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The phenomenon of “soft power” and its main problems in Russia

Abstract: The concept of “soft power” has firmly entered into wide scientific use. Even more often this concept is used by politicians. Numerous scientific works of domestic scientists are devoted to the study of these reasons. However, it cannot be said that over the next decade, Russian social sciences have made great progress in the study of “soft power”. It should recognise that it is still premature to speak of any clearly formulated theory of soft power. The author of the article tries to highlight the problems of professional education of future artists in the field of Russian traditional art as one of the most important elements of Russia’s soft power. The author uses historical, comparative, formal-logical and content-logical methods of scientific research. The logic of the article was determined by the following aspects: analysis of the main definitions of the concept and application of “soft power”; it is shown that the history of the use of soft power is much older than the appearance of the term soft power itself; the theory of A. Gramsci about “cultural hegemony”, which considers the use of soft power as the bonds of society, is considered; a good example of the use of soft power by such a country as Argentina is shown; the features of the insufficient effectiveness of Russia’s soft power are analysed.

Keywords: soft power, cultural hegemony, bonds of society, Russia, Gramsci, Putin, Joseph Nye.



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Феномен «мягкой силы» и его основные проблемы в России

Аннотация: Понятие «мягкой силы» прочно вошло в широкое научное употребление. Еще более часто это понятие используют политические деятели. Изучению этих причин посвящены многочисленные научные работы отечественных ученых. Однако нельзя сказать, что за последовавшее десятилетие российские общественные науки далеко продвинулись в исследовании «мягкой силы». Следует признать, что говорить о какой-либо четко сформулированной теории мягкой силы пока преждевременно. Автор статьи пытается выделить проблемы профессионального образования будущих художников в области русского традиционного искусства как одного из важнейших элементов мягкой силы России. В данной статье применены исторический, сравнительный, формально-логический и содержательно-логические методы научного исследования. Логика статьи определили следующие аспекты: анализ основных определений понятия и применения «мягкой силы»; показано, что история применения мягкой силы значительно древнее появления самого термина мягкой силы;

рассмотрена теория А. Грамши о «культурной гегемонии», которая рассматривает применения мягкой силы в качестве скреп общества; показан удачный пример использования мягкой силы такой страной, как Аргентина; разобраны особенности недостаточной эффективности мягкой силы России.

Ключевые слова: мягкая сила, культурная гегемония, скрепы общества, Россия, Грамши, Путин, Джозеф Най.



Introduction

The “soft power” concept has firmly entered into wide scientific use. It is even more often used by politicians. In Russia, among practical politicians, the concept was used by President V.V. Putin, in his campaign article *Russia and the Changing World*. He defined soft power as “a set of tools and methods to achieve foreign policy goals without the use of weapons, but through informational and other leverage” (*Putin, 2012a*).

On July 9, 2012, speaking at the Meeting of Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives of Russia Abroad, V.V. Putin called on Russian diplomacy to make more active use of “soft power” in their work. This means “to promote one’s interests and approaches by persuading and attracting sympathy for one’s country, based on its achievements not only in material, but also in spiritual culture and the intellectual sphere”. He noted that “the image of Russia abroad is not formed by us, therefore it is often distorted and does not reflect either the real situation in our country, or its contribution to world civilization, science, culture, and the position of our country in international affairs is now covered as it is one-sided” (*Putin, 2012a*).

On February 12, 2013, “soft power” was officially included in the new concept of the Russian Federation’s foreign policy as “a comprehensive toolkit for solving foreign policy problems based on the capabilities of civil society, information and communication, humanitarian, and other methods and technologies alternative to classical diplomacy” (*Kuznetsov, 2018*).

Since that time, the Russian leadership has created a number of institutions whose task was the integrated use of “soft power” tools in foreign policy – the Rossotrudnichestvo agency, the Russkiy Mir Foundation, the Foundation for Supporting the Development of Public Diplomacy named after A.M. Gorchakov, as well as a number of think tanks and expert platforms. Information channels have been created, such as the RT TV channel, the Rossiya Segodnya news agency, the Sputnik information multimedia service, which, as soft power tools, are designed to present the world with an alternative viewpoint on international events that corresponds to Russia’s foreign policy interests (*Ageeva, 2016*).

However, it cannot be said that over the next decade, domestic social sciences have made great progress in the study of “soft power”. Numerous dissertations have been defended on this topic (mainly on Western soft power). In 2015, two monographs, which collected analytical articles by domestic researchers on the theoretical and practical aspects of the “soft power” concept, were published (*Borisova, 2015*).

The reasons for this are manifold. Numerous scientific works of domestic scientists are devoted to the study of these reasons. Nevertheless, it should recognise that it is still premature

to talk about any clearly formulated theory of soft power. The article's author tries to contribute to the study of the soft power phenomenon and especially to highlight the problems of professional education of future artists in Russian traditional art as one of the most important elements of Russia's soft power.

The author uses historical, comparative, formal-logical and content-logical methods. The use of the historical method makes it possible to study soft power in its historical forms in previous historical eras and different countries. The comparative method of research means comparing various objects (phenomena, ideas, etc.), highlighting what they have in common, on the basis of which the classification and typology of the phenomenon under consideration is carried out. The use of formal logical methodology allows us to study the theoretical and methodological foundations of soft power in various aspects. The content-logical method is used to involve in the analysis of soft power from the standpoint of the conceptual tools of social philosophy and political science.

The logic of the article was determined by the following aspects:

- analysis of the main definitions of the concept and application of “soft power”;
- it is shown that the history of the use of soft power is much older than the appearance of the term soft power itself;
- the theory of A. Gramsci about “cultural hegemony”, which considers the use of soft power as the bonds of society, is considered;
- a good example of the use of soft power by such a country as Argentina is shown;
- the features of the insufficient effectiveness of Russia's soft power are analysed.

Definition of “soft power”

The interpretation of the word power as “strength” is not sufficient. This word can also be expressed as “influence”, “authority”, “submission of others”. Actually, the author of this term, the American sociologist and political scientist Joseph Nye considered “soft power” precisely as a kind of power as authority. According to Joseph Nye, power is the ability to change the behaviour of others to get what you want (*Egorov, 2017*). Joseph Nye elaborates that it is “the ability to do something and control others, or force them to do things that they would not do without coercion” (*Bratersky & Skriba, 2014*). There are three main ways to do this: coercion (stick), payment (carrot), and attraction, the same “soft power” (*Vasihyeva, 2015*). Joseph Nye noted that in our information age, power based on coercion is gradually receding into the background, giving way to the power of attraction (*Ageeva, 2016*).

It should be noted that Joseph Nye (born 1937) is not an armchair theorist; on the contrary, he has vast experience in practical political activity, holding high government positions and directly influencing the country's politics. In 1970-90s. Nye has served as Assistant Under Secretary of State for Security Support, Science and Technology, also served as Chairman of the National Intelligence Council, and Under Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. Joseph Nye combined these positions with teaching and research activities in a number of Western universities. Many of Joseph Nye's students hold key positions in many Western countries. Based on his vast practical experience and theoretical knowledge, the scientist outlined his ideas about cultural influence in the dissemination of American leadership in the 1990 book

Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power. In this book, Joseph Nye first introduced the category of “soft power” into scientific circulation.

The scientist’s book came out at the most opportune moment – in 1990, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the socialist system in Europe collapsed and the death agony of the USSR began. It was the attractiveness of the Western system and way of life that played a huge role in these events. Mickey Mouse defeated Karl Marx.

In his next book published in 2004, *Soft Power. The Means to Success in World Politics*, Joseph Nye made this interesting judgment: “If Napoleon, who spread the ideas of the French Revolution, was obliged to rely on bayonets, now, in the case of America, the inhabitants of Munich, as well as Muscovites, themselves strive for the results achieved by the leader of progress” (Nye, 2004), i.e., the USA.

Many countries spare no expense to promote their culture abroad. Thus, in terms of spending on financing international cultural programmes, France ranks first in the world. Every citizen of France (including old people and babies) spends in the form of taxes on the promotion of French culture abroad 17 dollars a year! This is four times more than second-placed Canada, followed by the UK and Sweden (Bobylo, 2014). No less significant is the fact that the annual official report of the German federal government notes that “foreign policy in education and culture is now the supporting pillar of German foreign policy” (Lanshina, 2014).

At the same time, soft power cannot be reduced only to the promotion of one’s culture abroad. Soft power is not only a political instrument of the state, but also a certain ability to be used in any capacity. The “soft power” of each country is based primarily on three resources: its culture (especially its most attractive aspects), its political ideals and values, and the effectiveness of its foreign policy.

Modern Russian researcher O.G. Leonova considers soft power an instrument of covert management of international processes. Such management, according to the researcher, has its own characteristics. First, the influence of the subject of control, due to its attractiveness for the object of control, is transformed into the desire of the controlled to act in a certain way. Secondly, such a hidden influence does not yet have a well-formed and well-established system of methods and methods of control. That is why the ability to manage in such a way that the object of management does not feel external pressure is called art (Leonova, 2013). She gives the following list of the main soft power tools:

- information flows;
- political PR aimed at a foreign audience;
- global marketing;
- positioning of the country in the global hierarchy;
- the language of the country and the degree of its popularity in the world;
- people's (public) diplomacy;
- tourism, sports and cultural exchanges;
- education system and student (youth) exchanges;
- the ability to conduct information wars;
- migration policy; national diaspora;
- dialogue of cultures (Leonova, 2013).

According to O.G. Leonova, “soft power” is a concentrated expression of a country’s national idea in conjunction with its mission in the global world (*Leonova, 2013*). In other words, any country should have its own national idea (or dream), realised by using soft power among other things. And thanks to the effectiveness of its soft power, to have a positive image in the world.

The soft power effectiveness often helps to recovery the state economic. P.S. Gurevich notes that “The image contains a huge practical meaning. It has not only political dividends, but even an economic effect. No state will invest in the economy of a country that does not inspire respect or trust. It is also impossible to reap political benefits if the country is not recognized” (*The image of Russia in the modern world, 2010*). Thus, soft power is also a serious economic factor.

Soft power in history

Joseph Nye in his writings and interviews repeatedly emphasised that he only introduced the “soft power” concept into science. According to a modern Russian researcher, “the term proposed by Joseph Nye described not a fundamentally new, but a long-existing phenomenon, which, however, had not previously had a generally accepted academic definition” (*Panova, 2012*). Joseph Nye managed to clearly shift the focus from a general analysis of contemporary social transformations to the field of international relations and the interactions, which take place in them (*Emel'yanova, 2018*).

As a “soft power” phenomenon, it has existed for thousands of years. Any rising power strives to arouse (and often does arouse) a feeling of envy and admiration in all its neighbours. It is not surprising that even in the second millennium BC. the petty princelings of the Middle East tried, even in small things, to copy the architecture and artistic style of hegemonic countries such as Egypt or Assyria. At the same time, strong powers tried to establish the cultural characteristics of their country among the conquered peoples. Thus, cultural expansion is historically the same phenomenon as military and economic expansion.

Alexander the Great played an outstanding role in history not only as a great commander. It is no coincidence that Alexander was a student of Aristotle. In history, there were many conquerors who devastated, burned, and killed everything. Alexander also devastated, burned and killed. But still the Macedonian king acted not only as a conqueror. He sincerely sought to spread Greek culture to the east, where his new numerous subjects lived. The cultural fusion of the Greeks and the eastern countries’ inhabitants, conquered by the invaders, would also mean their complete merging into one whole. Alexander built cities in the conquered lands (only he built 74 cities with the name Alexandria). At the same time, the king built not just cities, but Greek cities with all the architectural features, with palestras and gymnasiums, and with a polis structure. Following the victorious army of Alexander, many thousands of Greek settlers rushed to the east. However, in addition to Greek settlers and children from mixed marriages in the eastern lands, a large number of so-called. philhellenes (who love Greek). So called very numerous natives of Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, Persia, India, who could not resist the charm of Greek culture. Philhellenes had Greek names, spoke Greek, and led a Hellenic lifestyle. So, literally in a matter of decades, a large-scale Hellenisation of the East took place. From the Bosphorus to India, Greek was spoken, cities were built in the Greek manner, Greek customs triumphed. First of all, the upper classes of local societies and the urban population were

Hellenized. Of course, there was also a reverse influence of local cultures on the dominant Greek, but this influence became noticeable in the conditions of the Hellenistic era end.

Alexander's empire died with him. However, the cultural impact of the Hellenisation of the East was enormous and lasting. The era of Hellenism (the three hundred year period between the campaign to the east of Alexander the Great and until the fall of the Greek kingdoms formed on the lands of his empire as a result of Romans' conquest) was one of the most outstanding periods in the history of world science, art, and philosophy.

If not for the spread of Greek culture to the east by Alexander, then Greek civilization would have remained in history as a local one, such as a very interesting and original civilization of the Etruscans. The soft power of Greek culture conquered the conquerors of the Greek world – the Romans. In addition to direct borrowings of Greek literary genres and architectural styles, the Romans even began to endow their gods with the features of the Olympian gods of Greece. As the great Roman poet Horace wrote: "Greece, taken prisoner, captured the wild conquerors" («Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit»).

Cultural expansion in the Middle Ages realised through missionary activities to spread religion. The adoption of a new dogma automatically led to the assimilation of a new culture. In the Middle Ages, Europe was a collection of a huge number of small and tiny feudal estates, but at the same time, European unity was conditioned by a single Catholic religion and Catholic culture.

In modern times, politicians also appreciated the importance of the cultural influence of their country on their neighbours. The French king Louis XIV (1643-1715), although he fought many wars with different results, nevertheless achieved French influence over all of Europe with the help of culture. From Lisbon to St. Petersburg, the French language, French fashion, architecture, cuisine, lifestyle began to dominate. Throughout the 18th century, France suffered defeats in wars, lost most of its colonies, but continued to reign culturally on the continent. Any artistic style, any change in dress, any new theory that came from France, immediately became "their own" in all European countries. The cultural hegemony of France continued into the 19th and much of the 20th century. It was only after World War II that the dominance of American soft power began.

Antonio Gramsci's theory of "cultural hegemony"

The original concept of soft power (without the use of this term) was created by the prominent Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci. In the 1930s, based on the turbulent political events of the first third of the century, A. Gramsci created the "cultural hegemony" concept. Previously, hegemony was considered only military, economic, and political predominance. Not without the influence of Gramsci, the "hegemony" concept expanded to denote the cultural predominance of a certain class within the country and the culture of a certain state among other states. According to Gramsci, the power of any ruling class rests not only on violence, but also on the mutual consent of the entire society. The ruling class, by influencing the general ideas, spiritual values, morality, religion accepted in the culture of society, imposes its own worldview as a generally accepted cultural norm and a generally valid ideology recognized by all. A necessary component of the functioning of the state, A. Gramsci believed, is the achievement of cultural hegemony, where civil society and the ruling elite are in a state of agreement through a common

cultural and ideological state. The result is a strengthening of the existing social, political or economic position of society (*Lester, 2020*). Cultural hegemony in the ideological superstructure, A. Gramsci believed, thus opposing orthodox Marxism, has a greater influence on the formation and establishment of a new political order than control over the economic basis. As we can see, the cultural hegemony of certain social forces in the country, whose basic cultural values are tacitly recognised by the majority of society, provides the country with stability. Conflicts of all kinds within society proceed smoothly, within the generally accepted rules of the game. Thus, cultural hegemony manifests itself as a soft power within the country and society.

However, every social revolution must be preceded by a cultural revolution that would undermine the cultural hegemony of the ruling class. So, long after the fall of the Bastille, the educated society of France and almost all European countries was dominated by the ideals generated by the Enlightenment philosophy. The former feudal-Catholic ideology lost its authority and completely lost its hegemony. A man, who proclaimed the infallibility of the Pope among the “educated public” or defended absolute monarchy on the basis of divine right, caused only sneers. Similarly, in Russia, already from the second half of the 19th century, long before 1917, socialist theories of the most diverse trends gradually began to prevail – populist, Marxist, anarchist, etc. 87% of the votes (including 58% received by the Socialist-Revolutionaries, 24% by the Bolsheviks, 5% by the Mensheviks, as well as the rest of the left-wing parties of national minorities) (*Lebedev, 2007*). However, only the Bolsheviks were not afraid to take responsibility for power.

It can be assumed that precisely the conquest of cultural hegemony is the main goal of soft power. However, at the same time, it must be taken into account that it is a soft power manifestation that forces the enemy to recognise someone else’s cultural hegemony.

Argentine example to successfully applicate soft power

Many countries of the world are concerned about the development of their soft power. At the same time, some countries, which cannot be called too rich and influential, have managed to achieve a lot in popularising their image in the world through soft power. In particular, one can cite the successes of such a country as Argentina. According to the Russian diplomat in Argentina Ya.A. Burlyai, this South American country uses its soft power very successfully: “The Argentines managed to present their homeland as an attractive Latin American country, home to a highly cultured people who profess traditional Christian values. Achievements of world famous figures of national science and culture, literature and art played a big role in this. Argentina’s success in education, health and sports is also well known” (*Burlyai, 2017*). Thanks to such historical figures as politician Evita Peron, revolutionary Ernesto Che Guevara, football players Diego Maradona and Lionel Messi, writer Jorge Luis Borges and Pope Francis I, Argentina is a very “recognisable” country in the world. Few people outside the country can name the Argentine president (especially, since 32 people were replaced in this post in 1946-2021). On the economic front, Argentina can only boast of three defaults in 20 years of the 21st century. However, this country is known and loved in the world thanks to its soft power.

The cultural symbol of the country is the tango. In 2009, at the 4th session of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee, the tango was included in the list of the intangible cultural heritage of mankind (*Decision of the Intergovernmental Committee*). The government of Argentina is

making great efforts to popularise dance abroad. FM radio stations broadcasting tango music receive subsidies from Argentine diplomatic missions. December 11 (the birthday of the famous singer, the “tango king” Carlos Gardel), with the active participation of the Argentine diplomatic missions abroad, is celebrated as World Tango Day. Also, the government of Argentina provided great support to the filming *Evita* based on the musical of the same name by E.L. Webber in 1996. The film starred such celebrities as Madonna, A. Banderas, etc. The film not only received many prestigious awards, but also caused a surge of interest in Argentina. In one year after the release of the film, the number of tourists to the country has increased several times.

Argentine figures, promoting the art of their country abroad, always emphasise that Argentina is a country of immigrants. The foreign origin of many great Argentines is not only not hidden, but, on the contrary, is cited as an example of creative integration into “Argentinianness”. In fact, the “tango king” Carlos Gardel was a Frenchman, the composer A. Piazzolla was born in an Italian family, the Croatian H. Vucetich became the creator of fingerprinting, and the Hungarian L. Biro was the creator of a ballpoint pen. However, all of them are rightly considered primarily Argentines.

Thus, Argentina has managed to make the most of its soft power. The cultural achievements of Argentina far outweigh its economic or military role in the world.

Лин problems на Russian soft power

According to the report of the international rating group *The Soft Power – 30*, making up the annual lists of the 30 most influential countries in terms of the global impact of soft power, Russia ranked 30th (last) place in 2019. The first 5 places were occupied by France, Great Britain, Germany, Sweden, and USA (*McClory, 2020*). It should note that in 2019, when the rating was compiled, a frenzied propaganda campaign had not yet been waged against Russia. On the contrary, the successful holding of the World Cup and a number of other sporting events aroused favourable interest in Russia, which had a positive effect on the country’s rating.

Other rating studies give similar results. In a highly authoritative ranking of the world’s leading countries in terms of “soft power”, prepared by the *Center for Public Diplomacy* of the University of Southern California and *Portland PR Agency*, Russia ranks 26th, after Greece, Poland, and China. The rating is headed by France, Great Britain, and the USA (*Kuznetsov, 2018*). The position of each country in this ranking is formed from such characteristics of international attractiveness: entrepreneurship, public administration, culture (including also sports), education, digital technologies, and global influence. Thus, it should recognise that Russia does not apply its soft power well.

Of course, the rating compilers, who unwittingly or consciously transfer their political preferences and their national egocentrism to the rating, themselves can be blamed for this. The British newspaper *Daily Mail* also constantly ranks the 20 countries with the strongest “soft power”. It is not any wonder that the UK itself leads the TOP 20.

At the same time, it is difficult, if not impossible, to single out the criteria for determining soft power. As J. Nye wrote, “If you talk about hard power, then you can say that I have 10,000 main battle tanks, and you have only 1000, thus stating that “the presence of these resources means that I am 10 times stronger than you”... When it comes to soft power, we must consider the resources that we can attract. As a consequence, we can look at opinion polls as a kind of

surrogate to answer the question “Are they really attractive?”. There is a problem with measuring any type of power. With a soft one, it’s a little more difficult, since its resources are intangible” (*Borisov, 2020*).

Of course, many ratings, when assessing soft power, pay enough attention to such positions that cannot be considered objective. For example, the *Rapid-Growth Markets Soft Power Index*, developed by the Russian Moscow School of Management Skolkovo, groups variables according to 3 positions:

- global image (export of media products, the number of Olympic medals won, interest in learning the language of a particular country, the number of citizens of the country in TOP 100 most influential people according to Time magazine, respected companies in the world);
- global reputation (index of freedom, rule of law, electoral activity, emissions into the atmosphere);
- global integration (tourism, immigration, university rankings, spread of English language acquisition) (*Borisov, 2020*).

According to all these indicators, Russia is far from being in the forefront of the rating.

However, it should take into account that none of the listed ratings refers specifically to indicators that actually characterize the country’s soft power. It is clear that in the context of the dominance of Western news agencies and social networks in the world media, it is Western countries that will be in the forefront in terms of the number of media products exports and the number of citizens in the TOP 100 most influential people according to Time magazine. Scandals related to attempts to deprive Russian athletes of honestly won Olympic medals and an outright ban on Russian news channels (e.g., RT and the Sputnik news agency) are just evidence of the struggle against Russia’s soft power.

However, it must be admitted that for all the biased ratings, Russia very little uses its soft power in the world.

This is especially unfortunate given that Russian is the fourth most influential language in the world (*Antonova, 2021*). Russian is the second most popular language on the Internet, after English. The Russian language is the fourth in terms of the number of translations from it. Classical Russian literature is still recognised and taught in most educational institutions of the world, Russian animation in just a few years has become very popular in many countries of the world. All European and American champions of the traditional family, as noted by French researchers, welcomed Putin’s position on this issue (*Laruelle, 2014*).

And yet, in many countries, a negative attitude towards Russia prevails with ignorance of Russian culture. At the same time, the image of Russia in the eyes of foreign citizens continues to decline. So, according to the *Pew Research Center*, back in 2012 (i.e., even before the events in Crimea), the image of Russia deteriorated in almost all Western countries. In the US, only 37% of Americans had a positive attitude towards Russia (down 12% compared to 2011), Spain – 36% (down 10%), Great Britain – 38% (down 12%), Germany – 33% (down 14%), France – 36% (by 17%) (*Bobylo, 2015*).

Some foreign researchers admit that the role of Russia in the information and ideological sphere has become more visible in recent years, largely due to the wider coverage of the global audience through social networks, the *Russia Today* channel and the *Sputnik* agency. However, they doubt Moscow’s ability to compete on equal terms with leading Western countries (*Borisov,*

2020). J. Nye himself at the end of 2014 expressed the opinion that Russia had almost no soft power left that it could use (Nye, 2014). Some Russian researchers agree with this opinion. They believe that Russia “almost irretrievably lost its rather significant potential of “soft power”, which it inherited after the collapse of the Soviet Union... This resource was (and still remains in part) quite significant, it includes in themselves: the information and cultural influence of Russia on the CIS countries, the possibility of unhindered distribution of products of the Russian television and film industry, musical works (albeit sometimes of not very high quality), the scientific and educational attractiveness of Russian universities” (Lebedeva & Faure, 2009).

Of course, it is not absolute true. The very fact of the demonstrative acceptance of Russian citizenship by many Western cultural and sports figures is already an indicator of Russia’s soft power. The main problem of the spread of Russia’s soft power lies in the fact that Russia occupies a defensive position in the global competition between the soft power of different countries. Russian soft power is interpreted by Russian politicians as a counterpower, that is, a reactive and defensive action directed against American and European soft power (Laruelle, 2014). The existing vagueness in the wording and setting of goals and objectives in official regulatory documents also significantly weakens Russia’s soft power. So often the Russian leaders, calling for the use of Russia’s soft power, have not themselves decided the Russian culture side that should be put at the heart of the country’s cultural policy.

As the modern Russian researcher I.V. Lyabukhov noted in 2012, “ today, the real image policy of the Russian Federation is mainly large-scale one-time actions, the positive effect of which is not lasting, and the scattered work of a number of individual actors who, pursuing a single good goal, act chaotically, which minimises a positive result” (Lyabukhov, 2012).

Conclusion. Reasons for the weakness of Russia’s soft power

The impact of soft power cannot be unlimited. The natural limiters of the soft power action are the civilizational incompatibility of “consumers” of foreign soft power. Already at the level of archetypes of national consciousness, certain phenomena of economic, political, or cultural life realising expansion from the outside are rejected. In Russia, e.g., there is a complete rejection by society of many “values” imposed from the West. At the same time, Russian researcher A. Tsygankov notes that Russian “soft power” has a number of undeniable advantages over Western competitors and China in Eurasia. And Russian advantages are precisely in the field of values (Tsygankov, 2013).

Russia has never cared about its cultural influence. Bouts of interest in everything Russian and “style russe” periodically arose in various Western countries, but each time not for long. So, in 1814-15, after the defeat of Napoleon, a fashion for the Cossacks arose in Europe. The “cossaque” hairstyle appeared, and gourmets appreciated the taste of “vodka”, but all this lasted for several years and was forgotten. A new attack of Russophilism swept France and some other European countries at the beginning of the 20th century, which was the result of the activities of S. Diaghilev and his *Russian Seasons*. Perhaps, Diaghilev was the only Russian figure who purposefully and skillfully promoted Russian culture abroad. It is impossible not to admit that the passion for everything Russian really swept Europe on the eve of 1914. Russian ballet, the pictorial avant-garde, the music of Vasily Andreev’s orchestra – all this really took possession of Europe. However, this period was very short.

On the other hand, the West was dominated by an idea depicting Russia as a “kingdom of the whip”, a “prison of peoples”, an “Asiatic wild autocracy”, ignorant rude masses of the people, an empire striving for conquest, owing all its power to the beneficial intervention of Western culture. The words “Siberia”, “hard labour”, “whip”, “Cossacks”, “pogrom”, etc., have become iconic concepts for Western liberals.

It is significant that only 20 Russian words were mentioned in the dictionary of the French Academy of 1835: cossaque (Cossack), kabak (tavern), knout (whip), pope (pop), steppe (steppe), tsar (king), and some others (*Bragina, 1978*). In the following decades, the acquaintance of the West with Russian realities did not advance much. In the Littré-Bajan dictionary of 1910, 26 Russianisms were noted, including the words pogrom (riot), nihilist, katorga (hard labour / galleys). By the way, the word “nihilist” is Latin, “pop” is Greek, “knout” is German, and “katorga” is Turkish, but they were considered primordially Russian. It should also note that in order to designate the more positive features of Russian life in the West, they preferred to use precisely Western terminology, even if it was not able to convey the Russian specifics of phenomena.

After the October Revolution, the Bolshevik leaders, who denied the “old-mode” culture, paradoxically contributed to the development of the avant-garde in the West, but Russian traditional art, despite the prizes for products from Palekh, did not have an impact on world artistic development. However, in this particular case, it is necessary to evaluate the Soviet government for the fact that it has preserved and even increased traditional artistic crafts.

After the Second World War, the cult of everything Russian again arose for several years all over the world. The song *Katyusha* has become a worldwide hit, and in a number of countries, for example, in Japan, it has become a folk song. However, soon the outbreak of the Cold War quickly put an end to any interest in the West in Russian art in general, and in traditional applied art in particular. Unfortunately, the Soviet leaders, presenting their Western guests with Palekh caskets, and without fail presenting the Orenburg downy shawl to women leaders, completely lost sight of the possibility of using Russian traditional art products as soft power. However, for many Soviet people, jeans and Coca-Cola have become a symbol of some other sweet life. Of course, the Western lifestyle with its undercooked meat (“steak”), moldy cheese, snails and sivukha (“whiskey”) was promoted as a symbol of familiarisation with something great, which all backward peoples with an incomparably greater culture should be equal to, but unable to promote it. So, the West defeated the Soviet Union on the cultural front. Hollywood, with its fictional characters, turned out to be much more effective than tank and air armadas.

Therefore, Russia should learn a lesson from those events and correctly understand the essence of “soft power”.



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