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## Soft Power in the Current Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation: Resources, Possibilities, Limits

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# **SOFT POWER IN THE CURRENT FOREIGN POLICY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION: RESOURCES, POSSIBILITIES, LIMITS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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This paper aims to analyze soft power in the contemporary foreign policy of the Russian Federation. The structure of the present article is based on the basic normative and methodological definition of soft power. The third and also the main part of the text tries through an analytical approach to map and identify resources and real options as well as discern limits of Russia's current use of soft power.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Changes to the political map of the world in the late 80s of the last century indicated later structural changes in international relations that have been continuing with varying intensity to the present. The radical transformations of the global environment grew mainly from the new geopolitical situation – the end of the Cold War and the bipolar arrangement system of international relations, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the formation of new independent states, the growth of NATO with the inclusion of

countries of the former Soviet bloc, deepening and intensification of integration processes in Europe etc. The new reality and at the same time a challenge is the structural growth and qualitative deepening of mutual interactions, interdependences within the international system both between sovereign states on a bilateral level and also within the international and regional organizations on a multilateral level<sup>1</sup>. The nature of all these transformations were based not merely on the establishment of a new power – political configuration but especially from qualitative transformations of the very system of international relations that reflected shifts in the newly created power configuration, which had a direct impact on the level of relations between the participants. In addition to the institutional dimension of the whole system of international relations, starts to increase the emphasis being placed on functionality of the system, this can be reviewed primarily in terms of the dynamics of relations within the system itself. The function can then in a more relevant way outline the operation of the system as a whole. The background to these changes and the natural development led the Russian Federation to shape its post-communist/post-totalitarian identity and statehood. This formation was complicated not only by the “post-Soviet” past, historical heritage of the totalitarian state and a long term of ideology and burdened social structures but was made considerably more difficult by the deep internal political, economic and social crisis that the entire process of creating a “new” identity and statehood entailed.

#### SOFT POWER IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

From the point of view of research focus and scholarly interests in international relations, the category and notion of power belongs among the basics in the research of political relations. In the context of transformations and changing environment in international relations, this topic started to be confronted intensely with new concepts and models, as for example the concept of soft power. In spite of the diversity and existence of several concepts of power, the basic starting category and variable for any research of international relations is power which is defined mostly as the ability of a state to influence, in accordance with its goals, the behav-

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<sup>1</sup> A. Čemez, *Globalization: International, Political, Social and Economic Aspects* [in:] *Economic, Management and Law*, J. Jurkova (ed.), Srbsko razvojno udruženie, Bački Petrovac 2013, p. 14–15.

our of other states, and that even against their will. With respect to this definition, the concept of soft power emphasizes and works with the tools such as attractiveness and appeal as opposed to the traditional instruments of pressure and threat of using the power. The concept of soft power is a relatively new one and it is the result and reflection of development in the last two decades of the dynamically changing practice in international relations<sup>2</sup>. Despite its unquestionable substantiation and relevant place in the theory of international relations, this concept remains criticized by many authors and that mostly for its interpretational ambiguity as well as excessive normativity. Another reason is that it still constitutes a relatively unexplored research field and a challenge for deeper analyses and research. For the purposes of this paper, soft power is considered as the essential variable, which is used to identify the sources as well as its possibilities and limits of its practical application in the Russian foreign policy. In methodological and theoretical terms, it will draw from Joseph Nye's definition, which identifies three primary sources of soft power: culture, political values and foreign policy. With respect to content definition of soft power, Nye claims that it operates mainly on the principle of persuasion of other actors by means of following or agreeing with norms and institutions producing desirable behaviour. According to Nye, soft power can also rely on appealing to certain values or the ability to create the agenda in the way that it forms the others' preferences<sup>3</sup>. However, it is necessary to mention that in the political sphere, the political values can serve as the source of soft power only in case when the state itself follows them from inside as well as outside<sup>4</sup>. While achieving the foreign political goals by means of soft power, the state does not need to make use of so many expensive traditional economic or military sources and can attain the same if not higher efficiency. This is one of the reasons why soft power is sometimes defined in opposition to hard power.

The positive tools in foreign economic relations within the framework of soft power are mostly economic benefits, which are usually the preferential access to the market of the given country, breaking down of business barri-

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<sup>2</sup> J. Nye, *Soft Power*, "Foreign Policy", 1990, no. 80.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem; Idem, *Soft Power. The Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs, New York 2004.

<sup>4</sup> L. Flanderová, *Soft power: Mít či nemít? Mezinárodní politika*, [www.iir.cz/article/soft-power-mit-ci-nemit](http://www.iir.cz/article/soft-power-mit-ci-nemit), accessed 18.02.2015.

ers, developmental help with respect to third states, transfer of technologies, granting of loans and guarantees<sup>5</sup>. Furthermore, the area of soft power includes also the ideological means helping to spread ideas connected to the particular state. These tools mostly concentrate on political elite and public opinion of other countries. In this context, public diplomacy is often mentioned. It is based on the assumption that the country's image and reputation are public property, which can create environment either enabling or disabling individual action<sup>6</sup>. The area of public diplomacy, whose importance is underlined by the development of modern communication technologies, includes the statesmen's speeches, work with the media with international impact, support of ideologically compatible groups within other states as well as attendance of international cultural events abroad with the purpose of creating positive awareness about the given state<sup>7</sup>.

The ideological sphere includes creating good reputation abroad focusing on the positive image (so-called branding) in the world community and achieving better standing among other states. The main tool for achieving support from other members of the international community is the attractiveness of offered ideas and approaches together with the reputation of their holders. Branding is especially important for countries which underwent radical systemic change and transformation (Russia included), because it becomes a tool whose role is to introduce the new or confirm the existing identity of a particular state, its idea about how it wants to be perceived, mainly by that group of states to which it wants to belong. Identity and its presentation become part of strategy of public diplomacy by means of "stories" about the state and its place in time and space<sup>8</sup>.

#### EVALUATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION POST-SOVIET DEVELOPMENT: THE ROOTS OF RUSSIAN SOFT POWER AND THE BASIS FROM WHICH IT BEGAN

For the Russian (post-Soviet) political elite the change started after the collapse of the USSR – an intense, although initially uncertain and cha-

<sup>5</sup> H. Savigny, L. Marsden, *Doing Political Science and International Relations. Theories in Action*, Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire 2011, p. 53.

<sup>6</sup> J. Peterková, *Věřejná diplomacie – jen módní pojem nebo skutečná změna*, "Mezinárodní vztahy", 2006, no. 3.

<sup>7</sup> P. Drulák, R. Druláková, *Tvorba a analýza zahraniční politiky*, VŠE Oeconomica, Praha 2007.

<sup>8</sup> J. Peterková, *Věřejná diplomacie – jen módní pojem nebo skutečná změna*, "Mezinárodní vztahy", 2006, no. 3, p. 91.

otic search for a new ideological framework and paradigm on which it would be possible to shape foreign policy and at the same time respond to current political, security and economic issues<sup>9</sup>. During the 90s of the previous century within this process of “searching” for a substitute ideology and paradigm the ideological directions of Eurasia and (Russian) geopolitics became important<sup>10</sup>. The early years of post-transformation development had a great impact on the foreign policy of Russia also Atlanticism. The Atlanticism in foreign policy, the “degradation” of Russia and its position within the system of international relations, defeatism towards the international financial institutions and excessive orientation towards the “West” (so called Westernization of Russia) developed relatively quickly among the ruling political elite, including president Yeltsin and this was socially and politically untenable as a new Russian idea<sup>11</sup>. Equally unsuccessful was the process of “accepting” Eurasian ideas and geopolitics. This acceptance of thoughts and expectations regarding ideological currents did not materialize. More specifically the society did not accept and identify with the initial constants and premises of these directions because of their own excessive static nature, orientation to the past rather than future, but especially the inapplicability to the contemporary (critical) position of Russia. Russia’s strong traditions and intellectual background did not foster liberalism and other liberal ideational currents (including Atlanticism as mentioned above)<sup>12</sup>. The real political

<sup>9</sup> J. Holzer, *Politický systém Ruska. Hledání státu*, CDK, Brno 2001; A. G. Arbatov, *Russia and the West: The 21st Century Security Environment*, Sharpe, East West Institute, New York 1999.

<sup>10</sup> N. K. Gvosdev, C. H. Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy. Interests, Vectors and Sectors*, SAGE Publications, London 2014, p. 55–57; K. Pleshakov, *Russia’s mission: The third epoch*, “International affairs (Moscow)”, 1993, no. 1; A. Sergunin, *Russian Post-Soviet Foreign Policy Thinking at the Cross-Roads: Changing Paradigms*, „Journal of International Relations and Development“ 2000, no. 3; A. Kubyshkin, A. Sergunin, *The Problem of the “Special Path” in Russian Foreign Policy (From the 1990s to the Early Twenty-First Century)*, “Russian Politics and Law”, 2012, no. 6.

<sup>11</sup> N. K. Gvosdev, C. H. Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy. Interests, Vectors and Sectors*, SAGE Publications, London 2014, p. 57; A. Duleba, K. Hirman, *Rusko na konci Jelcinovej éry. Zabraněná a vnútorná politika, rozširovanie NATO a záujmy Slovenska*, IVO, Bratislava 1999; J. Holzer, *Politický systém Ruska. Hledání státu*, CDK, Brno 2001, A. Kozyrev, *Diskussija o tom, kakoj byt vnešnej politike Rossii*, “Meždnarodnaja žizn”, 1993, no. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Lilly B., *Russian Foreign Policy Toward Missile Defense. Actors, Motivations, and Influence*, Lexington Books, Lanham 2014.

impact was very marginal, not to mention the fact that it was liberalism and liberal currents (political, economic) that had been associated with almost all negative phenomena of the post-communist transformation process of the country after 1991. This development and the discourse around the question of post-Soviet identity and statehood heralded its result and present form as well as helped to establish a solid base and framework for current instruments and content, a “filling” with Russian soft power concepts. Therefore, Russia’s form of soft power with regard to political values is based on strict antiliberalism, conservatism, Russian nationalism and a state-paternalistic approach<sup>13</sup>.

The final transitions in the process of completing the post-Soviet identity and the statehood of Russia occurred after 2000. It was at this time that the new President, V. Putin, started to fully and professionally develop the technology of power in the model of a controlled (managed) democracy. Although the model of controlled democracy, especially as seen in election procedures and results had already been applied during Yeltsin’s era; the new sophisticated forms, the means and specifically the methods and tools of controlled democracy were achieved under President Putin’s “qualitatively” higher dimension. It was in the first presidential term of office for Putin (2000–2004) when the basic institutional foundation of controlled democracy became hierarchically and “personally rebuilt” as a vertical of power, which among other issues incorporated the party of power (the political party “United Russia”), strong economic structures and financial groups but also the media both federal and regional<sup>14</sup>. The negative political image that was evoked in the democratic (Western) world by the term “managed democracy” led to the reshaping and “transformation” to the term: “sovereign democracy”<sup>15</sup>. Sovereign democracy should primarily ideologically serve to legitimize the power of Putin, and at the same time to justify his governance and the need for a sovereign democracy with reference to the particularities and specificities of the Russian political system. Sovereign democracy

<sup>13</sup> D. Kollár, *Ideologické prúdy ruskej zahraničnej a bezpečnostnej politiky a interné vplyvy na jej tvorbu*, [in:] *Bezpečnostné forum 2015*, J. Ušiak, J. Lasicová, D. Kollár (eds.), Belianum, Banská Bystrica 2015.

<sup>14</sup> A. Jack, *Inside Putin’s Russia. Can there be reform without democracy?*, Oxford University Press, New York 2004.

<sup>15</sup> N. Popescu considers the concept of sovereign democracy as one of the content attributes of the Russian “soft power” (Popescu 2006).

was established to elaborate the official state ideology in order to distract everyone from the political chaos of the 90s<sup>16</sup>. In the practical sphere the aim of sovereign democracy is the reasoning for and interpretation of decisions of the ruling establishment in internal and foreign policy. In the context of sovereign democracy as a pragmatic ideology the main idea becomes the legitimization of the empowerment of the state position and its structures (administration, bureaucracy, army, secret services, military-industrial complex, the fuel-energy complex) in all areas of political, social, economic and cultural life<sup>17</sup>. The whole concept of sovereign democracy, the political system of contemporary Russia is based on its historical predisposition for primacy of the state over the individual and society – known as state-centrism. The state-centric concept places the state as the hierarchically highest placed institution and entity. Other structures of the state are directly derived from it and at the same time subordinate to it. The idea of a strong state as an institution that includes and supplies everything is the historical constant whose genesis has long-lasting philosophical, historical and imperial roots formed several centuries ago, and so continues to prop up political values of Russian soft power (antiliberalism, conservatism, nationalism)<sup>18</sup>.

When considering foreign policy, sovereign democracy is nothing more than an expressed vision by Russia as being one of the independent poles of world politics in a multipolar world<sup>19</sup>. Exactly this idea of a multipolar world is one of the basic starting points of the theses that Moscow with its political values of soft power offers at the international level as well as to state and non-state members of the global community. Current multi-vector diplomacy as a practical political doctrine within a multipolar arrangement for international relations seeks to balance its influence within the system of international relations and institutions (also regional), by means of active and purposeful diplomatic action focussed on key actors within

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<sup>16</sup> Duleba A., *Ruská federácia pred prezidentskými voľbami 2008*, [www.sfpa.sk/sk/publikacie/analyzy/?nrok=2008](http://www.sfpa.sk/sk/publikacie/analyzy/?nrok=2008), accessed 10.02.2015, p. 4–6.

<sup>17</sup> R. Connolly, *The Economic Sources of Social Order Development in Post-Socialist Eastern Europe*, Routledge, Abingdon 2013, p. 126–127.

<sup>18</sup> P. Dutkiewicz, *Missing in Translation: Re-conceptualizing Russia's Developmental State*, [in:] *Russia the Challenges of Transformation*, P. Dutkiewicz, D. Trenin (eds.), New York University Press, New York 2011.

<sup>19</sup> A. Duleba, *Ruská federácia pred prezidentskými voľbami 2008*, [www.sfpa.sk/sk/publikacie/analyzy/?nrok=2008](http://www.sfpa.sk/sk/publikacie/analyzy/?nrok=2008), accessed 10.02.2015.



international politics<sup>20</sup>. Sovereign democracy should create manoeuvring room in international relations sufficient to realize a foreign policy which would fulfil the exclusive political dominance of Russia across the entire post-Soviet space, to which it feels entitled. The claim is declared in all of its official foreign policy and security documents adopted from 1992 to the present. The framework of Russian “soft power” which is an integral part of its foreign policy with those countries in the post-Soviet space is based on a common history, language, cultural proximity, and a predisposition, i.e. relatively high trade and economic exchanges and attractiveness of Russian labour and product market<sup>21</sup>. The idea of a multipolar world “offered” within the framework of Russian soft power represents an alternative political model to accommodate the arrangement of a new system for international relations. The alternative to this is a clear delimitation against the USA and the cultural hegemony of the Western model of democracy with values based on political and economic liberalism<sup>22</sup>. The EU with its extensive potential of soft power offered in the form of attractive benefits arising from the signatures of the Association Agreements and access to the united EU market is seen by Moscow as the greatest threat to its dominance in post-Soviet space. For Russia this means a huge challenge, which must be answered. In response to Moscow’s reaction to the launch of the EU project, the so called policy of “European Neighbourhood Cooperation”, came the intensification of the Eurasian economic integration and the development of its own political concept of soft power.

In conclusion it is possible when examining the assumptions of Russian soft power to assert that the first of the above mentioned dimensions serves sovereign democracy by legitimizing the foreign policy decisions directly or indirectly applied in relation to former Soviet republics and by using all available tools, including hard power as well as soft power. In the second dimension sovereign democracy creates an ideological platform upon which to offer an alternative (global) and universal political model using Russian soft power. This model is created and justified on strict

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<sup>20</sup> O. Oliker, K. Crane, L. Schwartz, C. Yusupov, *Russian Foreign Policy. Sources and Implications*, Rand Corporation, Santa Monica 2009; J. Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham 2009.

<sup>21</sup> F. Hill, *Moscow Discovers Soft Power*, „Current History“, 2006, no. 2.

<sup>22</sup> A. Zagorski, *Multilateralism in Russian Foreign Policy Approaches*, [in:] *The Multilateral Dimension in Russian Foreign Policy*, E. W. Rowe, S. Torjesen (eds.), Routledge, New York 2012, p. 48–50.

delimitation and differentiation against the current model created by the Western world mainly the USA and at the same time it is also closely and in fact inextricably linked to this model. These statements also indirectly indicate the strong dominance of pragmatism in Russian foreign policy.

#### THE COURSE OF FOREIGN POLICY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AFTER 2012: NEW IMPULSES AND PRECONDITIONS FOR SOFT POWER

The expected onset of Putin into the presidential chair in May 2012 formally ended the process of “exchange” at the highest political and constitutional post of the Russian state. The priorities of his “new” 6-year presidential mandate already declared while he was in function of prime minister between 2008 and 2012. These priorities indicated that in the coming years he will in the foreign policy emphasise those steps and actions that will lead to the strengthening of economic power and political positions of Russia in the global economy and in the system of international relations. An ambitious goal that Putin has set is the Russia’s inclusion in the top five largest economies in the world by 2015<sup>23</sup>. This goal should be supported not only by Moscow’s entry into the WTO formally ended in 2012, but especially by the new economic dimension oriented on foreign policy<sup>24</sup>. The basic contours and parameters of foreign policy officially published in May 2012 by the Decree no. 605 “On Measures to Implement the Foreign Policy Course of the Russian Federation”, adequately highlight the economic dimension of foreign policy. In July 2012 within the speech to the members of the diplomatic corps Putin referring to the decree recalled that the diplomacy must in the near period use diplomatic instruments more effectively to support Russian economic and business interests abroad. In this context he directly spoke of a factor of *soft power* as future integral part of foreign policy, emphasizing that in the Russian understanding the soft power should be based on promoting the (Russian) interests through conviction and obtaining sympathy<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> V. Putin, *Vladimir Putin on foreign policy: Russia and the changing world*, Valdai Discussion Club, [www.valdaiclub.com/politics/39300.html](http://www.valdaiclub.com/politics/39300.html), accessed 22.02.2015.

<sup>24</sup> M. Horemuž, *Contemporary Russian Foreign Policy and the Post-Soviet Area: The Economic Dimension*, [in:] *Panorama of Global Security Environment*, M. Majer, R. Ondrejcsák (eds.), CENAA, Bratislava 2013, p. 228–229.

<sup>25</sup> M. Horemuž, *Contemporary Russian Foreign Policy and the Post-Soviet Area: The Economic Dimension*, [in:] *Panorama of Global Security Environment*, M. Majer, R. Ondrejcsák (eds.), CENAA, Bratislava 2013, p. 230.

In February 2013 published an updated Concept of Russian Federation Foreign Policy explicitly incorporates the factor of Soft power into (textual) doctrinal form, showing (emphasis) on improving the application of “soft power” and identifying the best forms of activities in this area. The new Concept postulates that the ongoing global economic processes and the rapidly changing situation in the world require not only a new vision of foreign policy but mainly access to markets. One of the primary objectives in the economic dimension of this foreign policy involves the strengthening of Russia’s positions in the global trade and economic system, providing diplomatic support to national economic operators abroad, preventing discrimination against Russian goods, services or investments; making use of the potential of international and regional economic and financial institutions to that end<sup>26</sup>.

The Concept directly but rather tersely defines the factor of “soft power” as a comprehensive toolkit for achieving foreign policy objectives when building civil society potential, information, cultural and other methods and technologies rather than traditional diplomacy and is becoming an indispensable component of modern international relations<sup>27</sup>. At the same time, increasing global competition and the growing potential of crisis sometimes creates 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<sup>28</sup>. Regarding the aforementioned factor of “soft power” the concept further emphasizes that economic, legal, scientific, environmental, demographic and IT factors are becoming as important for states in influencing world politics as military power. Of increased relevance are also issues related to sustainable development, spiritual and intellectual education of the population, improving its well-being and

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<sup>26</sup> *Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, [www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D), accessed 13.01.2015.

<sup>27</sup> *Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, [www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D), accessed 13.01.2015.

<sup>28</sup> *Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, § 25, [www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D), accessed 13.01.2015.

promoting investment in human capital. The Concept also considers the economic independence of states as the key factor of international stability while it does not specify precisely what this means in the increasingly interconnected and globalized world. The Concept also indirectly points to the necessity for creating an effective framework for the use of “soft power” in the foreign policy of Russia. The fact that the Concept does not clearly define and does not deeply justify the nature and framework of the “soft power” factor, but possibly focuses within minimal space on what the soft power factor “should include”, which refers to the entire content ambiguity, current lack of fulfilment, but also the high variability of the term “soft power” itself<sup>29</sup>.

The EU’s policy towards the former post-Soviet republics has become one of the biggest challenges for Russian foreign policy and its concept of soft power in practical terms since 2011. After the most comprehensive enlargement of the EU and the integration of countries of the former Eastern bloc in 2004 (including Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia) possibly after the acceptance of Romania and Bulgaria into the EU in 2007 the question of next access and procedure of the EU towards the post-Soviet countries became not only legitimate but urgent. The result became the policy of the Eastern partnership which within the European Neighbourhood Policy offered to some former post-Soviet republics a political and institutional platform for mutual dialogue and development of relations<sup>30</sup>. The policy of Eastern Partnership approved by the EU in 2008 and officially implemented a year later, was in response to the interest of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine in building closer relationships with the EU. The main objective of the Eastern Partnership policy is mainly an effort to deepen political and economic relations of the above six countries with the EU. One of the dimensions of the Eastern Partnership policy is the process of negotiations regarding Association Agreements, possibly the agreements of affiliation. The signing of these agreements should bring the former post-Soviet republics involved in the Eastern Partnership policy, in addition to deepening of political dialogue, the legal

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<sup>29</sup> *Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, [www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D), accessed 13.01.2015.

<sup>30</sup> W. Gizicki, *Eastern Partnership – for Security and Cooperation*, „Politické vedy”, 2012, no. 2, p. 139.

obligations and responsibilities to implement reforms and align national legislation with European legislation. The second dimension is a form of economics and is based on a real vision of initializing of a free trade zone agreement between the EU and the individual state participating in the Eastern Partnership policy<sup>31</sup>. The agreement regarding the free trade zone is especially “attractive” to the former post-Soviet republics because their application will lead to removal of the majority of existing restrictions on mutual trade and so allow free access to the goods and services of the EU market, gradual economic integration into the internal EU market and ultimately the formation of a new economic space. On the other hand, it creates pressure on these countries to adopt internal reforms with a view to achieving competitiveness as one of the basic requirements of action within the internal EU market. Ultimately in the long-term perspective it will lead to substantial changes in foreign trading partners, a reorientation of exports and imports as well as a change in the structure and composition of the commodities to be traded among states located in the “free trade zone”. Considering the fact that some of the post-Soviet states are heavily dependent on the Russian market for several key (sensitive) goods means that changes in foreign exchange trading could have considerable geopolitical impacts since Moscow would de facto lose these states as the most important “economic instruments of its own foreign policy. Another important consideration within the framework of soft power which the European Union offers to the countries participating in the Eastern Partnership policy is the question of visa facilitation, the ultimate objective being a visa-free regime which trades with EU countries<sup>32</sup>.

In the interpretation and thinking of Russia the Eastern Partnership represents a threat or disruption of its own “privileged” and dominant status in the post-Soviet space. Moscow is fully aware of the fact that the EU offers an economically attractive model of political cooperation with direct economic / political benefits in addition to the open possibility of full membership which is not ideologically or historically burdened. The Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius held in November 2013, especially the non-signature of the Association Agreement between the EU and Kiev

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<sup>31</sup> A. Duleba, V. Benč, V. Bilčík, *Policy Impact of the Eastern Partnership on Ukraine*, Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, Bratislava 2012.

<sup>32</sup> A. Duleba, V. Benč, V. Bilčík, *Policy Impact of the Eastern Partnership on Ukraine*, Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, Bratislava 2012, p. 63–64.

which in fact initiated the events in Ukraine, fully demonstrated the deep contradiction between the EU and Russia on questions of substance and the final objectives of the Eastern Partnership policy. Moscow considers this EU policy a hostile tool, possibly a direct political instrument leading to the Europeanisation of the post-Soviet space at the expense of Russia, weakening the political and economic ties between Russia as a former centre and the individual post-Soviet republics at its periphery. In Vilnius the Association Agreement was endorsed and a free trade zone with Moldova and Georgia, which had long sought to escape the Russian sphere of influence was created. This raised negative reactions in Moscow rejecting potential threats associated with the action (closure, possible difficulties for Moldovan and Georgian products getting to Russian markets). These two countries see the Eastern Partnership policy as a key policy tool which should put them closer and more firmly anchored within European political, economic and integration structures. Other countries participating in the Eastern Partnership policy are Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus and in a significant manner also the Ukraine. Up until the overthrow of the Government of V. Yanukovych these countries considered the policy of the Eastern Partnership of EU a rather good opportunity to balance and neutralize political influence and pressure from Russia but also as an opportunity for participation and involvement in this project as much for political reasons as for economic benefits. Therefore the approach of these countries to the Eastern Partnership policy is rather modest and selective (i.e. participation only in selected projects), and also expressed as having pragmatic purposes.

An important outcome of the summit in Vilnius was the further developed view that acceptance of this political declaration confirmed the main objective of the Eastern Partnership as the political association and economic integration of involved partners with the EU. Soft power of the EU therefore in relation to selected countries in post-Soviet space represents a constantly open process, a mutually beneficial relationship based on support, tangible economic benefits of the EU, a specific political vision in exchange for the fulfilment of reforms as well as European political, economic and legal norms and standards for these countries. In contrast Russia offers to the post-Soviet republics an alternative project of economic integration i.e. its own soft power featuring a relatively wide range of instruments: simplification of cross-border arrangements and

travelling, a targeted immigration policy, rules allowing access to the Russian market including the labour market as well as specifically preferential prices on energy commodities. A significant difference in the application of soft power by the EU and by Russia towards the post-Soviet states is the fact that Moscow does not apply the principle of reciprocal and mutually advantageous relations but retains a largely one-sided relationship in favour of Russia. This is one of Russia's policy responses to the Eastern Partnership of EU. From the perspective of Russian foreign policy Eurasian economic integration is the regional institutional platform and tool whose ultimate goal is to establish political and economic dominance in the post-Soviet space. While soft power is not a goal it is a means to achieve this objective. This is one of the reasons why there are opinions and evaluations claiming that Eurasian union, or rather the whole concept of economic integration of post-Soviet area and its structures (Customs Union and Common Economic Space) emerges from the defensive character and aims at protection of Russian interests from the influence of the EU, but also China and Islamic countries. As it happens, it is documented by evaluation by some analysts who consider the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan to be an institutionally created space and opportunity for Russian expansion and export of their production (especially cars and machinery) as a competition to the EU and China they would not otherwise be able to compete with.

One of the most important dimensions of Russian soft power is how it values the Russian political system as identified above. The post-Soviet space in political science theory and practice is characterized by the existence of multiple non-democratic and authoritarian regimes: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The main goal of several political elites and clans of these undemocratic regimes continues to be the preservation of political power. The political values promoted within the foreign policy of the Russian soft power offer just that possibility. Although such a view and analysis is considerably oversimplified, the relationship between Russia and several post-Soviet republics is much more difficult, complex and multidimensional, nevertheless it is one of the legitimate and empirically substantiated views, which subsequently allows understanding of the general nature of the relationships<sup>33</sup>. Political leaders

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<sup>33</sup> A prime example in this respect is Uzbekistan, where after a violent suppression of anti-government protests in Andijan in 2005 and subsequent international criticism (EU

and elites in the countries participating in the policy of the Eastern Partnership of EU (Belarus, Armenia and Azerbaijan) see the possible implementation of the values and principles of the EU as a threat to their own power position as well as to the very nature of their regimes. Therefore these states are politically oriented to some degree towards Russia which represents a greater guarantee of “rigidity” and the status quo of undemocratic and internally corrupt political regimes.

#### **POST-SOVIET SPACE: RESOURCES, LIMITS AND FAILURES OF RUSSIAN SOFT POWER**

Current starting positions and also limits of the current Russia’s soft power are partly the result of the “Soviet period” and the legacy of the past-Russian “imperial tradition”. After World War II, the Soviet Union possessed relatively high political capital for the successful application of soft power within the international relations. This capital stemmed mainly from the victory over Nazi Germany, but also from the achievements in the field of culture, art, literature, science and technology (cosmonautics). Although in the context of the bipolar division of the world and the ongoing confrontation “East” versus “West” there was a tendency for one of the blocks rather the result of a pragmatic decision than an ideological opinion, some countries have “voluntarily” decided to build images of some hybrid models of socialism (African and Arab socialism, Latin American socialism). In the Western European countries there was the attractiveness of the socialism ideas (communism) in the ‘50s, but also even in the early ‘60s represented by the existence of strong communist parties that, in a certain

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and USA) regarding violations of human rights, the regime of President I. Karimov carried out a “pragmatic” foreign-political shift. The shift was based on the secession of Uzbekistan from the regional association of post-Soviet states GUUAM (Georgia, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova) which combined countries strongly critical and at the same time unsupportive of the integrative structures of the post-Soviet space (CIS, CSTO, EurAsEC, CU and EEU) “controlled” by Moscow. Karimov also ended the presence of US troops dislocated in the country due to the operation “Enduring Freedom” in Afghanistan, and also decided to join the security pact: Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) actually controlled by Moscow. The cautious foreign policy convergence of Tashkent with Russia did not criticize the undemocratic regime of I. Karimov which included human rights violations resulting from the pragmatic foreign policy stance of Uzbekistan. This pragmatism also documented the reality that I. Karimov entered the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEc) in 2006 but by 2008 he suspended membership in this organization (in fact he resigned) as in 2012, Uzbekistan also left the CSTO.



period, participated directly to the government (Italy, France). However, the ideas of the Soviet system in intellectual and artistic circles were having the highest support. Events in Hungary, but especially in Czechoslovakia, however, finally buried the last illusions about the true nature of the communist totalitarian system, respectively, any considerations of its any kind of reform. Moreover, in the context of the onset of post-material society, the ideology that legitimized the communist system, began, regarding the content, to get emptied and exhausted, respectively, began to be confronted with the emergence of the new post-material values<sup>34</sup>. The economic problems of the USSR and the entire Communist bloc in the 70s and 80s definitely predetermined the development that ended with the collapse of communism and the Soviet Union itself.

At the moment, Russia has a number of advantages for implementing a soft power strategy in its neighbourhood: the presence of large Russian minorities; a shared history; cultural and linguistic proximity; a larger economy and energy resources. The Kremlin's soft power tools include cultural and linguistic programmes, scholarships for foreign students, well-equipped media outlets, Christian Orthodoxy, and a visa-free regime with many neighbours that makes Russia's labour market relatively accessible<sup>35</sup>. One of the most obvious means of enforcing soft power, which the Russia's foreign policy has been also appropriately using, is the Russian minority living in the so-called Near abroad, a term officially used for the countries of the former Soviet Union. After 1991, due to the collapse of the Soviet Union, more than 25 million ethnic Russians, respectively citizens, who have been ethnically endorsed as Russians, found themselves outside the territory of the Russian Federation. In some countries, their share, even more than 20 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, represents more than 30%<sup>36</sup>. The second group consists of people who,

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<sup>34</sup> R. Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization. Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey 1997; R. Inglehart, *Modernization and Democracy*, [in:] *Democracy versus Modernization. A Dilemma for Russia and for the World*, V. Inozemtsev, P. Dutkiewicz (eds.), Routledge, Abingdon 2013.

<sup>35</sup> E. Tafuro, *Fatal Attraction? Russia's Soft Power in its Neighbourhood—Analysis*, [www.eurasia-review.com/29052014-fatal-attraction-russias-soft-power-neighbourhood-analysis/](http://www.eurasia-review.com/29052014-fatal-attraction-russias-soft-power-neighbourhood-analysis/), accessed 02.02.2015.

<sup>36</sup> D. B. Malysheva, *Etničeskie konflikty na jube SNG i nacionalnaja bezopasnost' Rossii*, „Mirovaja ekonomika i meždunarodnye otnošenija”, 1994, no. 3.

though nationally and ethnically aren't identified as "Russians", but use Russian language as a *mother tongue*, or they consider its use in everyday communication for matter of course. The presence of the Russian minority and Russian language actually creates sufficient flexibility for the realization of soft power on the platform of such structures and institutions such as the media, educational institutions, culture and art institutes, but also science and sport. The importance of the Russian minority and language factor is also pointed out in the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, which emphasizes: *protecting rights and legitimate interests of compatriots living abroad on the basis of international law and treaties concluded by the Russian Federation while considering the numerous Russian diasporas as a partner, including in expanding and strengthening the space of the Russian language and culture*<sup>37</sup>. After all the experience with the Russian language, as a tool for political power, Russia actually inherited from the Soviet times. The Russian language in the Soviet era actually became with the communist ideology one of the integrating elements, even though prescriptive and often violently designated, assisting in cultural unification of the Soviet space. Another one was the Soviet nationality policy, which, under the guise of internationalization (unity and the brotherhood of Nations) and "Sovietization" of the country has actually meant a purposeful Russification of individual republics of the USSR. This systematic process mostly reflected in the Central Asian countries, where a number of key positions and positions in administration, government, power components, in education, as well as, technical professions were held by the Russian community, which has been in most cases "resettled and moved" here. This process was fostered by the practical and "real" life, in which the knowledge of the Russian language, together with the affiliation to the Communist Party, became an essential precondition to raise the social and economic position of the Soviet society at the time. The emergence of new independent states, deteriorating socio-economic, as well as, security

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<sup>37</sup> Conception highlights further aims in relation to the Russian minority abroad, supporting consolidation of organizations of compatriots to enable them to effectively uphold their rights in the countries of residence while preserving the cultural and ethnic identity of the Russian diaspora and its ties with the historical homeland, and provide conditions for facilitating voluntary relocation to the Russian Federation of compatriots willing to do so; *Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, § 39 d, [www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D), accessed 13.01.2015.

conditions, political instability, the application of the authoritarian way of governing, withdrawal of financial support for cultural and artistic development led, in the 90s, to the gradual leaving of Russian minorities from the Republics of the former Soviet Union and their return to Russia<sup>38</sup>. This return was over and above supported also by Moscow, which sought to partially address the demographic decline of own population with it. Transformed local Communist elites of the former post-Soviet states that have successfully incorporated in the official state policy of nationalism, “welcomed” the departure of ethnic Russians. Russian minority was in fact, by the political representation of these countries, perceived as some internal threat, respectively, a possible pretext and justification for political interference and pressure from Russia. Former post-Soviet republics has already been, since their independence, seeking to create a stronger sense of national identity through the language, which ultimately leads to a weakening of the Russian language retreat from the position on the media market (press, radio, television), the scientific research and education institutions, manifested subsequently, for example, by the lack of intelligence and qualified teachers to teach Russian language<sup>39</sup>. The overall decline and fall of the Russian language was also confirmed by the deputy of the Russian Ministry of Education V. Kaganov, who, in December 2013, said to the agency TASS that the number of Russian-speaking population in the world has fallen since the collapse of the USSR by 100 million. Although Kaganov did not specify the data source and the structuring of this decline by individual countries or regions, the overall trend of decline is undisputed and remains a persistent phenomenon<sup>40</sup>.

Protection of the Russian-speaking minority has also become one of the “official” reasons of Russian “involvement” in the current Ukrainian

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<sup>38</sup> A. P. Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham 2013.

<sup>39</sup> S. Blank, *Russia's Waning Soft Power in Central Asia*, „The Diplomat”, [www.thediplomat.com/2015/01/russias-waning-soft-power-in-central-asia/](http://www.thediplomat.com/2015/01/russias-waning-soft-power-in-central-asia/), accessed 25.01.2015.

<sup>40</sup> This outcome strongly suggests that while state support for the propagation of the Russian language abroad is a point in Russia's 2009 national security strategy, Moscow is apparently steadily if somewhat unobtrusively failing to achieve its goals. And this testifies to a continuing failure to actualize Russia's soft power despite an enormous state investment; S. Blank, *Russia's Waning Soft Power in Central Asia*, „The Diplomat”, [www.thediplomat.com/2015/01/russias-waning-soft-power-in-central-asia/](http://www.thediplomat.com/2015/01/russias-waning-soft-power-in-central-asia/), accessed 25.01.2015.

crisis. The decision of the new political representation of Ukraine to revoke Russian as the second state language can be viewed as a political mistake. Although, this decision was rather quickly revised, Russia has used this fact properly medially and propagandistically to promote their own interpretation and vision of the situation by saying that the new government in Kiev is fully controlled by the nationalists, radicals “Bander`s” and “fascists”. This was also one of the reasons why Moscow decided to act sooner in the situation, respectively, to act as it acted. The too intensive war led in the mass media has also become one of the dimensions of the conflict in Ukraine (whether political or military)<sup>41</sup>. Russia realized the importance of the information and media war already in the so-called First Chechen War (1994–1996), which it failed to win, also due to the mismanagement of information coverage of the events and the total media campaign. It is due to this failure, as well as, the professionally led media campaign by NATO during the Kosovo crisis (1999), or the reporters and information coverage of military operations of the US and its allies in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) that Russia took away a number of lessons. Moscow, in connection with further development of public diplomacy, has invested considerable funds into media, news and information coverage and “own” interpretation of events at home and abroad in. Creating a positive image of the Russian state, as well as, its official top political leaders has become the main goal of public diplomacy<sup>42</sup>. TV channel Russia Today

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<sup>41</sup> Minister of Foreign Affairs, S. Lavrov, commented the war in the information field and its possible impacts in the following way: The events in and around Ukraine have demonstrated that we face increasing, often unfair competition in matters of shaping public opinion. Unprecedented measures to discredit Russian politics and distort the image of our country are being taken..... It is important to do everything possible to elucidate Russia’s position in international affairs, to convey truthful information to the public abroad, and to strengthen contacts not only with those inclined towards constructive engagement with us, but also with players still under the prejudiced influence of a bygone era; E. Chernenko, *Russia’s new soft power doctrine. Russia Direct*, [www.russia-direct.org/russian-media/russias-new-soft-power-doctrine-could-be-summer-blockbuster](http://www.russia-direct.org/russian-media/russias-new-soft-power-doctrine-could-be-summer-blockbuster), accessed 08.01.2015.

<sup>42</sup> The Winter Olympics in Sochi should have helped to improve the Russia’s image in the world, as well as the upcoming FIFA World Cup in 2018, on which were (will be) spent colossal funds with questionable effect. On the other hand, the official budget of Rossotrudnichestvo federal agency that aim is to preserve Russian influence in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the strengthening of friendly ties to support Russia’s political and economic interests, was in 2014 only 79 million USD.

was created for this purpose, which should care mainly about improving Russia's image abroad. It is broadcasted in English, while it has to offer "fair and independent" (i.e., "the Kremlin") view of the current political events at home and abroad. The reorganization of the Russian state agency RIA Novosti should also improve the positive image of Russia abroad. Its new boss D. Kiselev, shortly after assuming office in 2013, introduced the creation of a government-sponsored project "Sputnik" - a network of intelligence centres in 34 countries. Those centres should create radio, social media and agency news content in local languages.

In 2008, at the executive level, by Presidential Decree the following institutions were established, the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation (Rossotrudnichestvo), which is from the point of management subordinated actually to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In connection with the events in Ukraine in 2014, the head at the time K. Kosachev pointed out that the Agency should make an effort to change the perception of Russia by the international community. This was also one of the reasons for initiating the preparation of the new soft-power doctrine entitled *Integrated Strategy for Expanding Russia's Humanitarian Influence in the World*<sup>43</sup>. The public was first time officially notified about the upcoming version in July 2014 at a meeting of the Head of Agency K. Kosachev, which was also attended by Foreign Minister S. Lavrov. Withdrawal of the Head of Rossotrudnichestva K. Kosachev, in December 2014, was probably due to the failure of the Agency in relation to Ukraine. Current discussions in the media show the need to reorganize the agency, in the form of direct subordination to the President's Agency, respectively, its inclusion into the presidential administration<sup>44</sup>. It cannot be ruled out that the planned reorganization of the agency may be associated with the new looking at "soft power", which was presented at a press conference of the Centre for Political Analysis at the end of October 2014. The authors of the analytical study come to the conclusion in it that the essential element of soft power is the

<sup>43</sup> E. Chernenko, *Russia's new soft power doctrine*. *Russia Direct*, [www.russia-direct.org/russian-media/russias-new-soft-power-doctrine-could-be-summer-blockbuster](http://www.russia-direct.org/russian-media/russias-new-soft-power-doctrine-could-be-summer-blockbuster), accessed 08.01.2015.

<sup>44</sup> V. Martynjuk, *Sobytya na Ukraïne pokazali: Rossotrudnichestvo provalilo rabotu s sootčestvennikami*. *KM.RU*, [www.km.ru/v-rossii/2015/01/16/ministerstvo-inostrannykh-del-rf/753579-sobytya-na-ukraïne-pokazali-rossotrudni](http://www.km.ru/v-rossii/2015/01/16/ministerstvo-inostrannykh-del-rf/753579-sobytya-na-ukraïne-pokazali-rossotrudni), accessed 18.01.2015.

person of President Putin. The personality of President Putin, disposing of international authority and political experience is the fact, which the soft power of Russia should be based on, according to this “study”. The analytical document, however, is more of the propagandistic nature, than a serious analytical study<sup>45</sup>. In the context of anti-Russian sanctions implemented in connection with the events in Ukraine by the EU and the US, after the annexation of the Crimea that are behind persistently high domestic popularity of V. Putin, it seems that the document should further develop (strengthen) a specific personality cult of Russian President. S. Karaganov offers a more realistic assessment of soft power, who believes that Russia has been suffering from a lack of “soft power” in the long term, which led to military aggression not only in Ukraine, but also in Georgia in 2008.

The absence of soft power results in a power, confrontation, and in extreme cases, military conducted approach of Moscow to the solution of disputes and conflicts. The second one is without any doubts an uncompleted process of internal modernization of the Russian state and its individual structures and segments (political, economic, social, cultural), which results in the non-creation of a sufficient area nor potential for Russia to become an attractive, and by external actors accepted, gravitational center for the “surrounding periphery“ (post-Soviet area). The fundamental problem in the contemporary form of Russia’s modernization remains its adaptation to current political and economic model, in other words the state-centric concept. Emphasis is put on the decisive role of the state (state-owned companies and administration) in the whole process of modernization. In this regard criticism of expert authorities in an apt way names modernization through several attributes: authoritarian modernization<sup>46</sup> requirements of which mean orientation and purpose are given from the “top”, managing modernization<sup>47</sup> hitting the model of controlled democracy with the in advance intended result or conservative modern-

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<sup>45</sup> Kolektiv, *Russkaja Soft Power*, Centr političeskovo analiza, „Političeskij doklad“, Moskva 2014.

<sup>46</sup> O. Kryštanovskaya, *Authoritarian Modernization of Russia in the 2000s*, [in:] *What Does Russia Think?*, I. Krastev, M. Leonard, A. Wilson (eds.), ECRF, London 2009; A. A. Razuvaev, *Modernizacija sverchu. Vzgljad*, Delovaja Gazeta, [www.vz.ru/columns/2013/7/8/640393.html](http://www.vz.ru/columns/2013/7/8/640393.html), accessed 12.02.2015.

<sup>47</sup> S. Meister, *The Failure of Managed Modernization*, “DGAPstandpunkt”, 2011, no. 4.

ization<sup>48</sup> which focuses on social stability and consolidation of existing structures and social order.

As part of the former USSR, Russia corresponds to the biggest economy, but by its long-term stagnating share in the global GDP (3,326% in 2014) is far behind the USA (16,277%), China (16,479 %) or the EU (16,939%) (Economy Watch 2014)<sup>49</sup>. What is currently being offered by Russia in the economic alternative “soft power” is primarily a relatively large market from the perspective of a number of citizen, even though with a lower purchase power of the citizen, access to the labor market to citizen (labor migrants) from former post-Soviet republics (in particular Tajikistan) and supplies of energy raw material at “preferential” prices in the event that the given country is in its foreign policy oriented towards Moscow, respectively it accepts its foreign-political interests. Right the energy policy remains the most efficient and effective tool of the Russian soft power<sup>50</sup>; however, very debatable and controversial, because from the aspect of utilization and targets it is construed not to achieve bilateral advantages, but on the principle of the creation of unilateral dependency and achievements of, for Russia, favorable foreign-political, economic and safety targets.

As a conceptual and system attempt for a change in perceiving Russia and its efforts to create an attractive economy center, it is possible to designate steps and measures leading to the intensification of a political process of the economic integration of the post-Soviet area. Even though the economic integration is in place continuously at various levels from the breakup of the USSR, its successful development from

<sup>48</sup> W. H. Cooper, *Russia's Economic Performance and Policies and Their Implications for the United States*, CRS Report Service, 2009; D. Trenin, *Russia's Conservative Modernization: A Mission Impossible?*, Carnegie Moscow Center, [www.carnegie.ru/publications/?fa=41108#5](http://www.carnegie.ru/publications/?fa=41108#5), accessed 20.02.2015.

<sup>49</sup> A rapid growth of China in the last two decades was seen until 2008 by the constantly growing volume of a mutual trade exchange with Central-Asia countries (in particular with respect to Kazakhstan) and by a growth of investments into key economic sectors of Central-Asia countries (power sector, transportation, raw-material processing) and trade relationships and investments are from the side of Peking accompanied by cultural, educational and other promotional activities in the PR sector, which results in a gradual erosion of the impact of Russian and its “soft power”; I. Sadykzhan, *China-Central Asia Trade Relations: Economic and Social Patterns*, “The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly”, 2009, no. 1, p. 48–49.

<sup>50</sup> F. Hill, *Moscow Discovers Soft Power*, „Current History“, 2006, no. 2, p. 342–343.

the beginning of the 90ties is prevented by the same problems<sup>51</sup>. The concept of an economic integration of the post-Soviet area implemented through the Eurasia Economic Union is primarily a project of the political-economic integration<sup>52</sup>. Its principal target is to create an area of the Russian geopolitical influence, which would have both institutional and political-economic forms. The Eurasia integration is being built as a political project “from above”, with the understanding that the political principles, ethical and moral values and international relations of the power on which it stands are diametrically different than those on which the EU is being built, to which it alone often compares to. Such structural political presumption follows from the fact that the “congeniality” of Russia has been and is Eurasian, statehood centric, in which a state is placed on the “pedestal” as a universally valid timeless value<sup>53</sup>. Other segments (including economy, society, culture) are

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<sup>51</sup> V. Shadurskij from the Belarus state university assumes that the cause of failure of economic or in broad terms political integration of the post-Soviet area are factors which in the whole process on a different level and intensity show as disintegrative centrifugal tendencies: 1. Incompleted economic reforms in the individual post-Soviet republics including the absence of harmonisation of economic interests. 2. High dependence economics and foreign business of post-Soviet countries on energetic materials especially mineral oil and gas. 3. Insufficient attractiveness of Russia as a centre (core) of integration and the associated low effectivity realized integrational projects. Absence of Ukraine in the integrational groups and structures. Influence of foreign actors on the politics of states of the post-Soviet area. Absence of legal mechanism on solving legal disputes; V. Shadurskij, *Ekonomičeskaja integracija na postsovetskom prostanstvo: problemy i perspektivy*, Belarus State University, Minsk 2010.

<sup>52</sup> N. K. Gvosdev, C. H. Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy. Interests, Vectors and Sectors*, SAGE Publications, London 2014; R. Donaldson, L. Noguee, *The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis, Abingdon, Oxon 2014.

<sup>53</sup> According to Putin, Russia is the centre of a civilisation, the Russian World. A Russian-Ukrainian-Belarusian community is at the core of this world, and its principal area encompasses the post-Soviet space inhabited by Russian-speaking people. Putin said: “The Eurasian Union is a project for maintaining the identity of nations in the historical Eurasian space in a new century and in a new world”. The identity of this integrating post-Soviet space is to be based on a presumed special spiritual and civilisational community, referred to as the “Russian world” (Russkiy mir); M. Menkiszak, *The Putin doctrine: The formation of a conceptual framework for Russian dominance in the post-Soviet area*, p. 2, [www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2014-03-27/putin-doctrine-formation-a-conceptual-framework-russian](http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2014-03-27/putin-doctrine-formation-a-conceptual-framework-russian), accessed 27.03.2014;



subordinated to it, contrary to the Western civilization, where they are autonomous on the state, or places to an identical level with the state. Also that is a reason why it will never be in line with democratic political institutions, ethical progress and geopolitical hegemony of the West. Furthermore, the biggest weak point in the entire concept and construction of the economic integration of the idea alone, which is preferably oriented to the past, withdraws from it through a reference to “previous economical relationships”.

## CONCLUSION

Even though the theory of international relationships “hard power and soft power” are understood as separate and divided categories, in practice they run in close interaction, and the two constantly supplement and strengthen each other. A diametrically different case in this aspect is the Russian Federation, which not always applies the above dimension of cognition of the power to its own foreign policy. Right as a result of frequent misunderstanding and a suitable balancing of the elements of hard power and soft power in its own foreign policy, the current ability of Russia to attract and affect other states is very strongly diminished and decreased. Russia nowadays is not able to apply soft power to obtain support with individual governments in post-Soviet republics, not even with wide population of such countries. One of the reasons of such a status is the fact that Moscow still believes that policy established on liberal principles such a law-abiding country, economic cohesion and democracy has in international relationships only a small significance. Also that is the reason why it prefers in foreign policy (neo) realistic tools of power primarily established on realistic policy, i.e., on the policy underlying power and practical factors, and not on ideological and ethical standards. Moreover, the logic of a realistic approach of Russia in foreign policy is also supported by historical experiences, strong imperial tradition, but also a specific manner of forming and creating of the post-Soviet identity and statehood.

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N. K. Gvosdev, C. H. Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy. Interests, Vectors and Sectors*, SAGE Publications, London 2014; R. Donaldson, L. Noguee, *The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis, Abingdon, Oxon 2014, p. 48–49.

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