



Article Type: Research paper

# The Status of Soft Power in Russian Foreign Policy toward Southern Caucasus

\* Mahmood Alipour Gorji<sup>1</sup>, Abdolmajid Seifi<sup>2</sup>

1. Assistant Professor Political Science, Faculty of Humanities, Ayatollah Boroujerdi University, Boroujerd, Iran.

2. Assistant Professor Political Science, Faculty of Humanities, Ayatollah Boroujerdi University, Boroujerd, Iran.

### Article Info.

Received: 19/11/2023

Accepted: 25/07/2024

Available Online: 05/09/2024

### Abstract

**Introduction:** The collapse of the Soviet Union and shaping 15 independent republics had some consequences. First, the role and influence of Moscow in the former superpower was reduced, and on the other hand, the ground was provided for the presence and influence of the West in the areas that were considered part of the Soviet Union in the past, especially the Caucasus. The influence of the West in military, political and cultural dimensions was manifested by facts such as the expansion of NATO to the East and color revolutions in some independent republics of the Soviet Union. After disintegration of the Soviet Union, although Russia was the main inheritor of the Soviet military equipment and power, it did not gain anything from the culture and ideology of the Soviet era, and this was right at the time when the issue of soft power

**Mahmood Alipour Gorji, Ph.D.**

**Address:** Faculty of Humanities, Ayatollah Boroujerdi University, Boroujerd, Iran.

**E-mail:** alipourmg@gmail.com

### How to Site:

mahmood, A. G., & Seifi, A. (2024). The position of soft power in Russia's foreign policy towards the South Caucasus republics. *The Fundamental and Applied Studies of the Islamic World*, 6(2), 31-34.



was emphasized at the global level. Since the late 1990s and especially after Putin came to power, the issue of using soft power in Russia's foreign policy became more important. Due to the importance of the South Caucasus republics in Russia's foreign policy, this region became one of the target points for the use of soft power. This region has important to the Russian authorities and there are significant connections between the Russian society and the societies of these countries. Also, existence of cultural and human commonalities between Russia and these countries makes it more susceptible to use soft power.

**Research Question:** what is the status of soft power in Russia's foreign policy towards the South Caucasus republics?

**Research Hypothesis:** Due to the penetration of Russian soft power resources such as language, extensive labor market, cultural commonalities and extensive energy resources, the importance of soft power in Russia's foreign policy towards the South Caucasus republics has increased, although Russia It faces challenges in using soft power.

**Methodology (and Theoretical Framework if there are):** The method of this research is qualitative with a descriptive-analytical approach. Power in international relations has traditionally been defined and assessed in easily quantifiable 'hard' terms, often understood in the context of military and economic might. Hard power is deployed in the form of coercion: using force, the threat of force, economic sanctions, or inducements of payment. In contrast to the coercive nature of hard power, soft power describes the use of positive attraction and persuasion to achieve foreign policy objectives. In the early 1990s, the concept of soft power was first used by Joseph Nye. According to Nye, soft power is the ability to influence the behavior of others to achieve their goals by creating attractiveness and non-coercive means. Soft power is the capacity to influence other nations through the use of persuasion and attraction rather than coercion or force. Soft power is the product and outcome of positive portrayal, presenting a self-righteous image, gaining credibility from internal and global public opinion, and the power of indirectly influencing others with satisfaction and attraction. Today, this view to power versus hard power, military power and weapons is used in a way that is combined with coercion and physical violence.

Nye identifies soft power as an important part of national power resources

and emphasizes the necessity of using it in US foreign policy

**Results and discussion:** after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia inherited the vast military power of the Soviet Union, but it did not inherit any of the communist culture and ideology from the Soviet Union, and this was just at a time when cultural power seemed to be more important than Cold war time. The negative feeling towards the communist ideology in many countries of the world in the period after the collapse of the Soviet Union made it difficult for the Russian authorities to use soft power to rebuild the image of Russia. Russia has sources of soft power such as a vast labor market, cultural commonality, linguistic affinity and rich energy resources to influence the South Caucasus republics. Although it seems that although the Russian authorities have realized the importance of soft power, in many situations and cases they present a wrong interpretation of this concept. Some domestic or foreign policies that are implemented without regard to the wishes of others are an important challenge for the use of soft power. According to Nye, the use of force outside of the accepted international norms and not observing the rules of democracy will seriously damage the effectiveness of soft power. Therefore, the previous and current unresolved disputes with Russia and some of its neighbors have had important negative effects on the soft power of Russia in the South Caucasus and especially in Georgia. The widespread use of military power, especially in Georgia, has affected Russia's credibility in the former Soviet republics and has led some of these countries' leaders to worry about relations with Russia. With these military interventions by Moscow, some politicians in the South Caucasus republics are worried that their susceptibility to Russia's soft power will provide the conditions for Russia's military intervention in their countries, so they resist the manifestations of Russia's soft power. Russia's socio-economic model has also created limitations for the use of Russian soft power in the post-Soviet era. Although Russia has the highest per capita income among the Commonwealth of Independent States, it is facing problems that it cannot solve easily. Among these problems, the high level of corruption is significant. According to the report of Transparency International, the level of corruption in Russia is higher than in many countries of Commonwealth of Independent States.

**Conclusion:** The concept of soft power has a strong normative content,

which is mainly based on the domestic political and social standards of the country, and if these standards are used at a high level, we can hope for their effectiveness outside the borders. It is not possible to present an attractive and positive image of a country without paying attention to solving internal problems. It seems that in order to make the use of soft power more effective, the Russians should present a more attractive and justified face to the world, especially to the people of the South Caucasus republics, by raising the level of standards such as fighting more corruption and increasing the level of economic well-being.

It seems that due to the dominance of the balancers in the last decade and the prospect of holding power for the next decade, the position of soft power in Russia's foreign policy will be strengthened and a more positive face of this country will be presented to the world. Efforts to host cultural, artistic and sports events and to win the hosting of important events such as the World Cup in 2018, the successful holding of the 2013 Student Sports Olympics in Kazan and the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi can be evaluated in this regard. Of course, due to the need for a relatively long time for the effects of the use of soft power to appear, one should wait for a longer period of time for the effects of the use of the type of power to appear.

**Key words:** Russia, Soft Power, southern Caucasus, Covid-19 Crisis, Color Revolutions.