaper articles, official documents and reports, databases and internet sources, both in

English and in Russian. Collecting data from multiple sources of evidence helps to look at the same problem from different perspectives and to provide a more nuanced picture of the phenomenon under study. The data has been critically evaluated and analysed in order to answer the research questions mentioned above. Interestingly, exploring secondary data allows researchers to understand what is known on the topic of interest and what needs to be further investigated.

It is important to add, however, that this method has its limitations. A frequent complaint about secondary data analysis is that available secondary data is unsuitable for scientific research (Bhattacharjee 2012:39). Being collected for a different purpose, secondary data may not adequately address the research aim and questions. For example, there is a lot of information on how Russia practices soft power and how Russia implements its foreign policy but it is rarely explained how Russia understands soft power and why Russia behaves just so. Secondary data analysis often implies collecting vast amounts of data to arrive at some satisfactory conclusion. Nevertheless, secondary data analysis remains an important means of research.

1.3.3 Case study

Case study is one of the most popular methods of qualitative research. Case study research “investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin 2009:18). The case study method allows researchers to carry out a heavily contextualized and nuanced qualitative analysis that focuses on a wide variety of factors related to the phenomenon under investigation. It is especially efficient in demonstrating clear causal relations between the perception of the soft power concept and the specific context in which it is implemented. Case study research is often used to contribute to our knowledge of complex social, political, cultural, organizational, and even economic phenomena. Through the case study method, investigators are

able “to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” – such as, for example, international relations (Yin 2009:4).

This thesis takes a case study approach to investigate the transformation of the soft power concept in modern Russia. The choice of the method is determined, first of all, in accordance with the research questions posed in part 1.2. According to Yin (2009:2), case study is the preferred method when the researcher (a) concentrates on contemporary phenomena within a real-life context; (b) has little or no control over events; and (c) poses “how” and “why” questions. Importantly, “how” and “why” questions usually lead to the use of case study approach because they are more explanatory and tend to deal with operational links needing to be discovered and explored (Yin 2009:9). Consequently, case study is the most appropriate research method to address the research questions mentioned above and shed light on the Russian understanding of soft power.

The case of Russia is chosen to enrich and deepen our knowledge of the concept of soft power as a whole, its features and limitations. Today, there is a specific interest in Russia as one of the countries trying to develop its own approach to soft power based on the cultural and political values that differ significantly from the Western ones. Our pre-understanding that Russia’s view of international politics contradicts the Western worldview makes us curious about Russia’s perception of the Western concept of soft power. Is it misunderstood or understood differently? Is it misused or used for different purposes and in a different way? The research implies, therefore, comparing Nye’s theory and our empirical findings concerning reconceptualization of soft power in contemporary Russia, or looking for differences and similarities between the Western and Russian approaches to soft power.

It is necessary to notice, however, that all research methods have their drawbacks. As a research method, case study can be quite challenging, as it may be difficult for a researcher to establish causalities and interpret findings. The main problem with qualitative research methods in general

and case studies in particular is that they are sensitive to subjective interpretations (Della Porta & Keating 2008:56). The lack of rigor and systematic procedures can easily lead to biased views and equivocal evidences. Case studies can even result into substantiating a preconceived position (Yin 2009:72). In order to reduce the likelihood of bias and minimize subjectivity in research, researchers should use multiple sources of evidence, be open to contrary findings and report all evidence fairly.

Another common concern about case study research is that findings from a single case study may not be readily generalized to other contexts and circumstances. It is often argued that case studies “provide little basis for scientific generalization” (Yin 2009:15) because it is impossible to generalize from a single case. Yin (2009:15) claims, however, that case studies are generalizable to theoretical propositions and aim at expanding and generalizing theories (the concept of soft power in this thesis). In other words, the aim of case study research is to do an analytic not statistical generalization. Interestingly, generalizability can be significantly improved by implementing a multiple case design (Bhattacharjee 2012:40).

1.4 Theoretical perspectives

The main theory critically analyzed in this thesis is Nye’s concept of soft power. However, the phenomenon of soft power can be viewed from various theoretical perspectives. Fundamental differences in perception of the same phenomenon can be explained by different theoretical approaches taken to understand it. In the thesis, we assume that Nye as one of the first neoliberals sees soft power from the neoliberal perspective, while Russia famous for its realist approach to foreign affairs sees soft power from the neorealist perspective. This part provides a brief overview of the contrasts and similarities between the two worldviews.

In fact, neorealism and neoliberalism are two views of the same approach, as they share key positions regarding the international system. To begin with, both perspectives accept that the world system is leaderless, i.e. the international system is in the condition of anarchy. Furthermore, both theories are state-centric. Being basic units of theoretical analysis, states are seen as the dominant actors in world politics. For both neorealists and neoliberals, states behave rationally and act in their own interests. Nevertheless, all these shared assumptions do not necessarily lead to the same conclusions. (Burchill 2005:64)

In the field of international relations, neorealism and neoliberalism are two competing schools of thought. While neorealists accept anarchy as a fact, neoliberals see it as a big problem that can be solved through the creation of effective international institutions. Neorealists argue, however, that institutions are highly dependent on states that use them to carry out their traditional political rivalry for influence. For neorealists, international relations are a zero-sum game where “relative gains” are crucial. Neoliberals, on the contrary, believe that states are interested in maximizing their “absolute gains” and, therefore, tend to cooperate with each other. Neoliberals think that the most important state goal is national economic prosperity, while neorealists consider strategic security to be a greater priority. According to neorealists, the distribution of capabilities is the main determinant of states’ behavior, while neoliberals pay more attention to states’ intentions, ideals and information as the most influential factors in world politics. (Burchill 2005:64-65; Kegley 2008:27)

Thus, Nye’s view of international relations in general and soft power in particular should differ significantly from Russia’s perception. Sharply contrasting beliefs expressed by the sides are, on the one hand, the reason for re-conceptualizing soft power in Russia and, on the other hand, the roots of Nye’s criticism of Russia’s approach to his concept. In this thesis, detailed analysis of both positions is provided in order to explain how and why Russian understanding of soft power

diverges from that of Nye. It is also interesting to see if there are some aspects of Russian soft power strategy that do not fit neorealism as the assumed theoretical perspective.

1.5 Research limitations

All studies have limitations. The research limitations help to stick to the research aim and effectively answer the research questions. In this thesis, our intention is to describe and analyze transformations of the soft power concept in contemporary Russia and, thus, to expand the theory of soft power as a whole. We do not, however, examine Russia's soft power strategy or public diplomacy in details. Only the aspects that are needed to understand the peculiarities of Russia's perspective are discussed. Moreover, we neither evaluate Russia's efficiency in this sphere nor assess the Russian government's policies and decisions because it is not needed to answer the above mentioned research questions. Finally, we do not concentrate on giving recommendations for developing Russia's soft power potential and improving Russia's performance in terms of soft power, as it is a big topic that should be studied separately.

1.6 Thesis structure

The main body of the thesis consists of two big chapters, each of which is subdivided into smaller integral parts. This structural system correlates with the research questions and research design mentioned above. Consequently, it allows approaching the research problem in the most effective way.

The first chapter investigates the development of the soft power concept over time. It begins with an overview of the preceding ideas about intangible and co-optive power in order to find out what the concept of soft power stands on. Then, it describes the theory of soft power as it is

articulated by its inventor Joseph Nye. This part is particularly essential as the soft power theory is a point of departure for the critical analysis and the case study presented later. The first chapter finishes with the constructive criticism of Nye's concept expressed by some other political scientists. This part is highly important to understand what drawbacks, blind spots, and limitations Nye's soft power concept has, and why it can be understood and used differently.

The second chapter is devoted to an in-depth discussion of the case of Russia. It starts with a historical overview that provides a brief analysis of soft power in the USSR. Historical background is useful to look for the roots of the present-day problems and should not be underestimated in the analysis of the role of soft power in contemporary Russia. The second chapter also seeks to explain why the Russian government is now interested in adopting the soft power concept, and why soft power is of great importance for Russia in the 21st century. After that, it focuses on how soft power is understood in Russia, and why it is understood exactly in this way. The final part of the second chapter demonstrates how the concept of soft power was reinterpreted and transformed to better fit Russian worldview and Russia-specific political and cultural values.

In the last, fourth, chapter, the main findings and conclusions are presented, and a structured comparison is provided to outline differences and similarities between Nye's (or the "Western") approach to soft power and Russia's alternative understanding of the concept.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOFT POWER THEORY

2.1 Previous ideas

The concept of soft power is a relatively new concept in theories of international relations. The term “soft power” was coined by Joseph Nye in 1990 and was later developed into the soft power theory. However, it would not be correct to claim that the concept of soft power introduced by Nye is a brand new idea. In the past, there were other scholars interested in the nature of power who noticed that force and coercion constituted only one side of power relations between states. Nye was certainly influenced by the previous conceptions of non-coercive power; therefore, it would be reasonable to take a look at some earlier works before approaching Nye’s soft power notion.

The concept of soft power has its roots partly in at least three preceding conceptions. Firstly, Nye (2004b:8; 2011:82) refers to Carr and his categories of international power. Though Carr was a traditional realist, he distinguished not only military and economic power but also power over opinion. Secondly, Nye’s concept of soft power is often said to closely resemble Gramsci’s idea of cultural hegemony, or ideological domination. Moreover, the theory of three faces of power, described by Nye (2011:10-18) as an introduction to his own concept, is highly important to understand the idea of soft power more deeply.

2.1.1 Power over opinion

The idea about three aspects of power was introduced by British theorist Edward Hallett Carr as early as in 1939. In his famous book *The Twenty Years’ Crisis*, Carr divides international political power into three categories: military power, economic power, and power over opinion. He describes these categories as closely interdependent and practically inseparable.

In international politics, potential war has long been a dominant factor; therefore, Carr refers to military strength as the instrument of supreme importance in international relations. Military strength puts limits on the foreign policy of a country and determines its position in the international arena. Being a proponent of the realist perspective, Carr argues that the power of states depends on how qualitative and efficient their military equipment is. Thus, Great Powers have the most military power in their disposal. (Carr & Cox 2001:102-105)

Economic strength is the second form of political power, according to Carr. Economic development, trade and finance can be a foundation of a country's political supremacy making it less dependent on other countries and better prepared for war. Economic power can be applied through the export of capital and in the form of the control of foreign markets. Carr emphasises that economic and military instruments of power are used for the same purposes and cannot be isolated from each other. (Carr & Cox 2001:105-120)

Power over opinion is the third element of power. Carr calls it "a distinctively modern weapon" (Carr & Cox 2001:120), which is just as essential as military and economic strength. Its importance is steadily increasing along with the growing number of actors whose opinion is seen as politically influential. International politics is becoming more and more dependent on the viewpoint of large masses; therefore, political leaders look for instruments to affect it.

Carr claims that rhetoric and the art of persuasion have always been an essential part of statesmanship. In the first part of the 20th century, the organised use of power over opinion becomes a regular and extremely powerful tool of foreign policy. The mass form of power over opinion, propaganda, comes to the fore and becomes appropriate not only to periods of hostilities but even to a time of peace. Such instruments as education, radio, films, and press become widely used channels for propaganda. (Carr & Cox 2001:120-125)

Most states, whether democratic or totalitarian, recognise that power over opinion is a highly important aspect of political power. Carr notices, however, that the attitude to mass opinion

varies. Both democratic and totalitarian propagandists insist that they follow the will of the masses. Nevertheless, totalitarian states are usually criticised for enforcing people to conform, while democracies are often accused of illusory nature of their freedom of opinion. (Carr & Cox 2001:121)

Propaganda is inevitably associated with state control. However, from a liberal perspective, mass opinion should not be artificially directed. Propaganda can never give absolute power over opinion because it is limited in two ways. Firstly, it is always necessary to consider objective facts. If propaganda is seen as untrue, it cannot be successful. Secondly, it is necessary to take human nature into account. Power over opinion, Carr explains, may defeat its own end and make human beings reject it in some point. (Carr & Cox 2001:129-130)

Finally, power over opinion is closely connected to military and economic forms of power and cannot be dissociated from them. Power over opinion accompanies military and economic might helping to pursue a state's interests both at home and in other countries. Carr emphasises that it is paramount for states to implement a skilful mix of military power, economic power, and power over opinion in order to be successful in the international arena. (Carr & Cox 2001:123, 127)

2.1.2 Gramsci's hegemony

Antonio Gramsci was an Italian Marxist theoretician and politician who made a considerable contribution to the Marxist theory of political power. Despite fragmentary character of his texts, Gramsci's concepts of hegemony, ideology and civil society guided many scholars who came after him. Nye's concept of soft power, for instance, closely resembles Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, or ideological domination, as noticed by Hayden (2012:38), Hruleva (2014), Ponomareva (2013), Vasilevskytė (2013:145), and Zahran & Ramos (2010). This part introduces

only some of the aspects of Gramsci's extensive political thought to demonstrate how Gramsci's ideas and the concept of soft power overlap.

In general, Gramsci understands power as a relation. In his view, hegemony is a relation between social classes where the hegemonic class exercises power over subordinate classes applying a combination of coercion (domination) and persuasion (intellectual and moral leadership). This relation is, importantly, "not of domination by means of force, but of consent by means of political and ideological leadership" (Simon 1982:21).

Ideology is one of the key terms in Gramsci's political thought. For Gramsci, ideologies have a material existence as they are embodied in institutions, organizations and people's social practices. The main function of ideology is to act as cement unifying a bloc of various social forces and creating a collective will. Consequently, the dominant ideology cannot be a pure class ideology; it should combine the interests of diverse classes and groups in order to create a common conception of the world. Moreover, it should be based on an active consent rather than a passive submission. In other words, the dominant ideology should be negotiated rather than imposed. (Simon 1982:58-66)

Finally, Gramsci emphasizes the central role of civil society in understanding the state. He distinguishes between political society (the armed forces, police, prisons and law courts) and civil society (political parties, trade unions, churches and cultural associations). Gramsci sees the state as a synthesis of political society (sphere of coercion) and civil society (sphere of hegemony). This combination of force and consent should be in a constantly changing balance to correspond to the actual conditions and circumstances. (Simon 1982:67-72)

2.1.3 Three faces of power

The theory of three faces of power was developed by a number of political and social scientists during the second half of the 20th century. This theory describes three different dimensions, or aspects, of power: commanding change, controlling agendas, and establishing preferences (Nye 2011:11).

The first aspect, commanding change, is sometimes called the “face” of power. It implies the ability to make others change their way of acting against their initial preferences. This dimension of power was defined by Yale political theorist Robert Dahl. In his article *The concept of power* (1957), Dahl outlined that power relations involve getting others to do something they would not otherwise do. He further elaborated on this idea in his book *Who governs? Democracy and power in an American city* (1961). The “first face of power” is a traditional aspect of power, which still remains relevant today. However, it only partly covers power behavior. In order to understand power clearly, two other aspects of power should not be ignored. (Dahl 1957, 1961; Nye 2011:11-12)

The second aspect is often called the “second face of power”. It was developed by political scientists Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz. In their article *Decisions and Nondecisions: An Analytical Framework* (1963), they noticed that Dahl’s definition of power ignored such an important element as agenda-framing. Controlling agendas implies using ideas and institutions to frame the agenda for action. Command power and coercion may never be necessary, if it is possible to shape others’ preferences and influence others’ opinion of what is legitimate and what is not. Others’ acceptance of the agenda as a legitimate one makes agenda-setting an instrument of co-optive power. (Bachrach & Baratz 1963; Nye 2011:12-13)

The third aspect, establishing preferences, can be called the “third face of power”. In the 1970s, it was described by sociologist Steven Lukes in his book *Power: a radical view* (2005). This dimension of power, which was also ignored by Dahl, means the ability to get others to want the

same outcomes that one wants by creating others' basic values, perceptions, and beliefs. This dimension involves not merely framing the situation in order to make others behave in a desired way. It implies shaping others' initial preferences so that they change their strategy in one's interest to achieve one's goals. (Lukes 2005; Nye 2011:13)

Interestingly, these three aspects are also called public, hidden and invisible faces of power depending on the degree of a target's awareness about such power being used (Nye 2011:14). For instance, the target always feels the effect of command power and definitely knows about the threats imposed. However, the target may or may not be aware of the agenda-setting. Finally, the target audiences tend to be unaware of the fact that somebody establishes preferences for them.

In conclusion, all three faces of power should be taken into consideration for a holistic understanding of the nature of power and for a broader understanding of international relations in general. A comprehensive approach allows expanding the set of instruments of influence and opens up new opportunities to affect other's behavior and beliefs. In order to create effective policies and benefit from power relations, it is highly important to take different dimensions of power into account.

2.2 Nye's soft power concept

The concept of soft power was pioneered and developed by Joseph Nye, an American political scientist, professor at Harvard University and a member of the American Academy of Diplomacy. Nye started to work on his theory in the late 1980s. He coined the term "soft power" in his book *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (1990). The concept was further developed in his book *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (2004b) that explores implications and limits of soft power and gives many examples based on polling data and historical research. Nye continued to elaborate on his idea of soft power in the book *Power*

in *The Global Information Age: From Realism to Globalization* (2004a) and numerous articles. The culmination of Nye's work on the concept of soft power is his book *The Future of Power* (2011) that emphasizes that both hard and soft power are needed to construct smart power strategies in the twenty-first-century context.

2.2.1 Hard power and soft power

Joseph Nye's theory of soft power is based on the fundamental idea that power comes in various forms. In general, Nye (2011:10) defines power as "the ability to alter other's behavior to produce preferred outcomes". There are different ways to exercise power or to exert influence on the behavior of others. On the one hand, power can be exercised through command and coercion to force others to do what one wants. On the other hand, power can also be exercised through attraction and persuasion to make others want what one wants.

Nye starts to explore the differences between various ways of exercising power in the end of the 20th century. In his book *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (1990), he describes two methods of power. A directive or commanding method of power implies the ability to change other's actions. Command power rests on inducements and threats, "carrots" and "sticks". An indirect or co-optive method is based on the ability to shape other's preferences. Co-optive power rests on the attractiveness of one's culture, ideas, and values. Moreover, it can involve the ability to manipulate the political agenda in a manner that forms the preferences of others.

In 1990, Nye (1990:32) uses the terms "hard power" and "soft power" for the first time to emphasize the distinction between commanding and co-optive methods of power. He defines hard power as "the ability to get desired outcomes through coercion and payment" (Nye 2011:16). Military force, economic sanctions, payments, and bribes are examples of hard-power

resources. Soft power is defined by Nye (2011:21) as “the ability to affect others through the co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction in order to obtain preferred outcomes”. Culture, values, policies, and institutions are most likely soft power resources.

Hard power and soft power are both aspects of the ability to achieve goals by affecting others’ behavior. However, the nature of behavior and tangibility of resources differ. Hard power is coercive power based on commands and threats, while soft power is attractive power, which rests on legitimacy and credibility. Hard power is usually associated with tangible power resources and soft power tends to correspond with intangible assets though these connections are not always absolute in practice. Soft power is not the same as influence and not merely persuasion. Hard power also can influence, persuade and even attract but it does not lead to acquiescence. Soft power, on the contrary, makes others voluntarily follow one’s values and beliefs.

In a global information age, soft co-optive power is as significant as hard command power. Current trends such as globalization, growing interdependency and diffusion of power from states to non-state actors make soft power a highly important and desirable element of foreign policy of a state, along with hard power. To succeed in such circumstances, it is necessary to use the full range of power resources and to combine different aspects of power depending on the specific context. In the book *The Future of Power* (2011), Nye (2011:22-24) emphasizes that a skillful combination and a right balance of hard and soft power allows developing “smart power”, which is the most effective foreign policy strategy today.

2.2.2 Sources of soft power

Each country has three basic soft-power resources: culture (cultural aspects, which are attractive to others), political values (in case they correspond to political decisions), and foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate at home and abroad). Discussing soft power resources, it is important to remember that soft power potential of a country depends heavily on the parenthetical conditions and the context in which power relations exist.

Culture is an extremely complicated phenomenon, which can be understood differently. In a broad sense, culture is a set of ideas, values, traditions, and attitudes, which are typical for a particular group of people or a certain society. Cultures can interact through, for instance, commerce, tourist visits, academic exchanges, and personal contacts. There are two types of culture: high culture such as education, literature, and arts produced for elites and popular culture such as music produced for mass consumption. Moreover, cultural aspects can be parochial, national or universalistic. Obviously, narrow values can hardly be transformed into impressive soft power, while universal values widely shared by others can become a great soft power resource. (Nye 2004b:11-13)

Another potential source of soft power involves political values. The values advocated by a government domestically and in international institutions are strongly influential over the preferences of others. A country's soft power can be reinforced or undermined by government policies at home and abroad. In order to produce soft power, it is necessary to follow attractive political values. Moreover, domestic and foreign policies should be based on a broader approach to national interests taking others' opinions into consideration. Hypocritical, arrogant and egoistic policies based on a narrow approach weaken a country's soft power and, therefore, should be avoided. (Nye 2004b:13-14)

In addition, a government's foreign policy can attract or repel others (Nye 2004b:14). Thus, promotion of broadly shared values such as peace, democracy and protection of human rights are

likely to increase attractiveness of a country's political ideals and provide a basis for soft power. On the contrary, arrogance and aggression may destroy soft power and seriously damage the image of a country. Moreover, Nye (2004b:63-65) notices that unilateralism of foreign policy can be costly, while multilateralist approach usually helps to legitimate state power and thus to generate soft power.

In conclusion, it is necessary to add that the sources of soft power are not restricted to culture, values, and policies. Interestingly, some power resources can produce both hard and soft power depending on the particular context. Economic power, for instance, can be utilized to attract to welfare as well as to coerce by initiating economic sanctions. Even military might, if used wisely, can become a soft power resource attracting others to strength. Consequently, the main challenge governments face with lies in combining military, economic, and soft power assets so that they reinforce one another.

2.2.3 Soft power behaviors

Nye (2011:90-91) emphasizes that soft power fits with the three faces of power, a concept described in part 1.1.3. Each dimension involves not only hard but also soft methods of influence. Under the first face of power, attraction and persuasion can be used to make others do what they otherwise would not do. Under the second face of power, agenda can be framed in order to influence others. Under the third face of power, attraction can help to shape other's initial preferences. Consequently, there are three closely interrelated types of soft power behavior: attraction, persuasion, and agenda-setting.

The ability to attract implies drawing attention and creating alluring effects. Depending on the context, attention can be positive or negative, welcome or unwelcome. Nye (2011:92) notices that it is positive attraction based on benignity, competence, and charisma that may generate soft

power. However, if an actor is perceived as manipulative or incompetent, all the efforts to attract others may produce indifference or even revulsion. Moreover, attraction is often asymmetrical, which may lead to hard power response, rather than soft power accumulation.

Persuasion means the use of arguments instead of force, threats, or payoffs to affect others' actions and beliefs. Persuasion usually involves manipulation because it tends to neglect some points, while emphasizing others. Dishonest persuasion may even involve fraud. Nevertheless, the use of rational arguments, facts and emotional appeals helps to present issues in attractive ways. It is important to add that persuasion is especially effective if it comes from a trusted source. (Nye 2011:93)

Agenda-setting is closely related to attraction and persuasion. In order to make the target more persuasive, arguments should be attractively framed. Interestingly, framing of an agenda may be based on indirect persuasion, which rests on emotional appeal and narratives rather than logical reasoning. The aim of agenda-setting is to make the target see one's arguments as credible and legitimate. However, if a framed agenda is perceived as manipulation and propaganda, persuasive power crashes. (Nye 2011:93-94)

Finally, it is necessary to notice that soft power depends heavily on the receiving audience. The targets are just as important as the agents. It should always be kept in mind that what is acceptable and attractive in one country may be repelling in others. Behaving in a certain manner may generate soft power in region A; nevertheless, at the same time it may produce revulsion in region B. In order to succeed, it is particularly important to take the target's preferences and opinions into consideration.

2.2.4 Public diplomacy as a way to wield soft power

Information has always been power. However, public attitudes to information changed in the global information age. Due to the rapid development and spread of information technologies the costs of processing and transmitting information decreased dramatically. Today, many people all over the world have access to multiple information channels, such as press, radio, TV, and the Internet. This leads to a “paradox of plenty”: as information becomes plentiful, attention becomes scarce. In an information-rich society where attention is the scarce factor the ability to select valuable information becomes highly important, and those who control information become extremely powerful. Cue-givers who can tell people what to focus on become more in demand. In these circumstances, the importance and relevance of public diplomacy is difficult to underestimate. (Nye 2011:103)

Public diplomacy is a relatively new conception that has more than 150 definitions (Kerr 2013:193). In order to explain what public diplomacy means, Nye (2004b:107) refers to Edward R. Murrow who sees public diplomacy as “interactions aimed not only at foreign governments but primarily with nongovernmental individuals and organizations, and often presented as a variety of private views in addition to government views”. This definition emphasizes the difference between classical diplomacy, or “cabinet diplomacy”, and public diplomacy. Traditionally, diplomacy is a privilege of sovereign states and implies government to government communication. Public diplomacy, on the contrary, aims at government to people communication. Effective public diplomacy allows influencing other governments indirectly by affecting public opinion abroad. Moreover, public diplomacy helps to promote an attractive image of a country and thus acquire more soft power.

There are three dimensions (stages, concentric circles) of public diplomacy. The first dimension, daily communications, implies explaining the context of both domestic and foreign policy decisions as well as answering misleading information immediately. It is usually measured in

hours and days. The second dimension, strategic communication, involves public diplomacy campaigns, symbolic events and communications focused on particular policy initiatives. It may take weeks, months, or even years. The third dimension of public diplomacy is development of lasting relationships through exchanges, scholarships, conferences, training etc. It is the broadest dimension that occurs over many years and even decades. All dimensions are equally important to utilize public diplomacy effectively and to wield soft power. (Nye 2011:105-106)

Public diplomacy is an instrument widely used by political actors in order to create soft power. Nye (2011:101) emphasizes that soft power is only partly generated by states. Non-state actors within and outside the country can have their own soft power and affect states' efforts to generate soft power in positive and negative ways. Today, governments are still the main diplomatic actors; nevertheless, international organizations (IOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), transnational corporations (TNCs) and even individuals can participate in public diplomacy and shape environment for government policies. Thus, public diplomacy can be divided into official government-initiated public diplomacy and nongovernmental activities initiated by various non-state actors (Kerr 2013:198-202).

The role of non-governmental actors in international relations in general and in public diplomacy in particular is steadily increasing. One of the main reasons for this is the fact that people in postmodern societies tend to be more skeptical of authority and mistrustful of governments. As a result, many governments today enjoy less public trust than some NGOs do. Non-state actors appear to be more credible, and credibility is a significant source of soft power. In the information age, credibility is the crucial resource, which political actors compete and struggle for. Nye (2011:104) notices that "politics has become a contest of competitive credibility" where the main goal is to become more credible and/or destroy credibility of others. Credibility contributes to positive reputation, while propaganda may damage one's image seriously. Without credibility, the instruments of public diplomacy cannot help to generate soft power.

Nye (2011:108) also mentions that public diplomacy is becoming more complicated evolving “from one-way communications to a two-way dialogue model”. This evolution has given rise to “the new public diplomacy”, which is aimed not only at messaging but also at listening. It implies not only promotion campaigns but also building relationships with civil society actors abroad. Basically, it involves peer-to-peer communication. In this new approach to public diplomacy, networks between NGOs at home and in other countries come to the fore. Governments tend to participate in rather than control such networks, which usually makes them more credible but inevitably leads to a dilemma about control. Nye (2011:109) notices that in a global information age diminished control may paradoxically result in more soft power.

In conclusion, public diplomacy is a complex instrument which governments cannot be in full control of. Public diplomacy is difficult to use as different approaches are required to influence different target audiences. To be effective in public diplomacy in today’s information age, governments have to become more sensitive to foreign perceptions. It is important to understand that sustained attraction and credibility can only be achieved as a result of consistency of words with actions and values with practice. Any suspicion of propaganda may undermine all the efforts to produce soft power. Moreover, public diplomacy requires patience as it rarely gives immediate results. Nevertheless, public diplomacy is highly important today as a way to improve a country’s image, reach greater understanding, develop trust, build long-lasting relationships and, finally, wield soft power.

2.2.5 The role of soft power in a global information age

The nature of power is changeable. In the global information age, power is becoming more diffused, less fungible, less tangible, less hierarchical, and less coercive. All these transformations of power lead to new opportunities, new challenges, and new requirements for political actors. In the books *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (1990)

and *The Future of Power* (2011), Nye describes these trends as fundamental to the growing significance of soft power in the world of politics.

Firstly, power is diffusing from great powers to smaller states and from governments to private actors. In the twenty-first century, institutions, organizations, corporations, terrorist networks, and even celebrities can be actors of power. A number of trends contributing to the diffusion of power include economic interdependence, the spread of technology, modernization and urbanization in developing nations, transnational actors, and global problems. This means that traditional power resources become insufficient to achieve goals. New sources of power such as the ability to cooperate, communicate effectively and use multilateral institutions come to the fore. (Nye 1990:182-188)

Secondly, power is becoming less fungible, or less transferable from one political issue to another. This implies that actual power depends increasingly on the specific context in which certain relationships exist. In today's highly globalized and deeply interdependent world, the direct use of force is often inappropriate. Moreover, militarization may even reduce a country's ability to achieve its goals. Nevertheless, the traditional geopolitical interests remain relevant; therefore, military power still has some fungibility. (Nye 1990:189-190)

Thirdly, power is becoming less tangible. The significance of intangible power resources has increased dramatically. Universalistic culture, broadly shared values, and national cohesion are now significant factors. Power is shifting from the "capital-rich" to the "information-rich". Those who have access to the channels of communication become more influential. The ability to navigate effectively through the plentiful information and timely respond to it becomes extremely important. Flexibility and organizational skills become critical power resources. (Nye 1990:195-198; 2004a:90)

Moreover, it is impossible to ignore that power is becoming less hierarchical in a global information age. This means that the importance of social networks has increased dramatically.

In such a networked world, two-way communications, co-option and attraction are much more effective than command and coercion. Governments now have to communicate not only with other governments but with publics, societies and NGOs, which they cannot fully control. In order to succeed in such an environment, leaders should learn how to make proper use of soft power. (Nye 2011:101-102)

Finally, power is becoming less coercive due to growing interdependency between states. Under the current conditions, using such instruments of power as economic threats and military force tends to be more costly than in the past. Nye (2004b:115) outlines that the price in terms of damaged image and lost credibility may be extremely high. Consequently, as the coercive types of power resources are now unacceptable in many situations, the less threatening applications of power are becoming more appropriate. (Nye 1990:190-195; 2004b:115)

In conclusion, the above mentioned trends illustrate that the significance of hard power diminishes and emphasize the paramount importance of soft power in today's world politics. In the book *Power in the global information age: from realism to globalization* (2004a:90), Nye argues that the countries that are well placed in terms of soft power and manage to use it effectively perform better in the international arena. In the global information age, soft power is becoming a more and more significant element in the mix of military, economic and soft power.

2.3 Soft power after Nye: criticism of the concept

The concept of soft power introduced by Joseph Nye at the turn of the 20th and the 21st centuries has attracted significant attention in scholarly and public debates. The term “soft power” has been used in many articles on foreign affairs published in popular newspapers and magazines in different countries, especially in the US. Moreover, the concept has received the attention of leading politicians all over the world. For instance, the importance of soft power was emphasized

by the US President Barack Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates (Nye 2011: ix).

Many political scientists around the globe have also paid great attention to the concept of soft power. After having analyzed Nye's theory, some of them found it underdeveloped, limited in terms of explanation and principally restricted to the case of the US. Despite Nye's concept's popularity, it has been extensively criticized by such scholars as, for example, Geun Lee, Giulio Gallarotti, Kazuo Ogoura, Pavel Parshin, Pinar Bilgin, and Ying Fan. It is important to notice, however, that all these criticisms contribute to the development of the idea extending Nye's theory and improving it to some extent. Undoubtedly, considerable scholarly attention to the concept of soft power shows its growing significance to the field of international relations.

2.3.1 Confusion about definitions

Three general points of criticism of Nye's soft power theory can be outlined: definition of the newly coined term, sources of soft power and limitations of the concept (Fan 2008:152). The first aspect of criticism, uncertainty about definitions, was addressed by such scholars as, for instance, Fan, Lee, Ogoura, and Parshin. Defining the key terms is an important part of every concept; however, soft power still does not have a single clearly defined meaning. Confusion about definitions of soft power is probably one of the key reasons the concept is so often misunderstood, distorted and misused.

In the article "Soft power: Power of attraction or confusion?", Fan (2008:148) notices that Nye's definition of soft power varies. Nye describes soft power as "getting others to want the outcomes that you want" (2004b:5); "the ability to shape the preferences of others" (2004b:5); "the ability to attract" (2004b:6); "the power to attract - to get others to want what you want, to frame the issues, to set the agenda" (2004c); "the ability to affect others through the co-optive means of

framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction in order to obtain preferred outcomes” (2011:21); and “the ability to produce outcomes through persuasion and attraction rather than coercion or payment” (2012).

Nye’s own definition of soft power was modified so many times that the term became uncertain and ambiguous. Other scholars look for different approaches to the concept in their attempts to give better definitions of soft power. For example, Parshin (2013:17) broadly defines soft power as the ability to accomplish a certain goal by choosing the instruments that are expected to cause relatively less (tangible or intangible) damage compared to other instruments available to achieve the same goal. However, Parshin (2013:17) emphasizes that a clear narrow definition should also be found to set the limits of the concept.

Interestingly, one of the narrow definitions of soft power is suggested by Ogoura in his article “The limits of soft power” (2006). In his opinion, soft power is closely associated with culture and separated from the state and any kind of state-based power. For Ogoura (2006), soft power is “the power of people engaged in cultural, religious, or educational activities to cultivate a common global awareness, increase creativity, and enrich the international community as a whole”. However, this definition contradicts Nye’s initial explication. According to Nye (2011:84-87), soft power is not restricted to cultural aspects; culture is only one of many different sources that, if used wisely, may produce soft power.

Many scholars want to make the concept of soft power clearer trying to provide a well-structured theoretical framework for Nye’s ideas. For instance, Lee (2009) suggests a “resource-based theory of soft power” linking hard power to material resources and soft power to non-material resources. Lee (2010:116) defines soft power as a “power to construct the preferences and images of self and others through ideational or symbolic resources that lead to behavioral changes of others”. His definition makes it easier to discern what soft power is, though Nye

would argue that it is a big mistake to make an absolute connection between soft power and non-material resources (see part 2.2.2).

In conclusion, many political scientists find Nye's definitions of soft power loose, vague and unclear. Fan (2008:149-150) argues that "the concept has been so stretched that the term comes to mean almost everything and therefore almost nothing". A lack of a clear definition of soft power leads to uncertainty and misunderstanding of the whole concept. As Parshin (2013:11) asserts, the confusion about definitions should be cleared up before the concept of soft power can become a more useful analytical tool in the field of international relations.

2.3.2 Uncertain sources of soft power

The confusion on what exactly constitutes soft power is one of the main reasons for the misunderstanding surrounding Nye's concept of soft power. Such political scientist as, for instance, Bilgin & Elis, Gallarotti, Fan, Ogoura, and Vasilevskytè seek to inquire what can or cannot be considered a soft power source, how various soft power resources can be categorized and, finally, how they can be used to turn soft power potential into real soft power.

Interestingly, Nye changed his mind about soft power resources in the process of theorizing. Concentrating on the case of the US in 1990, Nye (1990:191-193) named three main sources of American soft power: American culture, American multinational corporations, and international laws and institutions. In 2004, however, Nye (2004b:11) identified culture, political values and foreign policies as three basic soft power sources. Nye gave no explanation why he altered his ideas, which makes his concept even more controversial (Fan 2008:149).

Nevertheless, Nye (2011:85-86) mentions that soft power resources are not restricted to culture, values, and policies. Economic and military resources can also contribute to soft power in certain contexts. Thus, some political scientists try to classify various sources of soft power in order to

make Nye's concept systematically categorized. Gallarotti (2011), for example, distinguishes between domestic sources (domestic policies and actions) and international sources (foreign policies and actions) with multiple sub-sources within each.

Other scholars argue if culture, values, and policies can be considered soft power sources at all. According to Fan (2008:149), for instance, core values are an essential element of any society's culture, while a country's foreign policy is the mere presentation of its hard power. Consequently, both values and policies cannot be seen as separate sources or forms of soft power. To make the concept of soft power clearer, Fan (2008:149) suggests that soft power should be limited to cultural power.

Most scholars emphasize, moreover, that sources of soft power are not power per se. Soft power rests not on the resources themselves but on their attractiveness to others. Nevertheless, Fan (2008:153) doubts whether attraction power matters at the nation level. Both Ogoura (2006) and Vasilevskytė (2013) claim that Nye misses the fact that other states act depending on their own interests. In other words, the party receiving the influence will accept the attractive power only in case it accords with its own needs.

Translation of potential soft power resources into the behavior of attraction is usually a long and complicated process, which has not been described by Nye. Bilgin & Elis (2008:12) notice that Nye fails to explain how soft power can be produced. Trying to extend Nye's theory in this aspect, Fan (2008:150) outlines four key factors needed to convert soft power resources into real soft power: capital, political structure, social capital and social structure.

To summarize, the confusion over the sources of soft power is a blind spot in the soft power concept. There is no agreed list of the sources of soft power. More importantly, political scientists do not have deep understanding of how soft power resources can be used to generate soft power. The only thing that is clear for now is that soft power of a country should be judged based on the outcomes rather than the soft power resources.

2.3.3 Hard power versus soft power

The differences between hard and soft power may seem evident at first sight. However, it can be difficult to distinguish between them when it comes to real life situations. Many political scientists notice that it is often unclear what type of power is in use. Such scholars as, for example, Bilgin & Elis, Cooper, Fan, Gallarotti, Lee, and Ogoura, analyze the concept of soft power in order to understand how hard and soft power can be related to each other.

Five general ways of understanding soft power in relation to hard power are outlined by Fan (2008:152) in his article “Soft power: Power of attraction or confusion?” (2008):

1. Soft power is an integral part of hard power.
2. Soft power is the ‘soft’ or tactical part of power.
3. Soft power is an extension of hard power.
4. Soft power is linked with hard power, and can only work with the support of hard power.
5. Soft power is independent of hard power.

Nye (2004:9) himself believes that soft power does not depend on hard power; nevertheless, many scholars tend to disagree. Hard and soft aspects of power are often perceived as interrelated and closely interconnected facets of state power.

Cooper (2004), Fan (2008) and Ogoura (2006) share the opinion that soft power cannot be acquired without sufficient hard power to back it. As Fan (2008:152) notices, no country can possess significant soft power if its economic performance is dissatisfactory. A country can barely influence others if it lacks any hard presence in the political arena. Some hard means are usually needed to support soft power by communicating agendas and promoting ideas. Consequently, hard power is necessary to realize a country’s full soft power potential.

Having analyzed the relationship between hard and soft aspects of power, Fan (2008:151) comes to an interesting conclusion that soft power always has hard power behind or beneath. As Cooper

(2004) put it, “soft power is the velvet glove, but behind it there is always the iron fist”. Soft power is therefore nothing other than a manifestation of hard power. Ogoura (2006) adds that soft power is a subtle way of rationalizing the exercise of hard power, especially when it lacks international legitimacy. In other words, soft power can be called the “soft” face of hard power (Fan 2008:151), which gives a reason to see the whole concept of soft power as “a kind of hypocrisy” (Ogoura 2006).

Though hard and soft facets of power are often seen as interrelated, it is important to notice that there have been some attempts to solve the problem of distinguishing between them. For instance, Lee has proposed a simple way to differentiate hard power from soft power by attaching the nature of power to its resources. Thus, Lee equates hard power with tangible resources and soft power with intangible resources. Later, however, he recognizes that it is possible to attract with military might and coerce with ideas, which contradicts his original understanding of soft power (see part 2.3.1).

Gallarotti (2011) emphasizes that the principal distinction between hard and soft power depends not on tangibility of power resources but on the context and the manner in which they are used. The separation of hard and soft power resources is thus arbitrary and categorically imperfect. In the article “Hard power, soft power: Toward a more realistic power analysis” (2008), Bilgin & Elis (2008:12) show that soft power is not limited to non-material resources and can be successfully produced through compulsion.

To sum up, many political scientists agree that the relationship between hard and soft power is tricky and problematic. Hard and soft forms of power seem to be closely interconnected; however, they are neither rigid complements nor perfect substitutes for each other (Gallarotti 2011). According to Fan (2008:152), the main question now is how a country can exert smart power, or wield both hard and soft power so that they work together to reinforce rather than undermine each other. Though Nye’s soft power concept is highly debatable, most scholars

acknowledge the importance of smart power strategies in today's world (for example, see Gallarotti 2014; Nossel 2004).

2.3.4 Unilateralist approach to soft power

The concept of soft power developed by an American political scientist and based primarily on the case of the US is essentially American-centric in nature. This fact does not diminish the importance of the concept in the sphere of international relations; however, it is often the cause of criticism of Nye's theory in terms of its applicability and universality. Bilgin & Elis, Lee, Gallarotti, and Fan, among other scholars from all over the world, critique Nye's soft power concept for being principally limited to the analysis of contemporary US foreign policy.

To begin with, Nye is often criticized for accepting the stockpile of the US soft power as pre-given (Bilgin & Elis 2008:11). He neither explores the historical processes through which the US culture has become attractive nor clarifies why particular values have become considered as the "right" ones. According to Fan (2008:153), Nye falsely assumes that American culture is superior and Western values are universal. It is thus highly controversial if Western values and principles are truly beneficial for all nations (Gallarotti 2011).

Many people around the globe are skeptical about the superiority of American way of life and consider it a root of political conflicts in the world (Fan 2008:154). In the Middle East, for instance, the US core values such as freedom and liberation have become associated with violence and unwanted occupation (Nossel 2004:135). Moreover, the US operations in Afghanistan and Iraq show that western-style democracy can hardly be exported to some countries and can be inappropriate for some societies (Fan 2008:154).

The concept of soft power is also disputable because of its focus on the leading country. Lee (2010:117) notices that great powers do have an interest in affecting others' opinions and

attracting more followers; however, it is unclear why lesser powers, which are usually not in leading positions, would need to acquire soft power and what influence they could exert. In other words, it would be interesting and useful to look at the concept of soft power from the perspective of non-leading countries in order to expand Nye's approach.

Interestingly, there is an opinion that soft power cannot be developed by all the countries. For example, Raman (2007) claims that a genuine democracy is the basic condition for a strong soft power. This means that soft power can be generated mostly by the West. Fan (2008:150-151) argues, however, that "no country has a monopoly on soft power". Impressive soft power can be produced by any country, culture, or even organization, proven by the bright examples of the USSR, China and the ISIS. As Fan (2008:151) emphasizes, "the question is not who can or cannot develop soft power but to *whom* it is soft power" (italics in original).

In conclusion, many political scientists consider Nye's view of soft power one-sided, condescending and largely ethnocentric. Nevertheless, popularity of the soft power concept is steadily growing. Many nations have recognized how important it is to tell their stories directly to foreign audiences, and most governments have acknowledged the increasing role of soft power in today's highly interdependent world.

3. TRANSFORMATION OF THE CONCEPT OF SOFT POWER IN RUSSIA

3.1 Historical overview: a brief analysis of soft power in the USSR

Soft power is a quite recent concept in theories of international relations. However, the behavior it represents can be noticed through the whole course of human history (Nye 2011:81). A number of historical examples of soft power include the Catholic Church and the Pope; the British Empire; and France in eighteenth-century Europe (Cooper 2004; Nye 2011:81). Russia also had quite a lot of soft power at its disposal in some periods of its long, rich and dramatic history.

Historically, three main factors have been guiding Russia in its domestic and foreign affairs: “Christian ideals, trans-ethnic imperial principles, and the model of strong state (*derzhava*)” (Tsygankov 2013a, italics in original). Jurgens (2011) claims that Russia had nearly two centuries of soft power being ‘a patron of the Slavs and Orthodox’, “a conductor of European civilization in the vast expanses of Eurasia”, and “a unique multiethnic alliance of nations”. During the years of Communism, Russia managed to offer an ideological alternative to the West, appealing to leftists and national liberation movements around the globe (Jurgens 2011).

In order to better understand the role of the concept of soft power in contemporary Russia, it is important to analyze how what is now called soft power was exercised by Russia’s predecessor state, the USSR. Learning lessons from the past and taking historical experience into account is useful to look for the roots of some of the present-day problems, to review the old mistakes and avoid repeating them in the future. This part provides a brief historical overview illustrating how the USSR succeeded and failed to generate soft power through its culture, political values and foreign policy.

3.1.1 Cultural power of the USSR

Russia has historically enjoyed significant cultural power making considerable contributions to the world's culture (Nye 2014c). During the Soviet period, large sums of money were spent on an attractive public diplomacy program, which included Russian high culture promotion (Nye 2004b:73). Russian ballet with its rich traditions, great classical music, fine arts masterpieces and world-famous literature attracted not only the nearest neighboring nations but people from all over the world.

In the USSR, the great emphasis was also placed on displaying the superiority of its educational system (Nye 2004b:74) and spreading the Russian language. From the beginning of the 20th century to the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the number of Russian speakers increased from 150 million to 350 million people including 286 million residents of the USSR (Bovt 2013a). Representing the historical and cultural base for the statehood, the Russian language can be seen as a factor of humanitarian influence and an important soft power source (Bovt 2013a).

Another notable source of soft power was Soviet science and technology. In 1957, the USSR successfully launched the first space satellite Sputnik I. In 1961, a Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first human to travel into outer space. These examples of remarkable success significantly advanced Soviet soft power leading many people to believe that the USSR was “a force for modernization” (Cooper 2004). Great achievements illustrated that science and technology occupied a highly respected position in Soviet culture and proved the USSR's claim that communism was “scientific socialism” (Nye 2004b:74-75).

Moreover, the Soviet Union invested heavily in physical culture and sports. Over the decades, Soviet Olympic teams ranked first in the total number of gold medals won in the Winter Games and second after the US in the Summer Games (Nye 2004b:74). During the Cold War, Olympics were used by the two superpowers as a tool of politics and a means of demonstrating dominance to the world. In 1980, the USSR was the host nation for the Summer Olympics in Moscow. It

was a brilliant chance to project soft power, which was, however, partly undermined by the boycott following the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan.

It becomes clear that the USSR had a good deal of cultural power. Nevertheless, it was significantly constrained by politicization, strict and pervasive censorship, the closed nature of the Soviet system, and the lack of mass culture. Soviet culture was attractive in art, science, ballet, and athletics, but its impact was limited by the absence of popular exports. Some government-sponsored efforts to launch mass culture projects had little effect as the indigenous Soviet products could not find an overseas market. As a result, the USSR never competed with the global influence of America's commercial popular culture, e.g. television, film, and popular music, in flexibility or attraction. (Nye 2004b:49, 74)

3.1.2 Political values of the USSR

The USSR once had quite a lot of soft power at its disposal, with political values being an important soft power source. The Soviet model was claimed to be based on the idea of justice and social progress (Lukyanov 2013). Communism and socialism were the leading ideologies maintaining the ideal of equality formulated as “from each according to their ability; to each according to their needs”. During the Cold War era, one of the most important and broadly propagated political values was anti-imperialism in contradistinction to Western capitalism, colonialism and hegemony. Thus, for a certain period, especially in the post-war years following World War II, the USSR seemed to represent some attractive political values (Cooper 2004).

However, the problem was that the propagated ideals were rarely put into practice. In other words, Soviet propaganda was often inconsistent with its policies. Nye (2004b:75) mentions, for example, that “Soviet claims to leadership of progressive anti-imperial forces were belied by the invasion of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the crackdown in Poland in 1981”.

Such heavy-handed policies resulted in a dramatic decline in Soviet soft power. Despite impressive military capabilities, the USSR did not manage to transform its hard-power gains into soft power assets. The USSR's soft power was brutally undercut by its hard power, and much soft power was squandered.

Moreover, repression at home and inept economic performance of the Soviet Union in its later years led to a complete failure in terms of soft power (Nye 2004b:49). Finally, it was no longer possible to legitimize the use of hard power because of the weakening economy and lack of an external threat (Cooper 2004). A radical crisis of legitimacy eroded the whole Soviet system from within. Consequently, many people changed their opinions about Soviet ideology (Nye 2014b). What once looked appealing turned out to be a mistake. By 1989, the USSR had little soft power left, even though its hard military resources continued to grow (Nye 2004b:9; 2014c).

3.1.3 Foreign policy of the USSR

In the immediate aftermath of World War II, the foreign policy of Soviet Russia was a significant source of soft power. Since the 1930s, Communists had seemed to be the only people to resist Hitler and Nazi Germany (Cooper 2004). In the early post-war period, the USSR attracted Western Europeans because of its leading role in the fight against fascism (Nye 2014b). Moreover, the USSR was attractive to many people living in colonized areas such as Africa and Asia, owing largely to its opposition to European imperialism (Nye 2004b:73).

Importantly, Soviet Russia offered a viable alternative to the Western world. The USSR challenged its ideological opponents by developing and actively promoting its own social model and the image as a potentially powerful patron (Lukyanov 2013). According to Lukyanov (2013), "the Soviet Union not only promised help – it lavished it on countries that accepted its

patronage”. Furthermore, large amounts of money were spent on public diplomacy, broadcasting, sponsoring peace movements and antinuclear protests (Nye 2004b:73).

In the mid-1970s, polls in Western Europe showed that majorities preferred bipolarity in international relations rather than the US dominance (Nye 2004b:39). Nevertheless, Figure 1 illustrates how ineffective the USSR was at expanding its soft power and making use of its soft-power gains. During the Cold War, the percentage of Western Europeans with a positive view of the USSR was rather low. Only in 1989, Soviet favorability ratings rocketed following radical changes of Soviet policies, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War era. It is important to notice, however, that favorability ratings for the US in the Western European countries were always much higher than those of the USSR (Nye 2004b:75).

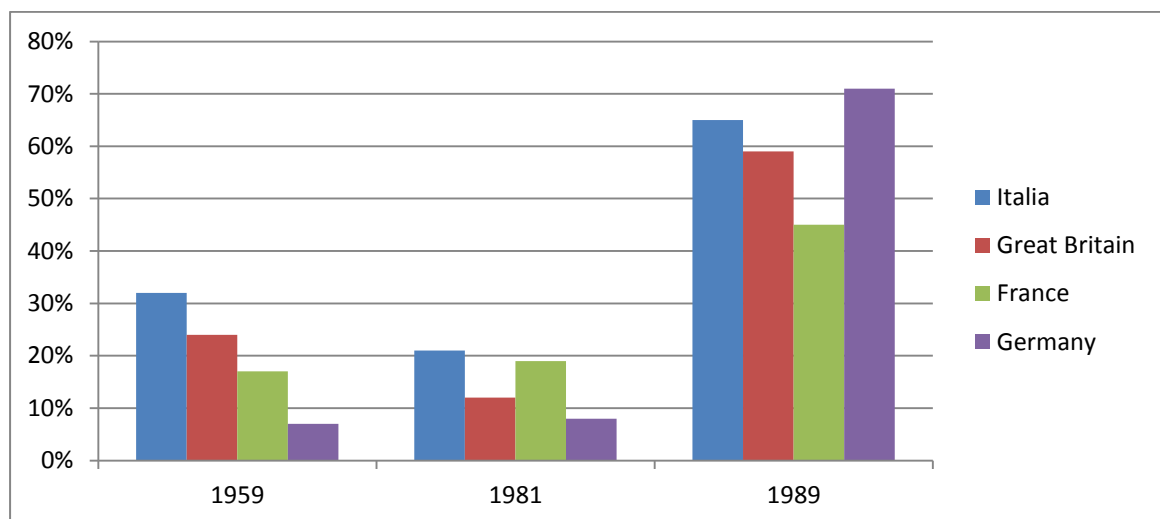


Figure 1. Percentage of Western Europeans with a positive view of the USSR

Source: Created by author from data in Nye (2004b:74-75).

The new policies of *glasnost* (“openness”) and *perestroika* (“restructuring”) initiated by the last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in the late 1980s had a short-term positive effect on the Soviet image abroad. At the same time, reorientation of the fundamental strategic aims resulted in the dissolution of the USSR in 1991. In the 1990s, Russia was considerably weakened by painful social and economic transformations that led to a major economic crisis, the rise of unscrupulous

oligarchs, corruption at high places, and extreme instability in the country (Zaki 2011:127-128). Moreover, with the end of communism, Russia lost its ideology and a clear vision of its role in the world. Consequently, soft power was quickly lost as well. No efforts to regain it could be made during the hard initial years forming contemporary Russia. For the decade, the country had remained absent on the soft power scene and only in the 2000s, when the need to invest in the international standing became obvious, did Russia start to make serious attempts to discover soft power again.

3.2 The importance of soft power for Russia

Soft power is an increasingly important means to success in contemporary world politics. Different states can use it for different purposes. For a rising power whose rapid economic and military development frightens its neighboring states, a softer foreign policy approach makes it look less frightening and more peaceful. For a declining power whose economic and social indicators decrease steadily, a residual soft power allows cushioning the fall. (Nye 2013)

Russia is a declining power today (Nye 2013, 2014). According to CIA (2015b), Russia still has the 7th largest GDP in the world; however, it is about one-fifth the size of China's or US's GDP, and Russia's GDP per capita is roughly a half of that of the US. Russia is one of the main exporters of oil, gas, and metals (The Observatory of Economic Complexity 2015), but its resource-based economy is extremely vulnerable to changes in global prices. Russia's ranking in the Corruption Perceptions Index is expectedly bad (Transparency International 2015). Though the birth rate is slowly growing (The World Bank 2015a), Russia's population is expected to decrease by more than 15 per cent by 2050 (UN 2013: xix). Furthermore, few Russian films are known abroad (Nye 2014a), and no Russian university is ranked in the top 100 in the *Times Higher Education* World University Rankings 2014-2015 (Times Higher Education 2015).

Having taken into account the above mentioned trends, Leonova (2013), Doctor of Political Science at Moscow State University, formulates a number of reasons for Russia to make use of its soft power sources in the 21st century. Firstly, Russia's international image is predominantly negative, which undermines cooperation with other countries and put limits on Russia's social and economic development. Secondly, Russia's economic and technological potential does not allow the country to be a strong player in the international arena, so the government tries to compensate these weak positions with military might, which is a questionable decision. Thirdly, Russia cannot rely on its energy resources as a tool to exert influence, as other countries are constantly looking for new sources of energy to lower their external energy dependence. Moreover, Russian worldview as being opposed to Western values requires a coherent soft power concept and an effective soft power strategy, which would help Russia to situate itself in a more advantageous and beneficial position in the contemporary global world.

3.2.1 Russia's image in the world

The image of Russia in the world has always been controversial. During the Cold War, Russia's image was predictably negative in the states of the Western Bloc, mainly the US and its NATO allies. It has already been illustrated in part 3.1.3 that the percentage of Western Europeans with a positive view of the USSR was rather low. Russia's favorability ratings showed a sharp but impermanent increase in the end of the 20th century following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the end of the Cold War in 1991. However, a series of harsh economic and political reforms following the collapse of the Soviet Union had an adverse effect on the country's stability and welfare, which diverted the government's attention away from soft power and public diplomacy and aggravated Russia's unfavorable reputation in the world.

Only in the early 2000s did Russia realize that it was suffering a severe image crisis abroad. More importantly, Russia was unable to determine its own place in the post-Soviet space and its

role in the new world order. As Kosachev (2004) noticed, Russia “could not explain the purpose of its presence in the post-Soviet space believing this was something axiomatic”. The West, for example, promoted the idea of democratization, but Russia found itself having a damaging identity crisis and its policies suffering from an “ideological emptiness” (Popescu 2006). A lack of a new national idea became one of the largest obstacles Russia faced in attempts to approach its foreign policy goals.

Russia’s long absence on the soft power scene caused by serious economic and social transformations of the 1990s resulted in destroyed public diplomacy infrastructure and extremely poor reputation abroad. In 2001, Mikhail Lesin (cited in Simons 2011:332), the Media Minister of the time, publicly expressed the interest in cultivating a new, positive image of Russia “otherwise Russians would always look like bears”. Thus, soft power as a tool to build a more attractive and effective international image has become a prominent topic on the agenda, and an extensive public diplomacy campaign was launched by the Kremlin in the mid-2000s.

The public diplomacy campaign was aimed at portraying Russia as a civil and cooperative country. In attempts to improve its reputation abroad, “Russia had launched international English and Arabic news channels, hosted international economic forums and discussion clubs, started funding supplements in foreign newspapers and even hired some Western PR companies” (Rozhnov 2010). For instance, a large international PR agency called Ketchum was hired by the Russian government in 2006 and again in 2007 to help Russia to shift global public opinion on the country, to ensure Russia’s openness and promote a greater visibility, transparency and understanding of Russia’s goals (Rozhnov 2010, Simons 2011:333).

A comprehensive public diplomacy campaign was expected to foster understanding between Russia and other countries, maintain economic cooperation, and improve relations with international organizations. Nevertheless, opinion polls revealed that Russia did not manage to rebuild its predominantly negative image abroad. A global survey by the Pew Research Center

(2013) illustrated that a median of just 36 per cent among publics in 38 nations held a favorable view of Russia, compared with 39 per cent who expressed an unfavorable view, and 19 per cent who did not offer any opinion. Russia's image suffered especially in the Middle East, Western Europe and Japan. Consequently, it became clear that Russia's public diplomacy exertions, though showed limited signs of success, failed to attain the main goals.

In recent years, Russia has had many opportunities to expand its soft power and restore its reputation on a global scale including G20 presidency in 2013, G8 presidency in 2014, Sochi 2014 Olympic Games and BRICS presidency in 2015. However, all the efforts to boost Russia's image have been completely undermined by the Ukraine crisis started in 2013 and Russia's annexation of Crimea in April 2014. According to a new survey by Pew Research Center (2014), negative opinions of Russia are on the rise in all parts of the world (see Figure 2). A median percentage of only 34 per cent among people interviewed in 44 countries have favorable views of Russia, compared with 43 per cent whose views are unfavorable. Since 2013, negative ratings of Russia have grown in 20 of the 36 states surveyed, especially in Europe and the US.

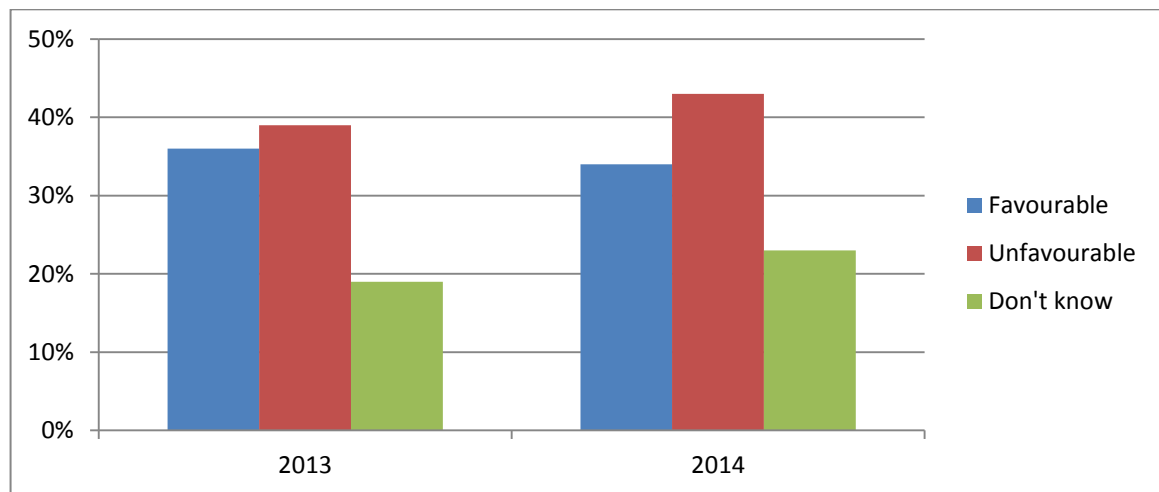


Figure 2. Russia's Global Image, %

Source: Created by author from data in Pew Research Center (2013, 2014).

Thus, since the start of the Ukraine crisis, the reputation of Russia has strongly deteriorated. Today, the authorities discuss spending more money on public diplomacy campaigns “to show Moscow’s true warm and friendly nature” (Dolgov 2014). Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov (cited in Dolgov 2014) says that “it is important that we increase our work on explaining Russia’s line in international affairs, bringing truthful information to foreign public, strengthening contacts not only with those who seek constructive cooperation with us, but also with those players who are still laboring under the influence of prejudices of a past epoch”. In other words, Soviet-era stereotypes and biased coverage by foreign media are perceived to be the primary challenges in terms of Russia’s international reputation.

Russia’s image problem seems to be much deeper, however. Simons (2011:338), for instance, emphasizes the lack of direct contacts between Russians and foreign audiences. Anholt (cited in Rozhnov 2010) says that Russia has to develop its tourism profile and increase the number of so-called “informal ambassadors” – famous brands or popular media personalities, which would be associated with Russia and liked by people around the world. Dmitry Gavra (cited in Rozhnov 2010), Russian political expert and professor at the Saint Petersburg State University, highlights “a lack of institutional and structural reforms in the country and Russia’s recent attempts to return to the system of global competition in geopolitics, technology and economy”. Moreover, most experts agree that big changes should be made in Russian policy and in Russia’s dealings with other states before the country’s image could be improved (for example, see Lough 2013; Nye 2013, 2014b; Rozhnov 2010; Simons 2011:345; Zlobin 2013).

To conclude, Russia’s international image continues to suffer today due to various reasons including domestic socio-economic and financial difficulties, numerous outdated stereotypes and clichés that still determine the perception of Russia internationally, incoherent strategies, aggressive policies and unpopular decisions of the government. Furthermore, Russia is still looking for its national idea being “torn between its historical European and Slavophile

identities” (Nye 2014a). Soft power alone cannot, of course, solve all internal and external problems the country faces nowadays, and the process of image-building is long and complex. Nevertheless, a coherent soft power strategy and a persuasive public diplomacy campaign, if complemented with long-sighted policies and constructive decisions, could have a positive effect on Russia’s reputation and boost Russia’s image abroad.

3.2.2 Russia’s economic and military potential

Russia is considered to be a declining power today (Leonova 2013:36; Nye 2013). Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia has suffered a dramatic setback on all the fronts including political, social, financial, and economic spheres. During the period 1989-1998, Russia experienced a severe transformational recession when its GDP dived to 55 per cent of the pre-recession level (Popov 2009). Russia lost its superpower status and became, at best, a regional power and a developing country undergoing the process of economic transition if not a third-world country and “an industrial banana republic” (Nye 2014a) in terms of its socio-economic performance. The “growth decade” of 1999-2008 when Russia's GDP was steadily recovering at a rate of about 7 per cent a year nearly allowed reaching the pre-recession GDP of 1989 (Popov 2009; Årslund, Guriev & Kuchins 2010). However, the financial crisis of 2007-2008 and the 2008-2012 global recession caused a sharp decline in oil prices, which Russia’s economy is highly sensitive to, and the outflow of capital from the country (Popov 2009). The Russian economy was hit hard by the worst financial crisis in a decade.

Another economic crisis has come already in 2014 as a result of international sanctions imposed on Russia following the war in Eastern Ukraine and Russia’s annexation of Crimea. Russia has also suffered from a sharp fall in global oil prices, which decreased dramatically from around \$100 per barrel in June 2014 to around \$60 per barrel in December 2014 (Chung 2014). The situation became critical when the Russian ruble started to collapse leading to the worst currency

crisis since the 1998 default (Shatalova 2014). The currency has dropped by more than 40 per cent since the beginning of 2014 and remains volatile (Petroff 2014; CIA 2015). More than that, Russia's counter-sanctions pushed up inflation. Political and economic instability made many investors to sell their Russian assets (Kitroeff & Weisenthal 2014), which caused a decline in economic activity and a major recession in the country. The crisis is still going on affecting companies, consumers, and regional financial markets.

Thus, Russia is in serious economic troubles. The crises reveal that its economy that suffers badly from Dutch disease (i.e. reliance on natural resources combined with underdeveloped manufacturing and agricultural sectors) is very fragile (Coppola 2014). According to the most optimistic forecast, Russia's GDP is expected to go down by 3 per cent in 2015; others predict a 4-8 per cent decline (Devitt, Kelly & Bush 2015; Focus Economics 2015). Credit rating agencies, such as Moody's, Standard & Poor's and Fitch, downgrade Russian credit rating and award the country a negative outlook (Trading Economics 2015). Russia's investment climate that is usually seen as risky has become absolutely unattractive. This significantly undermines the prospects for economic growth and development. This means also that the country cannot use its potential means of accumulating soft power through attracting foreign capital.

It seems, though, that Russia is trying to compensate its weak position in the economic area by strengthening its military might. In today's global world, Russia positions itself as a military pole. Firstly, it is one of the nuclear-weapon states owing the biggest estimated number of nuclear warheads (Macias, Bender & Gould 2014). Secondly, Russia is the world's second biggest exporter of arms (behind the US) holding 27 per cent of the volume of international arms exports (Wezeman & Wezeman 2015). In 2014, it sold weapons to 56 countries but its main clients were India, China and Algeria (Wezeman & Wezeman 2015). Thirdly, Russia's military expenditures have been drastically increased in the recent years (see Figure 3). In 2015, Russia's national defense budget reached a record 4.2 per cent of the country's GDP. According to the

World Bank (2015b), however, Russia's military expenditure constituted 4.2 per cent of GDP already in 2013.

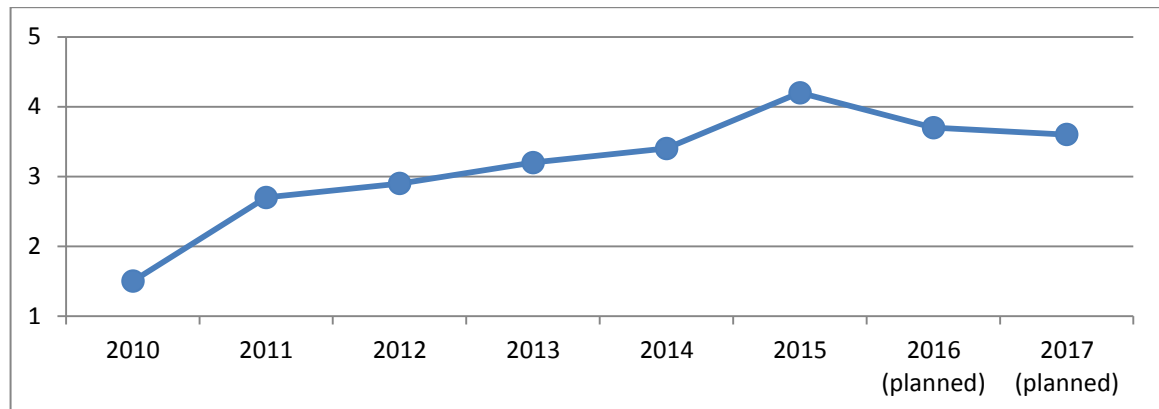


Figure 3. Russia's military expenditure, % of GDP

Source: Created by author from data in CIA (2015), Mikhailov (2014), *Novaya Gazeta* (2014), and *The Moscow Times* (2014).

Significant amounts of money are going to be spent on an ambitious rearmament program through 2020 launched by Dmitry Medvedev in 2010 and valued at 20 trillion rubles, or around USD 500,000 (Mikhailov 2014; *The Moscow Times* 2014). Russian economist Aleksey Mikhailov (2014) emphasizes that Russia's military budget became nearly 5 times bigger in a short period 2011-2015, and spending on national defense rocketed from 7.5 per cent in 2011 to 21.2 percent in 2015. All this makes Russia one of the most militarized countries in the world (Macias, Bender & Gould 2014). However, reasonability of this militarization is questionable. Mikhailov (2014) explains that the percentage of GDP shows in what proportion money is allocated to different spheres, but the actual sum of money spent on military and defense depends on the size of GDP. In 2014, Russia's GDP was USD 3.568 trillion, which is only one-fifth the size of US's or China's GDP (CIA 2015).

Figure 4 illustrates the world's biggest defense spending budgets in 2015.

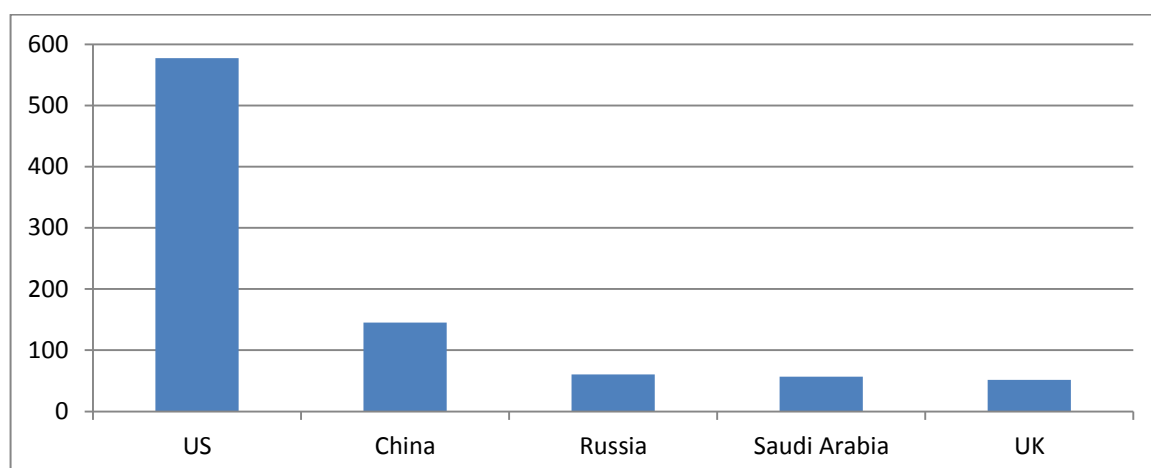


Figure 4. Defense spending budget, 2015, USD billion

Source: Created by author from data in Global Fire Power (2015).

Obviously, Russia's military expenditures do not correspond to its rating in the global economy (Lossan 2015; Mikhailov 2014). Russia has the third biggest defense spending budget in the world; however, it is nearly ten times less than the budget of the US and two times less than the budget of China. Consequently, a direct confrontation with these countries is practically unthinkable. It is especially imprudent to increase military expenditures at the expense of national economy and social spending in times of economic contraction. Further militarization may deepen the crisis Russia is in today rather than solve the country's problems. Consequently, Russia's government should look for other approaches and pay more attention to soft power as a foreign policy resource (Leonova 2013:36; Mikhailov 2014).

It has already been discussed in part 3.2.1 that Russia needs a more attractive image and a cohesive national idea to present to the rest of the world. However, positioning Russia as a military pole is unlikely to produce many benefits because it is inevitably associated with aggression. Many Russian scholars, such as, for instance, Kosachev (2012), Leonova (2013), and Tsygankov (2013b), claim that it would be much more promising to position Russia as a "civilization pole": multi-ethnic, multi-confessional and multicultural country that acts as an

interpreter between East and West. Leonova (2013:38) describes Russia's civilization resource as "sufficiently stable, practically indestructible, continuously reproducible" and able to generate soft power.

Nye (2014b) argues, though, that Russia already has almost no soft power to work with. Russian political scientist Karaganov (2012) notices that "the military buildup is expected to compensate for the relative weakness in other elements of power – economic, technological, ideological, and psychological. Russia possesses amazingly little allure for the outside world. It is respected solely as a strong player". Thus, the situation resembles a vicious circle. In Leonova's (2013:39) opinion, contemporary Russia does possess soft power, although in a latent state. Taking the present circumstances into account, it is time for Russia's government to look for the right balance between hard and soft power and activate the latter to operate more efficiently both at home and in the international arena.

3.2.3 Declining significance of energy resources

Russia's natural resources are an extremely important part of the country's economy. Traditionally, Russia is one of the world's leading producers of energy resources such as oil and natural gas. It is the second largest producer and net exporter of crude oil behind Saudi Arabia (IEA 2014b:11). It is also the leading exporter of oil products (IEA 2014b:21). Russia has the largest proven natural gas reserves and is the biggest net exporter of natural gas (CIA 2015a; IEA 2014b:13). Furthermore, Russia is also a top exporter of iron, steel, copper and primary aluminum as well as wood and wood products (CIA 2015b; The Observatory of Economic Complexity 2015; Workman 2015). According to the Observatory of Economic Complexity (2015), Russia's top 5 exported products include crude petroleum, refined petroleum, petroleum gas, coal briquettes, and semi-finished iron. In 2014, exports from Russia amounted to USD 492.1 billion, with oil constituting 58.6 per cent of total Russian exports (Workman 2015).

The 2003 “Energy Strategy of Russia for the Period of up to 2020” begins with the claim that “Russia possesses great energy resources ... that are the basis of economic development and the instrument for carrying out internal and external policy”. In 2009, Vladimir Putin (cited in Kupchinsky 2009), Russian Prime Minister at the time, said: “Russia enjoys vast energy and mineral resources which serve as a base to develop its economy; as an instrument to implement domestic and foreign policy. The role of the country on international energy markets determines, in many ways, its geopolitical influence”. The 2009 “National Security Strategy of Russia for the Period of up to 2020” states, moreover, that “the change from bloc confrontation to the principles of multi-vector diplomacy and the [natural] resources potential of Russia, along with the pragmatic policies of using them has expanded the possibilities of the Russian Federation to strengthen its influence in the world arena”.

Kupchinsky (2009) notices, therefore, that Russia has officially acknowledged that natural resources are vital tools of its foreign policy. This argument gives a reason to suggest that the gas disputes between Russia and other states have not only business but also political dimensions. The first serious dispute over the price of gas between Russia and Ukraine started in 2005 and resulted in the cutting off of gas supplies to Ukraine in 2006. According to the Russian side of the story, the conflict was between the two countries only and was a purely business question; however, Western analysts accused Russia of using its natural resources as a foreign policy weapon to put political pressure on other states. Russia also shut off gas supplies to Moldova in 2006 and to Belarus in 2007 because of the price disputes. In 2009, another dispute with Ukraine resulted in supply disruptions in 18 European countries. Greg Simons (2011), senior researcher at the Uppsala Centre of Russian Studies in Sweden, claims that these “gas wars” have become another source of unfavorable image for Russia. (Reuters 2009; Simons 2011; Whitney & Behrens 2010:433-434)

The ongoing Ukraine crisis has also been accompanied with an energy disagreement between Kiev and Moscow, which creates significant risks for the transit to Europe (Hirst 2015). This also means high risks for the EU energy security. Figure 5 shows that the EU is now heavily dependent on imports of pipeline gas from Russia. However, this gas goes mostly through Ukraine and Belarus. Gas disputes have an adverse impact on Russia's credibility and reputation as a reliable energy supplier. This makes Russia's partners, especially the EU, to look for alternative markets and diverse sources of energy (IEA 2014a:8). For example, Lithuania is now importing liquefied natural gas from Norway and Ukraine is increasing gas imports from the West (The Economist 2015). Europeans are improving energy efficiency and paying more attention to the use of renewable energy and development of shale gas (Harvey 2014; IEA 2014a:4-5; Nelsen 2014; Reed 2014).

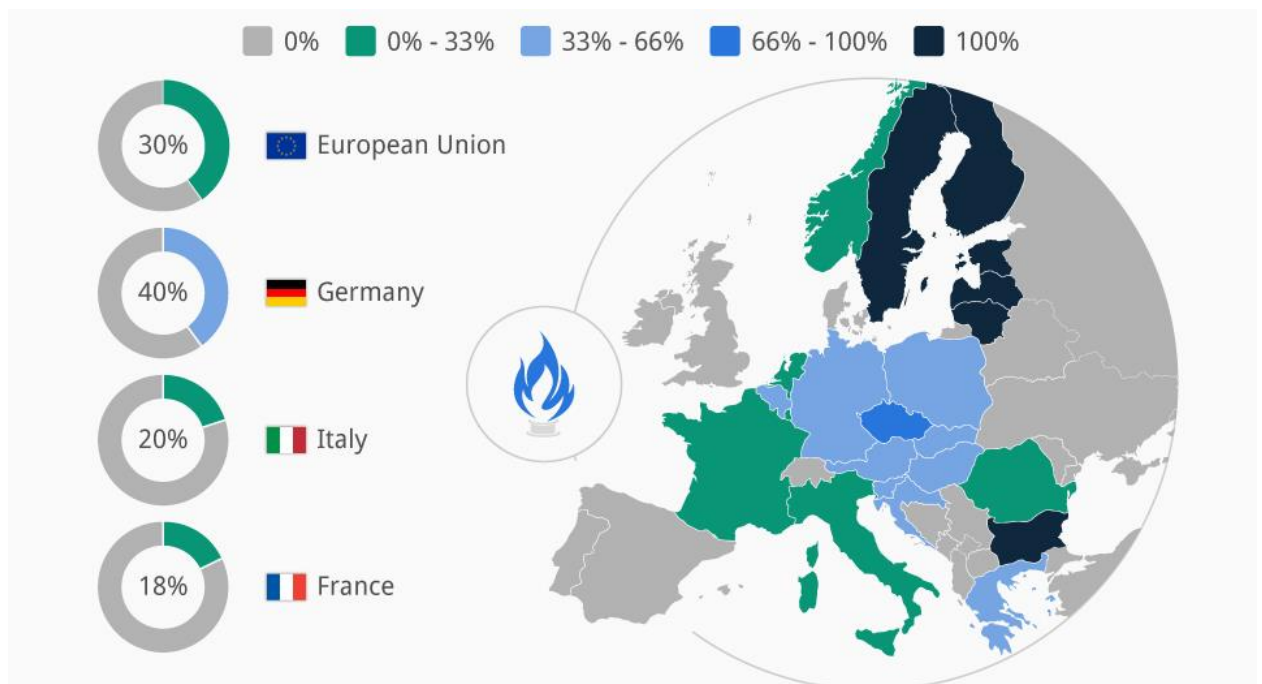


Figure 5. Percentage of gas supplied by Russia to European countries

Source: McCarthy (2014).

It is unlikely that the EU can find a good replacement for Russian gas in a short term (Reed 2014); nevertheless, European decision makers have already started to make serious attempts to

reduce Europe's reliance on Russia. Since 2009, the EU has twice reduced its dependence on the Ukrainian transit of Russian gas (Sinitsin 2015), which means that Europeans will be able to fuel their homes and factories even if another dispute between Moscow and Kiev occurs. Furthermore, a long term cut off of gas would be disastrous for Russia's economy that is overly dependent on export of natural resources (Bender 2014). Thus, complex and highly interdependent relations between the partners make it more and more risky to behave aggressively and use oil and gas as a means of influence. It is important to add also that, taking into account extremely low oil prices and economic crisis Russia is in today, it would be dangerous for the country to raise further questions concerning its reliability as an energy supplier.

To conclude, energy resources remain important in international relations today; however, it becomes clear that in the long term Russia cannot rely on its oil and gas as a foreign policy tool. The dependency on Russian energy resources is going to be decreased in many European countries. Russia is losing its old partners and markets, but its new clients such as China are going to buy Russian gas at much lower prices (Nye 2014c; Sinitsin 2015). Leonova (2013:37) emphasizes that declining significance of Russia's energy resources as a means of political pressure is one of the main reasons for Russia's government to pay more attention to the soft power sources. The potential of Russia's soft power is immense and, if used wisely, it could help Russia to strengthen those means of its external influence that may be more reasonable and effective in today's highly globalized and interdependent world.

3.2.4 Opposing the Western worldview

Nye (2011:84, 2014c) claims that soft power of a country depends heavily on its foreign policies when they are seen as "legitimate and having moral authority". It is important to notice that Russia's foreign policies often differ significantly from those of the Western states, especially

the US. Simons (2014:4) argues that “the Russian positioning in the context of international relations ... is oriented as an alternative or oppositional force to the US-dominated sphere of international affairs”.

There are many examples of Russia opposing Western positions and approaches including, for instance, NATO enlargement; eastward expansion of the EU and its Eastern Partnership initiative; a sharp and long-lasting disagreement between Russia and the US over the nuclear program of Iran; Arab Spring; so-called “color revolutions” in former Yugoslavia, Georgia and Ukraine during the early 2000s; the conflict in Georgia that led to the Russo-Georgian War and secession of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in August 2008; the Syrian Civil War started in 2011; and, finally, the current confrontation between Russia and the West over the Crimea issue and Russia’s role in the Ukraine crisis.

To be sure, Russia and the West share a lot of common interests such as, for instance, combatting international terrorism, promoting nuclear nonproliferation and cooperating in trade and investment. Nevertheless, like every other country in the world, Russia has its own strategic, geopolitical and economic interests that it is constantly trying to protect. However, Russian authorities often complain that Russia’s interests are ignored and Russia’s views are misunderstood by their Western counterparts. In his famous and much-cited article “Russia and the Changing World”, Vladimir Putin (2012) writes: “Our arguments are well known ... Regrettably, our Western partners are unresponsive and have simply brushed our concerns aside”.

Moreover, Russia is often seen as a bully. After the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, Western media portrayed Russia as an invader and provoker, and blamed the country for violating international law (King 2008). In contrast, Dmitry Medvedev, the President of Russia from 2008 to 2012, stated that it was Georgia that first started active military actions against Russian peacekeepers in the South Ossetia (Lifenews 2011). Later, it was concluded in a special EU-sponsored report that

there had been numerous provocations and international law violations from both sides (IIFMCG 2009). Most recently, Russia has been blamed again for supporting separatists in the ongoing war in eastern Ukraine, though Russian authorities continue to insist that Russia is not a part of the conflict. The annexation of Crimea has been considered “Russian imperialism” (Mearsheimer 2014).

Obviously, Russia’s reputation as an aggressor has an adverse effect on its international image and does not contribute to its soft power. However, the situation in Syria shows the world that Russia can act diplomatically and efficiently without using hard power. Thus, the Russian proposal on Syria’s chemical weapons allowed reaching consensus between Syria, Europe and the US and prevented American military intervention in 2013. As Simons (2013) put it, “bringing the world from the brink of war in Syria was a diplomatic coup by Russia at the perceived expense of the United States”. Undoubtedly, the case of Syria is Russia’s diplomatic success; nevertheless, it is just an isolated incident that cannot re-shape general perceptions of Russia in the world. Demonstrating the ability to act softer as a long-term trend could help to portray Russia as a cooperative and reliable partner.

To sum this up, Leonova (2013:36-37) claims that Russia’s opposition to the Western worldview should motivate the country to develop its soft power potential. In today’s complex international relations, Russian decision makers should rely more on soft power and diplomatic means of influence if they want to make Russia’s interests and concerns heard and understood in the West. Russia should also learn how to balance hard and soft power, or how to apply a smart power strategy, to achieve its foreign policy goals. Furthermore, opposing the West is a good reason for Russia to create its own approach to soft power, which is originally a Western conception. Providing a viable alternative that fits Russia’s worldview and corresponds to Russia’s aims and objectives could become a key to better reputation and more efficient performance both at home

and in the international arena. Thus, the concept of soft power is of critical importance to the country in the 21st century context.

3.3 Understanding Russia's view on soft power

Russia's view on soft power has transformed significantly over the past decade (Dolinskiy 2013). Though the country has started to develop its soft power potential since the mid-2000, it still has no clear understanding of the phenomenon (Leonova 2013). The country is now in the process of de-Westernizing soft power and adapting it to its own worldview. Interestingly, Russia tends to perceive soft power dualistically. On the one hand, Russia sees soft power as a threat to its own interests, especially when it is used by the West in Russia's neighborhood. On the other hand, Russia sees soft power as a useful means that helps to exert influence and attain its foreign policy goals.

This dualistic comprehension, together with Russia-specific political and cultural values, make Russia's perception of the concept of soft power noticeably different from that articulated by Nye. Today, soft power is an integral part of Russia's foreign policy and a topic lively discussed by Russian politicians, scholars and journalists. But is it the same concept as Nye put it in his works? In this part, Russia's understanding of soft power will be critically analysed starting with an overview of the ways the term is translated and defined by Russian scholars and a general review of the official documents containing the notion of soft power. This part provides interpretive insight into the process of re-conceptualization of soft power in Russia explaining the reasons for the concept's transformation and emphasizing the dualistic nature of Russia's approach.

3.3.1 Translation difficulties

It has already been discussed in part 2.3.1 that there is no concrete and universal definition of soft power, which often leads to misunderstanding and misuse of the whole concept. In non-English speaking countries, however, misconception may start with the mistranslation of the terms. In the process of translation it is possible to add or ignore some nuances. Consequently, the meanings of translated terms may differ considerably from original ones.

In the Russian-language terminology, there are several versions of translation of the term “soft power”. The verbatim translation is “*myagkaya sila*”. Nevertheless, this is not the only term used to describe soft power in Russian academic discourse. For example, the title of Nye’s book *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (2004b) is translated into Russian as “*gibkaya sila*” (flexible power). Parshin (2013) argues, however, that this expression emphasizes not the nature of power but the way power can be used in general. Indeed, both hard and soft power can be used flexibly.

“Soft power” is sometimes translated into Russian as “*myagkaya moshch*” and “*myagkaya vlast*”. In both variants “*myagkaya*” signifies “soft”. “*Moshch*” means “power” or “might”. “*Vlast*” means “power”, which is often associated with governmental power and authority. Moreover, some Russian scholars offer their own interpretations of soft power: Zevelev & Troitskiy (2006, 2007) refer to it as “*myagkoe vliyanie*” (soft influence) and Palazhchenko (2013) calls it “*nesilovaya moshch*” (nonforce might) and “*nesilovoj potencial*” (nonforce potential). Though all these expressions seem to mean basically the same, the nuances are important to the Russian ear. (Parshin 2013)

It is also important to notice that there is no single Russian term for “public diplomacy”. Today, it is most commonly translated directly from English as “*publichnaya diplomatiya*”. There are also two other expressions: “*narodnaya diplomatiya*” (people’s diplomacy) and “*obshchestvennaya diplomatiya*” (societal diplomacy). “*Narodnaya diplomatiya*” is the oldest term for public

diplomacy used since Soviet times. It implies mostly people-to-people contacts and accentuates the role of the common people as opposed to elites or institutions in a diplomatic process. The term “*obshchestvennaya diplomatiya*” focuses more on initiatives by non-governmental and civil society organizations. Despite the differences in meanings, the terms are often used synonymously, which may generate a dangerous confusion. (Dolinskiy 2012)

To sum up, it becomes clear that the Russian-language terminology contains the shades of nuance that diverge from the Western view on soft power and public diplomacy. On the one hand, Russian interpretations introduce new conceptual meanings; on the other hand, original meanings may be easily lost in translation. Furthermore, definitions of Russian terms are sometimes narrower than that of Western terms, which means that they can hardly be used as synonyms. According to Parshin (2013), the verbatim translation of Western terms into Russian appears to be the most adequate way to interpret the concept of soft power closer to its original formulation. It is necessary to add also that the verbatim translations of the terms “soft power” and “public diplomacy” have been used in Russian official documents and foreign policy concepts in the 21st century.

3.3.2 Soft power in Russia’s foreign policy concept

Soft power has become an increasingly common topic in official Russian discourse in recent years. The growing attention to this aspect of power can be easily traced in official documents and in the foreign policy concepts published since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The 1993 foreign policy reflected Russia’s ambiguity and lack of a strong position in a newly created world order. Not surprisingly, it did not mention soft power. The 2000 foreign policy paid more attention to communication. For the first time, the importance of information was emphasized. The next foreign policy concept adopted in 2008 mentioned the term “public

diplomacy” for the first time. Russia was going to use public diplomacy to “seek its objective perception in the world, develop its own effective means of information influence on public opinion abroad, strengthen the role of the Russian mass media in the international information environment providing them with essential state support, as well as actively participate in international information cooperation, and take necessary measures to repel information threats to its sovereignty and security” (Kremlin 2008).

As it has already been mentioned in the introduction to the thesis, the first Russian official document using the term “soft power” was issued in 2010. It was called “Basic Directions of the Policy of the Russian Federation in International Cultural and Humanitarian Cooperation” and emphasized the importance of cultural diplomacy as a soft power tool. Since then, both Russian President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev have stressed the role of soft power and public diplomacy in today’s international relations. In 2010, for instance, Medvedev famously said that Russia should display a smiling face to other countries instead of frightening them by “gnashing teeth”; and in 2012, Putin told Russian ambassadors to use more soft power tactics to boost Russia’s image abroad (Twickel 2012). Thus, soft power has generally been seen as a great opportunity to perform better internationally.

The Decree by the President of the Russian Federation on measures to implement the foreign policy of the Russian Federation published on 7 May 2012 that has later become a basis for a new foreign policy concept mentions public diplomacy as a means to enhance the effectiveness of Russia’s performance in the global arena. The Decree requires making more efficient use of public diplomacy resources, involving civil society in the foreign policy process, strengthening cooperation with various non-profit and non-governmental organizations, and promoting their wide participation in the global political expert forums and in the international humanitarian cooperation (Kremlin 2012).

However, the term “soft power” found its way into Russia’s official foreign policy concept only in 2013. The latest version of the foreign policy concept of Russia pays significant attention to soft power. Paragraph 20 of the Chapter II “Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation and the Modern World” states that “soft power”, a comprehensive toolkit for achieving foreign policy objectives building on civil society potential, information, cultural and other methods and technologies alternative to traditional diplomacy, is becoming an indispensable component of modern international relations” (MFA 2013). It is also noticed, importantly, that “increasing global competition and the growing crisis potential sometimes create a risk of destructive and unlawful use of “soft power” and human rights concepts to exert political pressure on sovereign states, interfere in their internal affairs, destabilize their political situation, manipulate public opinion, including under the pretext of financing cultural and human rights projects abroad” (MFA 2013).

Thus, it can be noticed that the 2013 foreign policy concept reflects the two sides of Russia’s perception of the soft power concept. On the one hand, the very inclusion of soft power in the country’s foreign policy document shows that the government is interested in it, and the definition given to soft power seems to closely resemble Nye’s original understanding of the term. On the other hand, the document reveals Russia’s vision of soft power as a threat and emphasizes the importance of sovereignty as one of Russia’s key values. It is now necessary to further explore exactly what has influenced Russia’s position in order to understand the peculiarities of the Russian perspective.

3.3.3 The political context for transformation of the soft power concept

The idea of soft power was invented in the US in the early 1990s. It came to the fore in American public discourse following such internationally significant events as the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War and the emergence of a unipolar world order. The US

remained the sole superpower and focused on the use of soft power as an effective means to expand its influence and maintain its status. Since then, the country has gained much soft power. According to the Monocle Soft Power Survey 2014/15, for example, the US currently holds the number one spot in soft power in the world (Monocle 2015).

For Russia, on the contrary, soft power is a relatively new concept that only recently has become an integral part of the official foreign policy (Hruleva 2014). The concept of soft power entered Russian official and academic discourse in an absolutely different political context. The notion has become increasingly popular among Russian politicians, scholars and journalists since the 2000s in connection with such political phenomena as so-called “color revolutions”, Arab Spring and anti-Putin protests. In order to understand Russia’s view on soft power, it is necessary to pay attention to these political events.

A “color revolution” can be described as “a mass protest or an unarmed uprising aimed at replacing, through elections, the sitting government that represents a semi/quasi-democratic regime” (Baev 2011:5). Various “color revolutions” that took place in the former Soviet republics in the mid-2000s played an important role in the transformation of the concept of soft power in Russia. They include, first of all, the Rose Revolution in Georgia in November 2003, The Orange Revolution in Ukraine between November 2004 and January 2005, and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan in March 2005 (though some political scientists such as, for instance, McFaul (2005) do not consider the events in Kyrgyzstan to be a “color revolution”). It is also necessary to mention a number of similar protests in other post-Soviet countries such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan, in the period 2005-2006.

In Russia, “color revolutions” have been perceived negatively. They have been associated with American soft power and the US interference in the internal affairs of other states. “Color revolutions” have been understood as an attempt to expand American influence in Russia’s neighborhood and undermine Russia’s position in the region (Ćwiek-Karpowicz 2012:6;

Filimonov 2010; Ponomareva & Rudov 2012:41; Tsygankov 2013a). More than that, they have been seen as “an instrument of information warfare and the concealed use of military force”, which are dangerous to overall stability in the world (Bērziņa 2014:3). Thus, “color revolutions” (and, consequently, Western soft power) have been interpreted by the Kremlin as a threat to Russia’s interests in the post-Soviet space, Russia’s national security, and international security in general.

This view is clearly reflected in one of Putin’s pre-election articles called “Russia and the Changing World”: “Regrettably, [soft power is] used all too frequently to develop and provoke extremist, separatist and nationalistic attitudes, to manipulate the public and to conduct direct interference in the domestic policy of sovereign countries. There must be a clear division between freedom of speech and normal political activity, on the one hand, and illegal instruments of “soft power”, on the other. (...) ...the activities of “pseudo-NGOs” and other agencies that try to destabilize other countries with outside support are unacceptable” (Putin 2012).

A number of scholarly articles on the nature and techniques of “color revolutions” have been written by Elena Ponomareva, a professor at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (Ponomareva 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). In her articles, she claims and proves that the phenomenon of “color revolutions” is directly connected to Western soft power. Ponomareva (2012b:44) describes soft power as “a mechanism to consolidate and expand the hegemony of the West, especially the United States” referring, thus, to Gramsci’s theory of hegemony (see part 2.1.2). Moreover, Ponomareva (2012b:55) confirms that “color revolutions” were financed from abroad and gives a list of Western (mostly American) NGOs that supported the protests, for example, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

A wave of riots in the Arab world, or the Arab Spring, that began in 2010 is also seen as a result of Western democratization efforts. After the September 11 terrorist attacks, the US has launched the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), opened about 350 new educational programs to foster democracy education and created new radio and television channels for Arab audiences (Ponomareva 2012b:57-58; Ponomareva & Rudov 2012:43-44). More than that, the US has started to support political opposition groups in the Arab countries using different NGOs and social networks such as Twitter and Facebook (Ponomareva 2012a, 2012b). According to Ponomareva (2012b:56), for example, the April 6 Youth Movement in Egypt has been supported by the Global Voices, an international network partly sponsored by the Ford Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation, both headquartered in the US. Interestingly, the Global Voices is also sponsored by the Open Society, a network of foundations established by an American investor and philanthropist George Soros in 1979 in order to undermine Communism in the Eastern Bloc.

Russian authorities have started to worry about the ways Western states use their immense soft power, especially in the neighboring countries and in Russia itself. It is therefore not surprising that the mass anti-Putin protests in 2011-2012 that are sometimes called Snow Revolution (Gabowitsch 2012; Ioffe 2011; Åslund 2012) have also been associated with the influence of the West. Thus, discussing Russian-American relations in his article “Russia and the Changing World”, Putin (2012) claims that “mutual understanding [between the countries is not] strengthened by regular US attempts to engage in “political engineering”, including in regions that are traditionally important to us and during Russian elections”. This perspective also explains such Russia’s decisions as the “Foreign Agents Law” (requiring NGOs that receive foreign donations and engage in political activities to register as “foreign agents”) and expelling the USAID agency in 2012, the events that have been seen by the West as “the repression of the Soviet era” (Amnesty 2013) and aggressive measures meant to crush independent civil society (Abbakumova & Lally 2012; Amnesty 2013; BBC 2012; Ostroukh 2012; Tsygankov 2013a).

In conclusion, following numerous “color revolutions”, the Arab Spring and the anti-government protests in Russia itself, it has become crystal clear to Russian policy makers that soft power is not only a method to “intervene” people’s minds, hearts, and souls, but also an effective instrument to exert influence over domestic affairs of sovereign states (Filimonov 2010). Russian authorities have understood that the concept of soft power supplemented with the latest information and communication technologies gives almost unlimited opportunities to manipulate public opinion at any distance and in a very short period of time. The only way to resist the Western effort seems to generate Russia’s own soft power potential and develop public diplomacy institutions. Rather than criticizing American unilateralism and denying Western values, Russia should offer a viable and competitive alternative to Western approach based on Russian interests and values (Grigoriev & Ordzhonikidze 2014; Filimonov 2010; Ponomareva 2012b:59; Shiryev 2013).

3.3.4 The conception of “sovereign democracy” in modern Russia

It has already been mentioned in part 3.2.1 that, since the 1990s, Russia has been looking for its international identity and a new “national idea”. “National idea” allows a country to understand its role, aims and interests in the world order. More importantly, “national idea” helps to determine a country’s position on different domestic and international issues and explain it to foreign audiences. Some of the conceptions suggested by different scholars imply, for example, portraying Russia as a security guarantor (Leonova 2013) and a civilization pole (Kosachev 2012; Leonova 2013; Tsygankov 2013b; see also part 3.2.2). However, the most important and widely discussed idea that can shed light on the reasons of re-conceptualization of soft power in Russia is the concept of “sovereign democracy” promoting Russia-specific political values.

State sovereignty is deeply rooted in Russia’s unique historical experience and cultural traditions that accentuate “statism, collectivism, strong leadership, the organic connection between the

people (*narod*) and the state (embodied in its leader), and control of a vast multiethnic territory” (Smith 2013:5-6, italics added). In contradistinction to the Western political culture implying that the state derives its authority from the people, Russia’s understanding of sovereignty implies that the state’s exercise of power and control gives people freedom, justice, and security (Smith 2013:6). As Putin (1999) put it, “our state and its institutes and structures have always played an exceptionally important role in the life of the country and its people. For Russians a strong state is not an anomaly which should be got rid of. Quite the contrary, they see it as a source and guarantor of order and the initiator and main driving force of any change”.

The conception of “sovereign democracy” has been introduced by Vladislav Surkov, a Russian businessman and politician, in 2006. Surkov (2006a) defines “sovereign democracy” as “a mode of the political life of society in which the state authorities, their bodies and actions are elected, formed, and directed exclusively by the Russian nation in all its unity and diversity for the sake of achieving material well-being, freedom, and justice for all the citizens, social groups, and peoples that constitute it”. The conception of “sovereign democracy” aims at conveying “the strength and dignity of the Russian nation through the development of a civil society, a reliable state, a competitive economy, and an effective mechanism of influence on world events” (Surkov 2006a). According to Surkov (2006b), “sovereignty is the political synonym of competitiveness”.

Surkov (2006a) argues that democracy is not just a fact but a process that can go differently in different contexts; therefore, it is impossible to avoid a shift in emphasis to specific elements of the democratic process. In contemporary Russia, for instance, sovereignty is emphasized. It means that Russia takes the side of the community of democracies and of the free market and, at the same time, opposes any kind of global dictatorship or monopoly (Surkov 2006a). Consequently, having sovereignty as one of the main values, Russia does not accept any outside interference in domestic affairs of sovereign states. This position explains Russia’s stance over

the political crises in Syria (support of the Assad regime) and Ukraine (support of Yanukovych) and the overall opposition to Western/American involvement in other countries.

Thus, “sovereign democracy” is an alternative to confront the liberal democracy of the Western countries and the populist democracy of the rest of the world (Krastev 2006). It is necessary to notice, however, that the conception of “sovereign democracy” is often criticized by both Russian and Western scholars and politicians for being debatable, problematic and vague (Popescu 2006). To begin with, it is sometimes seen as unacceptable to attach any adjectives to the term “democracy”. According to Russia’s Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev (cited in Fadeev 2006), for example, “sovereign democracy” is a weird term because “it could lead one to think that we’re talking about some other, non-traditional type of democracy”. Daniel Fried (cited in Smith 2013:9), Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs within the American Department of State during the period 2005-2009, claims that putting labels (such as, for instance, sovereign, managed, socialist, Islamic) in front of democracy is meaningless. For Aron (2008) “democracy” and “sovereign democracy” are as different as “chair” and “electric chair”.

More than that, the conception of “sovereign democracy” is all too often perceived as an ideology to justify authoritarianism in Russian politics, re-centralization in economic life, and anti-Western sentiment in foreign policy (Aron 2008; Popescu 2006). Though the idea of “sovereign democracy” resembles many aspects of democracy of the West on paper, it seems to be very different in reality. Zaur Shiryev (2013), Academy Fellow at Chatham House in London, claims that, while rejecting Western values, Russia does not make room for human rights and freedoms. According to Popescu (2006), “sovereign democracy” does not account “the rule of law, protection of minorities, a free press, a viable political opposition, or legally guaranteed property rights”. Consequently, the term “sovereign democracy” seems to imply just the opposite of democracy (Ryzhkov 2005a).

Interestingly, Popescu (2006) gives a number of examples illustrating the nature of “sovereign democracy” in modern Russia, such as the politically motivated jailing of a former Russian businessman and oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky; the assassination of a Russian journalist and human rights activist Anna Politkovskaya; persecution of North Caucasians after the Beslan school siege; and problems with Western companies over oil and gas development on Sakhalin Island. Moreover, the annexation of Crimea in March 2014 has seriously undermined Russian ideology of non-interference and, even more importantly, Russia’s image as a country that has always been advocating compliance with international law (Lukyanov 2015).

In conclusion, there are different opinions about the conception of “sovereign democracy”. It can be argued, on the one hand, that Russia’s idea of democratic governance should not necessarily correspond to Western understanding and standard of democracy. According to Sergei Ivanov, Russia’s Minister of Defense during the period 2001-2007 (cited in Popescu 2006), “if there is Western democracy, there should be Eastern democracy as well”. In his April 25, 2005 address to the Federal Assembly, Putin (cited in Ryzhkov 2005b) stated that “Russia will decide itself how it can implement the principles of freedom and democracy, taking into account its historical, geopolitical and other specificities. As a sovereign state, Russia can and will independently establish for itself the timeframe and conditions for moving along this path”.

On the other hand, it becomes clear that the conception of “sovereign democracy” aims not only to legitimize the government’s authority and create a backbone of a new Russian “national idea” but also to protect the polity in the country from outside forces. The fact that the idea of “sovereign democracy” has gained increasing popularity in Russia following the “color revolutions” of the mid-2000s reaffirms Russian perception of Western influence through soft power mechanisms as a significant threat. Thus, the Russian concept of “sovereign democracy” functions both internally to guarantee domestic stability, political order, and socioeconomic

progress, and externally to safeguard Russian norms of governance and cultural standards (Okara 2007).

3.3.5 Public diplomacy as an instrument of Russia's soft power

Russian understanding of Nye's soft power concept is not limited to the perception of soft power as a threat from the West. At the same time, soft power is perceived as a useful means to increase people's appreciation of Russia, to boost Russia's image abroad, to enhance people's familiarity with Russian history and culture and, consequently, their understanding of Russia-specific values. In general, soft power is seen by many Russian politicians, diplomats and political scientists as a great chance to improve Russia's performance in the international arena, and more and more attention is paid to public diplomacy as a way to generate soft power in Russia. As it has already been mentioned in part 3.2.1, Russia's serious attempts to practice public diplomacy started only in the mid-2000s, when an extensive public diplomacy campaign was initiated by the Kremlin. Since then, Russia's public diplomacy infrastructure and mechanisms have been undergoing continuous development and refinement.

First of all, it is important to pay attention to a long history of the RIA Novosti news agency. The establishment of the agency dates back to 1941 when it was called Sovinformburo. It was renamed several times between 1941 and 1991. By 2013, RIA Novosti has become an influential governmental news agency operating in 49 countries and offering 40 internet sources in 22 languages (RIA Novosti 2015). In 2013, however, the agency was completely reorganized by President Putin. According to Nye (2014b), 40 per cent of the staff including relatively independent managers was fired. Dmitry Kiselyov who has a reputation of "anti-Westerner" and "the Kremlin's propagandist" both in Russia and in the West became the agency's new leader (Bovt 2013b; Ennis 2014; The Economist 2013). A new government-funded network "Sputnik" created by Kiselyov is currently operating in 34 countries of the world (Nye 2014b).

One of the first public diplomacy initiatives of contemporary Russia is the Valdai Discussion Club named after Valdai Lake. It was established in 2004 in order “to promote dialogue between Russian and international intellectual elite, and to make an independent, unbiased scientific analysis of political, economic and social events in Russia and the rest of the world” (The Valdai Discussion Club 2015a). In its work, the Club relies on knowledge and experience of more than 900 experts, scientists, journalists, politicians and public figures from 62 countries (The Valdai Discussion Club 2015a). The Club receives financial support via RIA Novosti, and “remains under the informal patronage of Vladimir Putin” (Gaddy & Hill 2011). In 2011, the non-profit Foundation for Development and Support of the Valdai Discussion Club was created to expand the Club’s activities (The Valdai Discussion Club 2015b).

One of the most famous and important Russian public diplomacy assets is RT (formerly known as Russia Today), a global news channel broadcasting directly to an international audience in Russian, English, Spanish and Arabic. Launched in 2005, it covers 5 continents and over 100 countries and has a global reach of over 700 million people today (RT 2015a). RT is a government-funded channel, though its editorial policy is claimed to be free from political and commercial influence (RT 2015b). “RT provides an alternative perspective on major global events, and acquaints an international audience with the Russian viewpoint” (RT 2015a). Moreover, RT broadcasts news that contradicts the mainstream offered by other popular networks (Dolinskiy 2013). RT’s motto written on its webpage is “question more” and its aspiration is “to show you how any story can be another story altogether” (RT 2015b). In 2014, RT became the number one news network on Youtube with more than 2 billion views beating BBC News, Euronews, CNN, and Al Jazeera (RT 2014).

In 2007, the Russkiy Mir (Russian World) Foundation was established by President Putin. The organization is modeled after the Goethe Institute in Germany, the British Council in the UK, and the Confucius Institute in China. The Foundation aims at promoting Russian language and

culture, developing ties with Russian diasporas abroad, and co-operating with the Russian Orthodox Church. Today, the Russkiy Mir Foundation is a government-funded organization that has 95 Russian centers in 43 countries around the globe. (Russkiy Mir Foundation 2014, 2015a, 2015b)

In 2007, one more soft power initiative, Russia Beyond The Headlines (RBTH), was launched. It is an international multimedia project that offers news, analysis, comment and expert opinion on Russian politics, business, science, culture, and public life. It relies on professional and independent journalists from both Russia and other states. The resource has 22 websites in 16 languages and publishes print supplements in 29 international newspapers in 26 countries of the world. Russia Beyond The Headlines is supported by the Rossiyskaya Gazeta, the Russian government's official newspaper, and aims at contributing to a better understanding of Russia in the world. (Russia Beyond The Headlines 2015)

In 2008, The Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation, also known as Rossotrudnichestvo, was created by President Medvedev. It is an autonomous institution under the jurisdiction of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The agency coordinates different aspects of Russia's public diplomacy concentrating on international humanitarian cooperation, support of the Russian language abroad, collaboration with Russian expatriates, and acquainting the public of other states with Russia's foreign policy. These activities are sometimes seen as a tool to preserve Russian influence in the CIS area (Simons 2014a:6). The organization is now represented in 80 countries of the world; it has 59 Russian centers of science and culture, 8 branches and 18 federal representatives in the Russia's diplomatic missions (Rossotrudnichestvo 2015).

In 2010, President Medvedev established the Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund named after an outstanding Russian diplomat of the XIX century Alexander Mikhailovich Gorchakov. It is one more organization located within the structure of the Russian Ministry of

Foreign Affairs (Simons 2014a:7). The fund aims at supporting Russian non-profit NGOs and other national institutions of the civil society fostering their international activities and cooperation. Leonid Drachevsky, executive director of the fund, emphasizes that it is “the first and unique mechanism of a state-society partnership in the field of foreign policy in modern Russia” (The Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund 2015).

The Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), a non-profit academic and diplomatic think tank, was also created by President Medvedev in 2010. It is supported by both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Science, which means that the funding comes from the state budget (Simons 2014a:7). “RIAC operates as a link between the state, scholarly community, and civil society in an effort to find foreign policy solutions to complex conflict issues” (RIAC 2015). Igor Ivanov (2011), RIAC’s President and former Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs (1998-2004), stresses the importance of “smart” foreign policy and believes that Russians “need to drastically update and expand the range of foreign policy tools, which Moscow can employ in international relations”.

These are only some of the most prominent examples of Russia’s public diplomacy efforts undertaken in recent years. It is necessary to add that Russia is also involved in so-called digital diplomacy. Simons (2014a:8) notices, for example, the Russian Foreign Ministry has about 70 official accounts on Twitter. In 2011, the RIA Novosti news agency opened a new Facebook page called “The RealRussia” (Simons 2014b:5). A number of online projects, such as the “Modern Russia” blog later replaced with the “thinkRussia” webpage, have been introduced by the US-based lobbying and PR firm Ketchum hired by the Russian government (Simons 2014b; see also part 3.2.1). All these online platforms cover a wide range of topics, offer actual news and share perspectives on Russia.

Nowadays, Russia makes many attempts to practice public diplomacy using press, broadcasting, social media and other means of communication. In fact, Russia actively uses communicational

approach to messaging its values and foreign policies. It is also trying to use relational approach that implies building relationships with the target audience through humanitarian assistance and cultural and educational exchanges. Moreover, Russia has started to develop network approach, i.e. to utilize modern information communication technology, online communication means and social networks to engage foreign publics. Though relational and network approaches seem to be more effective in the long term, public diplomacy in modern Russia relies mostly on the communicational approach. (Simons 2014a:10)

It is easy to notice that all the major institutions dealing with public diplomacy in Russia are government-owned and government-funded. This fact is a reason for serious criticism. In his article called “What China and Russia Don’t Get about Soft Power”, Nye (2013) emphasizes that government is not the main instrument of soft power. In Nye’s opinion, “soft power springs largely from individuals, the private sector, and civil society” (Nye 2013). That is why the role of bottom-up public diplomacy initiatives is now increasingly important for states willing to develop their soft power potential (Filimonov 2010). Thus, Russia’s focus on the top-down approach is one of the problems leading to public diplomacy failures.

Furthermore, Russia’s public diplomacy exertions cannot attain their prominent goals, while they are perceived as propaganda. Indeed, such events as the reorganization of RIA Novosti right after publishing the “Foreign Agents Law” and expelling the USAID agency repulse international audience and sharply decrease the government’s credibility. Filimonov (2010) believes that development and strengthening of civil society is a fundamental prerequisite for the welfare state and its soft power capacity. Nye (2013) insists that “the best propaganda is not propaganda” and recommends Russian authorities “to match words and deeds in their policies, be self-critical, and unleash the full talents of their civil society” in order to succeed. However, he does not think that it is going to happen soon.

In conclusion, contemporary Russia has significant public diplomacy infrastructure including various agencies, clubs and foundations. Russia strives mightily to make use of these institutions and increase efficiency of its public diplomacy tools; however, several critical problems have to be solved first. Except the lack of coordination among public diplomacy organizations and insufficient (though steadily growing) funding, Russia has to pay close attention to its lack of credibility in the rest of the world. In today's international relations, it is almost impossible to achieve credibility without civil society actively involved in the process of public diplomacy. Thus, Russia still has many questions to answer and numerous challenges to face. Only time will show if the country manages to attain its ambitious goals.

4. CONCLUSION

In essence, the aim of this Master's thesis has been to contribute to a general understanding of the limits of the concept of soft power. To attain the aim, two closely interrelated and mutually supporting directions have been taken into consideration. On the one hand, the development of the soft power concept as a whole has been investigated in Chapter 2. On the other hand, the case of Russia has been examined and a better understanding of Russia's perception of soft power has been provided in Chapter 3. The purpose of this chapter is therefore to outline the main findings of the research and to compare Nye's and Russia's approaches to soft power in order to show how the originally Western concept has been transformed in contemporary Russia.

In the very beginning of the investigation we have noticed that the idea of non-coercive power is not new in the sphere of international relations and has its roots in numerous conceptions offered by, for example, Carr, Gramsci, Bachrach, Baratz, and Lukes. However, it was Joseph Nye who coined the term "soft power" and managed to turn the idea into a structured theory, described soft power behaviors and public diplomacy as a way to wield soft power. Moreover, Nye was the first political scientist to emphasize the critical importance of soft power in the 21st century. In the context of the global information age, Nye's soft power concept has become increasingly popular among scholars, politicians and journalists. Nevertheless, it has also been criticized by many political scientists for being underdeveloped and vague.

There are still so many uncertainties in the concept of soft power that it is not surprising that it can be understood differently. Firstly, there is no universally accepted definition of soft power, and Nye himself gives different definitions in his works. Secondly, it is not clear what exactly constitutes soft power, or what the sources of soft power are. Nye does not explain how potential soft power resources can be translated into the behavior of attraction, and this blind spot makes his theory even more ambiguous. Moreover, there are different views on relations between hard and soft power, and it is sometimes not evident how to distinguish between them in real life

situations. Finally, Nye is often criticized for his unilateralist approach to soft power. The whole concept is based on the case of the US; it accepts the US values as universal and the stockpile of the US soft power as pre-given.

The last point of criticism is the most important in this thesis. It implies that the concept of soft power as it is presented by Nye may have significant limitations if applied to a country other than the US. Thus, depending on a unique historical background, specific cultural traditions, special political values and many other factors, the same concept can be seen and used differently by different states. The countries willing to adopt the concept of soft power, especially those of the Non-Western World, tend to interpret and transform the concept so that it fits their own worldview, interests and values. Interestingly, Russia is one of these countries.

Like many other nations, Russia has started to use non-coercive power long before the concept of soft power was introduced. During the Soviet era, the country had a good deal of cultural power and possessed a number of attractive political values though its foreign policies during the Cold War period often undermined its soft power efforts. After the dissolution of the USSR, Russia lost its positions in terms of soft power and, more importantly, its ideology and national idea as a base for public diplomacy. Since the mid-2000s, nevertheless, soft power has become a priority for Russia as a declining power that has a serious image problem, economic difficulties and continuous tensions with other states.

In recent years, Russia has been eagerly trying to rebuild its international image and improve its performance in the global arena by adopting Nye's soft power concept. It is interesting to notice, however, that many aspects of soft power have been reconceptualized to fit Russia's worldview, its political values and strategic objectives. In order to show how and why the concept of soft power has been transformed in modern Russia, it is useful to provide a structured comparison of Nye's (or the "Western") approach to soft power and Russia's alternative understanding of the idea to outline differences and similarities between them (see Table 1).

Table 1. The comparison of Nye's and Russia's approaches to soft power

Nye's Approach	Russia's Approach
Theoretical perspective	
Neoliberalism Non-zero sum game	Neorealism Zero-sum game
Context	
The dissolution of the USSR The post-Cold War unipolar international system	"Color revolutions" Arab Spring Anti-Putin protests
Value standard	
Universalism	Particularism
Values	
Democracy Human rights Freedoms	"Sovereign democracy" Sovereignty Security
Emphasized aspects	
Appeal and attraction	Influence and hegemony
Perception of soft power	
A separate type of power	A projection of hard power "Light force"
Source of soft power initiatives	
Civil society	Government
Main aim	
Achieving foreign policy goals	

Source: Created by author.

It has been assumed in part 1.4 that the fundamental difference between the approaches lies in the theoretical perspectives used by the sides. Having analyzed both viewpoints, it is possible to conclude that Russia's neorealist approach differs significantly from Nye's neoliberal perspective. Interestingly, Russia's behavior (for example, publishing the Foreign Agents Law and banning USAID activities) reveals that Russia perceives soft power as a zero-sum competition with the West, while Nye (2013) emphasizes that the development of soft power does not need to be a zero-sum game. For Nye, soft power encourages cooperation and leads to mutual gains but Russia perceives the concept through the prism of neorealism and sees it as a challenge it must stand up to or lose entirely.

Tsygankov (2013a) notices that soft power can be a non-zero sum game only for the states that want to submit to the US-defined policy direction and accept the US values as universal. However, Russia represents a typical particularistic culture and, thus, counterposes its own values, such as sovereignty and security, to the "universal" values of the West, namely democracy, human rights and freedoms. The Russian conception of "sovereign democracy" implies the primacy of sovereignty over democracy and opposes any foreign intervention into domestic affairs of sovereign states.

Moreover, Russia's distinct attitude to soft power can be explained by the context in which the concept has been perceived. For Nye (2004b:73-75), on the one hand, soft power is a power of attraction that contributed to the fall of the USSR and allowed the US to become the sole superpower in the post-Cold War unipolar international system. For Russia, on the other hand, the same phenomenon is associated with instability of the 1990s, "color revolutions", Arab Spring, and anti-Putin protests, i.e. the events perceived as Western involvement and a threat to Russia's national interests. For this reason, in Russian discourse on soft power the emphasis tends to be put on influence and hegemony discussed by Gramsci rather than on appeal and attraction highlighted by Nye.

Thus, Russian authorities understand soft power as a projection of hard power, or a “light force”, rather than a separate type of power independent of its hard aspect. The government is therefore trying to control Russia’s public diplomacy by establishing government-sponsored agencies and foundations. Today, Russia’s soft power is based mainly on the communicational approach, or the use of information to present alternative opinions and viewpoints (Burlinova 2015). However, Nye sees these efforts as propaganda. He insists on the non-state nature of soft power and stresses the role of civil society in the process of public diplomacy (Nye 2013).

It is fair to add that both sides see soft power as a way to achieve foreign policy goals; however, they prefer different methods and tools to wield it. The in-depth analysis of the case of Russia illustrates that, today, significant similarities between Nye’s original approach to soft power and Russia’s alternative understanding of the concept can be noticed only on paper. Nevertheless, the fact that the notion of soft power has officially become an integral part of Russia’s foreign policy shows that the Russian government is highly interested in implementation of the concept. This leads us to the most interesting finding of this thesis that lies in Russia’s dualistic perception of soft power.

Due to the country’s historical and cultural background as well as the context in which soft power has entered Russian official and public discourse, Russia understands soft power dualistically. On the one hand, soft power is seen as a threat. Russia remains skeptical of the liberal cooperation in the inherently hierarchical world, criticizes the US interference in domestic affairs of other states and feels threatened by democratization supported by the West (Tsygankov 2013a). On the other hand, soft power is seen as an opportunity. In other words, Russia perceives soft power as a chance to promote Russia-specific political, economic and cultural principles in order to balance against the US values and perform better in the international arena.

In conclusion, the peculiarities of Russia’s perception of soft power can be clearly understood if viewed from the neorealist perspective. Significant changes in many aspects of the original

concept are noticeable. Not surprisingly, this reconceptualized soft power contrasts with that of the countries where the liberal worldview is now a commonly accepted dogma. Nevertheless, approaches can be different; the main question seems to be – how effective an approach is in a certain context, or how successful a state is in attaining its foreign policy goals. In the context of a global information age, Russian approach shows very limited signs of success and, in general, remains incoherent and hard. The ways Russia could use to increase its efficiency in terms of soft power taking into account its alternative vision of the concept could become a promising topic for further research.

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