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## **„Soft power“ in the foreign policy of the Russian Federation**

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### **Contents:**

This article is devoted to studying the influence of "soft power" on the development of the foreign policy course of the Russian Federation. Special attention will be given to the perspectives of improving the foreign policy image of the Russian Federation by means of culture, the Russian language, ideology and spiritual values. The article also analyses the problems and difficulties of developing the potential of "soft power" in the Russian Federation.

### **Key terms:**

Soft power, instruments, foreign policy image of the state, cultural-spiritual values, dissemination of the Russian language

At present, the need to develop an independent strategy to ensure national cultural security and the potential of "soft power" has become a key task. This includes factors which are required to maintain national sovereignty and integrity, to consolidate society, to establish conditions for successfully solving domestic problems and finally to implement an active foreign policy.

The political and socio-economic stabilization of statehood can only be achieved through the special attention of the State to ethnocultural components within domestic policy.

One of the "main pillars" of such a strategy is to ultimately establish such a state ideology, based on the consciously recognized, unbreakable unity of the century-old multicultural commonalities of all the peoples living in our country. There are particular difficulties in the social interaction of the various ethnic groups, religions and cultures in the present-day territory of Russia. Another reason for problems is that of the federation subjects, which can destabilize the regional or national overall situation by certain factors (military, social, economic, spritual-cultural).

As already mentioned, "hard power", which includes military, economic and other forms of pressure, can no longer solve the problems facing the State under the current circumstances. That also relates to the influences on world problems. For this

reason, many countries resort to the strategy of "soft power" to achieve their objectives. In this connection, culture, ideology and spiritual values, "exported" by the State, not only influence the image of the country but also its global importance. Hence the necessity arose for Russia to ensure such a new image in the world arena that corresponds to the real national interests of the State. According to the words of V.V. Putin, there is an important task to: convey unbiased and favorable ideas about the domestic and foreign policy of the Russian Federation with regards to its history, culture and current development.

However, present-day Russia is essentially seen worldwide as only a raw material and military power, where "soft power" is pushed into the background. In the eyes of the world public, Russia still has the image of the legal successor of the USSR. Subsequently, western countries still hold contemporary notions such as: The quest for world dominance, use of military and energetic leverage for the enforcement of national interests. The importance of "soft power" is, unfortunately, still not appreciated enough in Russia either, which can lead to the view that in fact there is a deficit of "soft power" in creating an improved image of the country in the world arena.

1 Strategy of national cultural security and "soft power" in the present Federation//

2 Putin W.W. Speech at the plenary session by the consultation of ambassadors, 12/7/2004//URL:

In addition, it is vital that the state policy accentuates the spiritual-moral recovery of the population. Special attention must be given to the ethnic-cultural specifics of the individual peoples who call Russia their home. At the same time, the psychological, political, economic, cultural, moral, religious particularities and traditions of the main nation, the Russian people themselves who make up more than 80% of the population, must not be forgotten. The preservation of its cultural identity must be met with care and understanding. <sup>3</sup>

Just as important is the knowledge of the true greatness of its own long history and expertise of the profound, natural, cosmogonic relations between past, current and future generations.

Radical movements must be fought against appropriately and rigorously by eradicating their extremist ideology, regardless of their form and origin. This applies equally to radical deviations in Islam, Christianity, Judaism or pseudo-religious doctrines and totalitarian sects.

A high priority in Russia's foreign policy must include increased efforts of Russian diplomacy to promote the Russian language as the means of communication of the multicultural population in the Russian and post-Soviet regions. Important are also the measures that popularize and widen the learning of the Russian language in those regions which are strategically interesting for Russia. No doubt of highest priority is the preservation and stabilization of the Russian-speaking area within the borders of the Federation, in the friendly republics. The foundations for this are in the

centuries of shared history, the shared present and future, based on the economic, political and cultural interdependence of the neighbouring countries.

The dissemination of the Russian language is an important instrument of "soft power". "The main efforts in the field of global cultural and humanitarian cooperation must be directed towards the support and popularization of the Russian language and the culture of the peoples in the Russian Federation, who make a unique contribution to cultural and civil diversity in the modern world."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Meeting with the leaders of the party "United Russia URL// [http:// www. Kremlin.ru/transcripts/7004](http://www.Kremlin.ru/transcripts/7004)

<sup>4</sup> Basic directions of RF policy in global cooperation, Supplement 1 to the Conception of Russia's Foreign Policy, URL// [www.mid.ru/ns-osndoc.nsf/0e9272bafa34209743/](http://www.mid.ru/ns-osndoc.nsf/0e9272bafa34209743/)

It has to be underlined that there is definitely a worldwide interest in the Russian language. Russian language courses take place in 45 countries with more than 15,500 learners – 46% in Europe, 30% in African countries, 16% in Asia, 3% in America and 5% in CIS countries. An alarming fact is, however, that interest in the Russian language continues to decrease in the CIS countries, although cooperation with these countries has priority in Russia's foreign policy. The Russian language is prohibited by law in the Baltic countries. The number of Russian schools in Ukraine has been reduced twice and in Turkmenistan all of the Russian schools as well as the faculties for Russian philology have been closed. In Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, there are virtually no opportunities to obtain education in Russian. Belarus and Kyrgyzstan are the only countries where Russian ranks as a second official language. <sup>6</sup>

At this point it should be emphasized that the Russian language is not only a part of the Russian culture (mastery thereof being a sign of loyalty to the Russian State), but it is also a carrier of foreign policy to the many compatriots throughout the world. If you acknowledge the significance and dissemination of the language, then possible measures to popularize it should be developed and the main target groups need to be defined. It should be recognized, however, that the Russian language cannot compete on a global scale with the English language and Russophile is no competition for Anglophile. Nevertheless, the Russian language can serve worldwide as the most important carrier of Russian culture and as an instrument of "soft power"

It is also important to emphasize that to stabilize the role of the Russian language as a factor of "soft power" of the Russian Federation, certain measures of scientific and popular scientific character for compatriots and well as foreigners are essential. The projects could be implemented in three interdependent directions: Russian Fables, the Russian Soul and the Russian Sacredness.

The Russian fable is of great importance for educating compatriots who either already have or would like to have knowledge of Russian culture. In this connection, exhibitions of Russian artists as well as documentary and cartoon projects should be

arranged. This includes the creation of a corresponding infrastructure for the popularization of Russian culture as a whole.

The "Russian Soul" is the visiting card in the world. This could include festivals of classic ballets, operas, exhibitions, book fairs and Internet facilities that deal with Russian stereotypes. The Internet portal could include a documentary film series on Russia, the history of the Russian language and statehood or also references to film production.

"Russian Sacredness" is a project to create the foundations of an infrastructure necessary to develop travel routes to Russia's most beautiful and original locations.

Finally, as a part of this "soft power", new departments must be opened worldwide with the "Russian World" fund. It would greatly increase the level and prestige of this organization to assume the responsibility for the educational activity and the dissemination of more knowledge about Russia throughout the world.

Events from the history of the 20th century have a particular adverse effect on Russia's image. The aftermath of the "Cold War", the arms race and ripisals in the USSR led to the Soviet Union being seen as an aggressive totalitarian state and a closed society, where words like human rights, freedom of speech and other western values were foreign. After the fall of the USSR in 1991, Russia was indeed the legal successor to the Soviet Union but with many essential differences. Democratic reforms were implemented and the transition to a market economy was accomplished. However, the image of an authoritarian state with imperial ambitions remained. The commentator of "Le Monde", T. Wolton, remarked in his considerations about the image of Russia, that "it's inconceivable that the country will ever break completely from communism." The situation worsened as Russia's image in the 1990s was one of economic problems, political instability and a high crime rate, where lawlessness ruled, the Mafia played a leading role and corruption flourished. This perception damaged Russia's image, undermined trust and decreased the effectiveness of the mechanisms of "soft power". To change this situation, a program to modernize Russia was drafted and proposed to the Federation Council in 2009 via a letter of Russia's prime minister D.A. Medvedev. The term "modernization" refers to the framework conditions of the present State and to standards as set by historical circumstances. This modernization process contains extensive reforms in all areas of society, records the overcoming of arrears to leading developed countries in economy and science, in information, political and social areas. It includes thereby all spheres of society.

At present, there are still some problems that constitute a deficit of "soft power" within the process of the policy of Russia's national security:

- The lack of a clear, coordinated strategy to improve the image
- Problems with the distribution of duties between facilities and offices for the outward implementation of the cultural policy
- The absence of an ideologic basis to increase the number of followers
- Problems in the tourism sector
- The decrease of the prestige of Russian education opportunities abroad
- Problems with the dissemination of the Russian language throughout the world
- Problems caused by the historic heritage of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

All these issues cannot be solved only on the state level. The so-called "soft power" can only be achieved, to a great extent, by efforts of the mass media, the NGO (non-governmental organizations) and the entire population of our country through public relations and "people's diplomacy".

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6 Lecture: Foreign Ministry. The role of the Russian language in the world: new challenges and solutions, 2005

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9 Wolton T. Lourd heritage sovietique, Le Monde 2008, URL: [www.lemonde.fr/cgi/](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi/)

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