

# **Russia Beyond Its Sphere of Influence:**

## **Russia's Soft Power in Serbia**



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## Abstract

Russia reacted aggressively to attempts by Georgia and the Ukraine to strengthen relations with the European Union. Moscow saw these developments as a direct threat to its post-Soviet hegemony. However, it has responded more quietly to Serbia's aspirations to join the Union. Although Serbia is not next door to Russia, it has been an important ally of Moscow. The two nations share an ethno-religious past and Serbia is the sole friend of Russia in the Western Balkans. This study considers the realist theory of international relations and concepts of 'spheres of influence' and 'soft power' to explore this, and argues that Russia sees international relations as 'great power' politics and post-Soviet countries such as Georgia and the Ukraine as its sphere of influence. Globalisation and the interconnected modern world have led Moscow to use soft power to expand beyond its sphere of influence: Russia has used such initiatives to de-rail *rapprochement* between Serbia and the European Union. However, the soft power it uses is mainly state propaganda, to prevent rather than attract via culture, political values and foreign policy. Moscow has not been able to attract Belgrade and change its inclination from West to East, while European Union has been the main trading partner and also provided aid and foreign direct investment to Serbia. Furthermore; EU membership gives Serbia the prospect of becoming more democratic, more regulated and wealthier. Thereby, European Union has been a source of attraction and a strategic goal for Serbia.

*To my parents Gülay and Abdulkadir for their continued support and encouragement. They raised me to be who I am today.*

*To my wife Kübra for staying awake through the endless hours of study and tirelessly motivating me.*



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## Chapter I

### Introduction

The ‘colour revolutions’ in Georgia and the Ukraine led to pro-European administrations in these countries. When these new administrations sought to integrate with the European Union (EU), Russia reacted aggressively and considered these developments as a threat. Furthermore; Moscow used minorities in these countries as a pretext for military intervention in order to prevent *rapprochement* between these countries and the West.

On the other hand, Serbia, a traditional Slavic Orthodox ally of Russia, has also been aspiring to become an EU member. The Western Balkan nation sees EU membership as a strategic goal and will become a member of the union by 2025. Unlike its reaction in Georgia and the Ukraine, Russia has been keeping quiet on this case. Although Serbia is not a former member of the Soviet Union it has had close relations with Russia for decades. Moreover, during the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s it was Russia that supported Serbia while the Western world bombarded it.

Looking at its tensions with the EU it is clear that Russia would not want the Union to incorporate a country that has been a close ally. Moreover, losing Serbia would mean losing the Western Balkans since most of the countries in that area are members of the EU and/or the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and Serbia is its sole friend in the region. So, why

is Russia not using the same tactics in Serbia that proved to be successful in Georgia and the Ukraine? How does Moscow plan to de-rail Serbia's path to the EU and pull it back towards Russia? To explore this phenomenon, I have employed a case study.

Before doing so I have reviewed the literature covering the realist theory, sphere of influence concept, soft power concept and role of these concepts in Russian Foreign Policy. Firstly, I looked at the literature on the realist theory of international relations. I observed that it explains Russia's foreign policy as 'great power' politics, meaning that the Russian administration sees international politics as a power game and does everything in its power to increase Russia's power in the competition with other great powers. Therefore, it sees neighbouring, former Soviet countries as its sphere of influence – its 'near abroad', as expressed in Russian political language. This leads to Russian hegemony in the region. On the other hand, Russian domination limits the sovereignty of the states in the region such as Georgia and the Ukraine. When these states interact with other great states, Russia takes this as a challenge to its authority and a threat to its security. Since, with the help of geography, it has the chance to employ its military power towards these countries it does so, in order to preserve its power.

Next, I looked at 'soft power', the concept coined by Joseph Nye to cover types of power that do not involve (for example) coercion or payment. Hence it would be beneficial to better understand why Russia has not used such 'hard power' in Serbia. Soft power is about attraction. Furthermore, looking at Russian soft power, it can be seen that it is quite different from the Western approach to soft power. Whereas in Western democracies soft power is expressed via culture, political values and foreign policies, and attributed to all society, not just the state, in Russia (and other authoritarian states such as China) soft power is seen as a tool to achieve foreign policy objectives. It is also driven by a state policy.

Next, I go on to examine theoretical arguments, taking into account theories of realism, spheres of influence and soft power, I develop a hypothesis to explain the case. I argue that great powers pragmatically employ soft power strategies outside their spheres of influence to gain more power in the international system. Thus, competing great powers may come face to face to pull a subject country in one direction or another. However, if the subject country has a democratic system, then the authoritarian agent state will lack soft power capabilities *vis-à-vis* the democratic agent state, because democratic orders are more susceptible to attraction via institutions, pluralism and democracy, than to propaganda.

Looking deep into Russia–Serbia relations, in the case study it is observed that geography constrains Russia: it does not have significant hard power leverage against Serbia, which is outside its sphere of influence. Accordingly, Moscow is using soft power initiatives such as media channels, think-tanks, religious bodies, cultural centres, youth organisations and military donations to cultivate historical Serbian sympathy towards Russia. Furthermore, Russia is using the miseries of the 1990s Yugoslav Wars and political crises in Kosovo to increase anti-Western feelings among the Serbian state and society. In this way, Russia is hoping to attract Serbia and prevent it from joining the EU. Despite all these efforts, EU membership has been a strategic goal and the Union has been a leading partner of Serbia via foreign aid, direct investment and trade. Moreover, EU membership gives Serbia the chance to institutionalise its democracy, thus leading to better governance and a stronger economy. Conversely, Russia cannot present a better alternative to Serbia’s EU path. Although Russia maintains its popularity with the Serbian public, its military interventions and interference in the domestic politics of other countries are creating suspicion in the Serbian government.

## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Realism**

Realism is one of the most important and best-known theories of international relations. The main paradigm of the realist school is the “belief that international affairs is a struggle for power among self-interested states” (Snyder, 2004, p. 55). Classical realist Hans J. Morgenthau (1948) argues that the search for power comes from the nature of humankind and just like men, states try to maximise their power to form hegemony over others.

Contrary to Morgenthau later generations of the school known as the Structural Realists argue that the search for power is driven by the anarchic structure of the international system, not human nature. This anarchy comes from the lack of central authority above states (Walt, 1998, p. 31). Kenneth N. Waltz and John J. Mearsheimer argue that, in this anarchic environment, states seek to maximise their power to maintain their own security. However, they differ in answering the question how much power. Waltz (1979), and others known as Defensive Realists, argue that enough power to protect the status quo would be the goal of states. However, according to Mearsheimer (2002), and other realists known as Offensive Realists, the only security in an anarchy is through maximising power and gaining hegemony over the system.

Mearsheimer points to five assumptions to explain the great powers' desire for power and rivalry with each other for hegemony. The first is the anarchic structure of the system, as explained above. Secondly, all great powers have a considerable offensive military capacity. Thirdly, states cannot be sure about the intentions of other states. Fourth, the main purpose of states is survival within anarchy. Lastly, great powers are rational, meaning they watch each other and act according to what they see. Mearsheimer (2002, pp 29–33) argues that these assumptions alone do not drive states to compete with each other but when all five are combined, they create powerful motivation for great powers to believe and act offensively towards their rivals. As affirmed by another Offensive Realist, Eric J. Labs (1997, p. 13), “states seek to maximise their security by maximising their relative power and influence where the benefits of doing so exceed the cost”. This gives great powers the ambition to expand beyond their borders.

At this point, hegemonic stability theory should be mentioned. It is built on the view that the states with the most power tend to gain hegemony in some or all parts of the international system in order to secure themselves against threats from other states. The theory predicts that the order of any international system is durable as long as a relation of authority is built between the actors. If the hegemon starts to feel challenged by another, strengthening actor, the stability of the system will be damaged (Wohlforth, 2016, p. 16).

## **Spheres of Influence**

### *Spheres of Influence as a Concept*

In international relations, the concept of ‘spheres of influence’ is widely used and debated. According to Paul Kael (1983, p. 15) “a sphere of influence is a determinate region within which a single external power exerts a predominant influence, which limits the independence

or freedom of action of political entities within it". A great power's spheres of influences are steps to ultimate hegemony over the system.

Elias Götz underlines the three fundamental assumptions of structural realism, which are that the international system is anarchic, states cannot be sure about other states' real intentions and survival is a state's main goal. Furthermore, he adds the constraining effect of geography to these assumptions. He argues that when these four conditions are met together, they provide an incentive for great powers to form spheres of influence. He accepts that states can undertake military operations far from home but argues that military intervention in a neighbouring country is easier than invading a far-away country (2016a, p. 303). This would also push possible adversaries as far from its borders as possible. He also notes that the great powers intend to control communication and transportation lines in their geographic spheres (2016b, p. 15).

Forming spheres of influence and limiting the independence of countries within them benefits the great power in two ways. First, the great power prevents a rival great power from approaching its borders by using neighbouring states as outposts. By gaining hegemony over the region it is easier for the hegemon to prevent a rival from close interaction with its neighbours. Second, forming spheres of influence benefit the great power by giving it the upper hand in preventing the rise of a revisionist state in the system. The great power would have the advantage in countering challenges by the revisionist state (Hast, 2014, p. 6).

The great powers use varying instruments to practice dominance over their spheres of influence: military, economic and diplomatic measures may be seen. According to Götz (2016a, p. 305) if neighbouring countries align themselves with the policies of one great power and the

threat of outside interference by another great power is low, the first power will use soft measures to influence and keep the neighbouring states under its dominance. These measures might include forming regional institutions, providing economic and military assistance, etc.

Conversely, if minor states get into interaction with other great powers and there is a consequent risk of intervention against the great power, hard power would be employed against these neighbouring states to keep hegemony over the region. These hard power measures would be blockade, interference in domestic politics or the use of force (Götz, 2016a, pp 305–6).

According to Heino Nyysönen spheres of influence bring a paradox since they cannot be publicly accepted by states. He further argues that spheres of influence are “obscure and contested political constructions rather than tangible reality” (2016, p. 43). Even though the spheres of influence concept feature some paradox, it has been utilised by great powers throughout history. The idea has also been effective in preventing wars between great powers by defining the borders of dominance clearly. Since World War II Europe has been an example of the idea, as Western Europe was left to democracies and Eastern Europe was controlled by the communist Soviets. Each party was careful not to cross the line and dislodge states from another’s region (Etzioni, 2015, pp 119–22). But nowadays the concept does not guarantee peace.

### *Spheres of Influence in Russian Foreign Policy*

Although the Soviet Union collapsed at the end of the Cold War in 1991 and new independent states emerged through Central Asia to Eastern Europe, Russia’s desire to control them never faded. This geography had been under Russian control for decades; first under the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union. For Moscow, although they were independent they had

inadequate capacity to adopt to modern developments without the help of third parties (Sahakyan, 2017, p. 128). These states along its borders were seen as its ‘near abroad’ (Appel, 2014) by Russia and any other great power’s influence would be a threat to Russia’s security (Adomeit, 2011, p. 6). In 1991 the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was formed by former Soviet states as an intergovernmental organisation to enhance cooperation on economic, political and military issues. During the last three decades other institutions have also been formed under Russian leadership to continue its influence in these former Soviet states (Herpen, 2014, p. 68).

The colour revolutions in the former Soviet countries of Georgia and the Ukraine early this century were perceived as a threat by Russia, especially as the new administrations in these countries formed closer ties with the EU. Russian authorities believed the West was behind these events (Mankoff, 2010, p. 353; Russell, 2012, p. 120). In this regard Russian military intervention to Georgia in 2008 was a reply to *rapprochement* of Georgia and the Ukraine with the EU. President Dimitri Medvedev’s speech about Russia’s “spheres of privileged interests” and the need to protect them set his country’s foreign policy goals. Russia’s primary goal in this intervention was to keep Western great powers away from its specified spheres of influence and keep these states under its hegemony (Trenin, 2009, p. 3).

Although the new Russia is not a great power like the Soviet Union (in military or economic terms) it is still seen as a great power by its administration. For the Russians, control over the former Soviet region gives them the chance to claim their country as a great power with its own spheres of influences and this has become a main motivation for Russian foreign policy (Rakowska-Harmstone, 2014, pp 9–10). Moreover; they had to be protected at all costs as 2014 showed, when Russia-friendly Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich was ousted by

pro-European protesters. Following this Russia annexed the strategic Crimean Peninsula from the Ukraine and gave support to ethnic Russian rebels in Eastern Ukraine. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stated that Russia believed that the West was expanding its own sphere of influence (“Lavrov Has Harsh Words for EU”, 2014).

Mearsheimer (2014) argues that *Realpolitik* is still relevant and explains Russia’s foreign policy. He believes that the West’s strategy to move the Ukraine from Russia’s sphere of influence provoked Moscow. According to him just as the United States did not want to let Cuba form a military alliance with the Soviet Union during the Cold War; it is normal that the Russians do not let rival great powers get into close interaction with its ‘near abroad’.

Unlike previous examples the Georgia and Ukraine cases show that spheres of influence can also be a source of conflict rather than preventing it. The main reason for this might be Russia’s inability to compete with the West in providing economic and institutional aid to these states. These developments have led to the growth of anti-Moscow, pro-Western movements in the region. The Soviet Union was not as wealthy as the West but it had military capability which deterred Western powers from its spheres of influences and form a stable hegemony. (Dunn and Bobick, 2014, p. 406).

## **Soft Power**

### *Soft Power as a Concept*

Soft power “is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideals, and policies” (Nye, 2004, p. X). Joseph S. Nye, introducer of the concept, argues that culture becomes an effective form of ‘soft power’ in regions where it is found attractive. Shared political values are

also effective forms of a country's soft power. When considered as legitimate and moral, foreign policy can also attract (2011, p. 84). Although the term was first coined by Nye three decades ago, the idea has existed for a long time. He notes: "though the concept of soft power is recent, the behaviour it denotes is as old as human history" (2011, p. 81).

Besides governments, non-state actors may also have soft power in the globalised world of today. Nye notes that much of America's soft power comes from non-governmental bodies such as Hollywood, pop culture, brands and universities rather than the state itself (2013). For example, Korean pop movies and songs known as K-Pop have been very popular among teens around the world. There is a growing tendency to learn the Korean language and culture. Thereby K-Pop constitutes a considerable part of South Korea's soft power.

Public diplomacy, media organisations, aid, investments, cultural institutions and schools can all be instruments of soft power in the borderless world of today. However, these 'investments' can be expensive and desirable outcomes cannot be certain. A lot of time may be needed to see the benefits of these investments. Take a cultural centre for example: a country may have to invest a lot of money in the facilities and personnel, but it would take years to attract and influence a significant number of people.

Nye notes that "in today's world, information is not scarce but attention is, and attention depends on credibility" (2013). A state must be credible to attract others with its soft power. Opening cultural institutions in one neighbouring country would not give the desired outcome if another neighbouring country was subjected to coercive tactics. This makes soft power a challenging strategy for countries like China and Russia, which view world politics as *Realpolitik*, and base their place in world politics on their hard power capability. Conversely,

countries that base their foreign policy on democracy, free trade and pluralism have the upper hand in soft power.

The most distinctive difference between soft power and hard power is that hard power rests on coercion and payment, meaning that an actor forces others to act as it desires. Thus for Nye hard power consists of military and economic power (2004, pp 30–31). However, the distinction is not always clear and this leads to one of the criticisms most often raised against the soft power concept: vagueness. Not every military and economic instrument can be regarded as hard power. For example, weapons aid or economic assistance can be soft power: American military assistance and aid to Turkey since World War II can be regarded as soft power. However, these elements of soft power turned hard when the United States tried to prevent Turkey from its Cyprus campaign during the 1960s and 1970s by forbidding the use of US-made weapons during the campaign (“Johnson Warns Inonu On Cyprus,” 1964). Nevertheless, Lawrence Sondhaus makes an interesting claim about this: “the nebulous nature of soft power has been at the same time its greatest asset and its greatest liability”. He notes that to make soft power valid it should be backed by hard power (2007, pp 214–15). Another criticism of soft power is its softness. Niall Ferguson argues (2009) that people may enjoy Coca Cola or Hollywood movies and hate America at the same time. For him hard power is a must to achieve national interests.

### *Soft Power in Russian Foreign Policy*

Russia has mentioned soft power as an important tool for its foreign policy objectives: “In addition to traditional methods of diplomacy, ‘soft power’ has become an integral part of efforts to achieve foreign policy objectives. This primarily includes the tools offered by civil society,

as well as various methods and technologies – from information and communication, to humanitarian and other types.” (Foreign Ministry of the Russian Federation, 2016)

The colour revolutions at the beginning of the century in post-Soviet regions showed Russian officials the importance of soft power as a foreign policy tool. Since then, soft power has been getting much attention from the Russian state (Herpen, 2016, p. 44). Moscow’s desire to improve Russia’s international appearance and to polish up its global prestige, as well as align its foreign policy to present needs, has made soft power attractive for the administration (Sergunin and Karabeshkin, 2015, p. 359). Alexander Sergunin and Leonid Karabeshkin find Russian understanding of soft power to be instrumentalist, quite different from the Western understanding: “Russian soft power initiatives often pursue overtly pragmatic, interest-based goals rather than aim to take into account international partners’ interests and, for this reason, are met with suspicion or even hostility” (2015, p. 352). Nye also criticises Russian understanding of soft power. He argues that government and government propaganda are seen as main instruments of soft power in Russia and notes that propaganda is rarely credible (2013). The latest developments of Russian asymmetric involvement in political processes in many countries should also hinder its soft power efforts. Moreover, one main driver of soft power, non-governmental organisations, is under pressure in Russia (Hill, 2012, p. 15). Thus, this leaves government-run initiatives as the main face of Russian soft power.

An important focus of Russian soft power strategy has been post-Soviet regions. The Russian state aims to integrate economically, politically and socio-culturally with post-Soviet countries, to gain attractiveness to its hegemony in the region (Sergunin and Karabeshkin, 2015, p. 349). Russia-made products, pop culture such as television series, songs and the flow of workers from these countries to Russia have been effective instruments for this objective (Hill,

2006, p. 341). Russia Today, Sputnik, local media outlets and social media resources are other effective resources of Russian soft power; and historical and cultural ties such as the Russian language, Russian minorities and the Russian Orthodox Church are also important elements of the country's soft power in post-Soviet and Slavic countries (Popescu, 2006). As we have seen, when its hegemony is not directly challenged Russia tries to use soft measures instead of hard power in its sphere of influence.

Although soft power strategies of the Russian state are bearing fruit in the Russian-speaking regions of Eurasia, such as Eastern Ukraine and Transdnier, they are not getting the desired attention elsewhere. The unpleasant legacy of the Soviet past is alive for many in the region and Russian attempts to draw attraction gets a negative reaction from nationalist bodies in these countries (Rutland and Kazantsev, 2016, p. 401). Russia's use of hard power methods such as military intervention in Georgia and the Ukraine has also drawn scepticism to Russian efforts.

Outside the post-Soviet sphere Russian soft power has been found attractive in Balkan countries such as Bulgaria and Serbia. Shared socio-cultural history has made Russia a popular actor in the administration and society of these countries. Moreover, the media, cultural centres and think-tanks aiming to promote Russian culture and values are being supported around the world to increase Russia's soft power.

## **Chapter III**

### **Theoretical Argument**

At the end of the Cold War Francis Fukuyama wrote “what we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government” (1989). He argued that while other types of government such as theocracy, communism or military dictatorship failed due to their defects and irrationalities, liberal democratic government became the ultimate ideal for humankind (1992, p. XI).

During the 1990s and early years of this century neither the liberal world nor Fukuyama’s ideas were substantially challenged. As the defeated side in the Cold War; Russia was dealing with economic, political and military collapse (Mankoff, 2009, p. 7). Although China was growing fast, it was nowhere close to competing with the Western world. However, a decade later, Russia and China emerged as revisionist states against the liberal world order. Their rapid economic growth and considerable military strength have made them important actors in international politics, but it was their authoritarian government that has made them challengers to the liberal Western world (Gat, 2007).

Emerging powers such as Russia and China regard the international political system as great power politics, also known as *Realpolitik*. They look for opportunities to challenge the liberal world by expanding their influence beyond their borders. As mentioned above, realist theory regards this as a struggle for life. Since states cannot be certain about each other's intentions, they must enhance their power to defend themselves from any possible threats. Thus, offensive realism explains the behaviours of these emerging powers better than defensive realism since these states are looking for ways to enhance their power rather than preserving the status quo.

Building spheres of influence has been one of the tactics most used by great powers through history. The United States established a sphere of influence in the American continent with the Monroe Doctrine and announced that it would not permit other great powers to gain any kind of influence in the region (Murphy, 2005). Another example would be India, which has become a nuclear power in its region. It has also competed with its regional neighbours Pakistan and China to become a great power. Building a sphere of influence in the Indian Ocean by gaining domination over minor states in the region has been one of its main ambitions. In this way it desires to gain hegemonic control over strategic maritime routes. Thus it would gain power and leverage over its competitors (Brewster, 2010). This example shows that sphere of influence is not a concept just of yesterday but also of today and perhaps tomorrow.

Today's Russia is another example of a revisionist state pursuing its aim to become a great power. As mentioned, Russia considers the former Soviet countries as its sphere of influence. Therefore, any internal attempt in these former Soviet countries to form relations with other great powers is regarded as a threat to Russia's great power status. Furthermore, Russia responds aggressively to these developments, as seen in Georgia and the Ukraine

(Maitra, 2014, p. 116). These Russian interventions in spite of international economic sanctions have shown Russia's ambition to be accepted as a great power (Borger *et al.*, 2014) and also its commitment to *Realpolitik*.

The ultimate goal for great powers may be to become global hegemon but none has been able to achieve this goal so far. Mearsheimer argues that as the most powerful state on Earth the United States is a regional hegemon in the Western hemisphere (2002, p. 40). Although the United States is a hegemon in the Western hemisphere it has considerable power in many other regions of the World such as the Middle East and East Asia. The revisionist powers also follow strategies to expand beyond their borders and spheres of influences. They may invest to try building relations with other states around the world. This would give them the chance to show themselves around the world and also invest in future power.

China's activities in Africa over the past two decades are examples of soft power. It has been seeking to enhance its economic and political relations with African states. Beijing presents its policy as based on equality and mutual trust, to become a source of attraction. In this way, China is expanding its presence to a continent where the Western world has been the primary foreign power for centuries (Fijałkowski, 2011, pp 230–31). This means authoritarian African administrations that cannot find Western help because they do not meet high Western standards in areas such as human rights and democratic rule find economic aid and a powerful political ally (Tull, 2006, p. 267). However, these standards are not always high. For example; Western countries have kept quiet about the 2013 military coup d'état and the human rights issues following it in Egypt to maintain their influence over this strategically important country.

Although China's soft power strategy works effectively in Africa, Nye's claim that China and Russia do not get the idea of soft power is still valid. State-run soft power strategies may become especially effective in authoritarian countries where civil society is limited and power is accumulated in the hands of small groups. However, in democratic societies where power is more evenly distributed, spreading money does not help gain attractiveness.

As Nye argues soft power is not about influence, since influence rests on hard power elements such as threats and payments. It is not just persuasion or argument; it is also the ability to attract that would finally lead to acquiescence. Simply put, soft power is attractive power and its resources are assets that generate attraction (2004, p. 6). Culture, a strong economy and economic model, high human capacity, principled foreign policy, respect for human rights, democracy and strong institutions would be sources of attraction for the subject countries. Furthermore, most if not all of these are features of democratic countries rather than authoritarian ones.

At this point I argue that when regional great powers expand beyond their spheres of influence, they adopt soft power strategies. However, since they pursue great power politics with hard power measures to call on in their spheres of influence, it is known that they are prone to hard power. Moreover; if such great power has an authoritarian state structure, use of soft power will be harder for them. Accordingly, their soft power capacity lacks the competence to compete with the liberal world in regions where the subject country is a democratic state, because their authoritarian power prevents a vibrant society and culture back home. In other words, in great power rivalries, when the state subjected to soft power is a democratic country, authoritarian great power will not be attractive enough to surpass the liberal democratic great power.

## Chapter IV

### Methodology

In the previous chapters a literature review was conducted and a theoretical argument was discussed in order to generate a hypothesis. As stated in the introduction, the starting point of this research was Russia's notable silence about Serbia's drive for EU membership. As known, Russia's response to Georgia and the Ukraine's *rapprochement* with the EU was military intervention in both former Soviet countries. Although Serbia is not a post-Soviet country like Georgia and the Ukraine, it had a special relationship with Russia even before its independence from the Ottoman Empire that continues today (Meriage, 2016). Moreover, it is clear that Russia would not want Serbia to be an EU member. To reveal the causes of Russia's limitations and behaviour, I presented my hypothesis in Chapter III.

Taking all of these into account, it is appropriate to employ a qualitative case study to evaluate the hypothesis. Unearthing the causal mechanism in order to have a better understanding of the case will help to test the hypothesis. Having chosen the case beforehand does not pose a problem for the research. As Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett argue, researchers may begin "their inquiry with a theory in search of a test case or a case in search of a theory for which it is a good test" (2005, pp 83–4).

Qualitative research relies on non-numerical measurement. It focuses on one or a small number of cases rather than large-n studies. Furthermore, it relies on qualitative data such as interviews, historical materials, documents and observation (King *et al.*, 1994, p. 4). Unfortunately, due to shortage of time and constraints such as language field work or interviews were not conducted for this study. However, a wide range of academic articles, books, reports and policy papers from many research institutions and non-governmental organisations, articles and news in media, public statements and official documents of governments have been evaluated to gather data.

John Gerring defines case study “as an intensive study of a single case (or a small set of cases) with an aim to generalize across a larger set of cases of the same general type” (2007, p. 65). Sandra Halperin and Oliver Heath offer a similar definition: case studies “address theory or issues that have wider intellectual relevance, use concepts that are applicable to other contexts, and may even seek to make inferences that apply to countries beyond the original case” (2017, p. 205). It is also argued that case study is a major part of comparative politics since it allows generalisations across a larger number of cases and such generalisation allows us to make comparisons (George and Bennett, 2005, p. 18).

Typical case study technique has been used to provide a general understanding of the broader phenomenon by studying a representative case. Gerring argues that the “typical case exemplifies what is considered to be a typical set of values, given some general understanding of a phenomenon” (2007, p. 91). He further maintains that the technique is viable where a particular outcome and a specific hypothesis have been identified. To investigate these, a typical case with which to explore causal mechanisms is looked for, as explained above (Gerring, 2007, pp 92–3).

## **Chapter V**

### **Case Study**

#### **Background: Slavic Orthodox Brotherhood**

Serbia and other parts of the Balkan Peninsula were ruled by the Ottoman Empire from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which did not face a serious threat in the Balkans until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Despite their decline, the Ottomans were able to continue their rule in a great part of the region by carefully balancing the great powers of the time against each other: at first, Austria vs Russia and later, other great powers: the United Kingdom, France and Germany. For the rival great powers, waning Ottoman rule in the strategic peninsula was preferable to strong Austrian or Russian rule (Hanioglu, 2008). Thus, this situation reveals the importance of the region to extraterritorial powers.

Russian interests in the Western Balkans emerged not long after Russia built an empire at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. With the French Revolution and the spread of nationalistic ideas; a general sense of Slavic identity and sympathy towards Russia emerged in the region, especially among Serbs (Levine, 1914, pp 666–9). Regular wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century such as the Crimean War of 1853 also spread pan-Slavic nationalist ideas among the Russian public (Kohn, 1961, p. 323). This mutual rise of pan-Slavism in the Balkans and Russia gave Russians the chance to expand their influence. During this period Serbian nationalists had significance

support from Russia in their efforts to gain independence from the Ottoman Empire (MacKenzie, 1964).

Although Ottoman rule in Serbia officially continued until 1877, by the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Istanbul had lost its authority in the region to local powers. In 1876 Serbians declared war on the Ottoman Empire, just before the 1877–8 Russo-Turkish War (Hanioglu, 2008, pp 103, 130). With the support of Russia, Serbia gained independence at the 1878 Berlin Congress held among the great powers to determine the future of the region (Yavuz, 2011, p. 26).

World War I started with a conflict between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. When Austria-Hungary attacked Serbia, Russia mobilised its army to defend its Slavic ally. Thus, this led to Germany's mobilisation and the Great War commenced. Although Serbia was invaded at the beginning of the war, with the subsequent Allied victory it managed to expand its borders and unite the Southern Slavic people. Montenegro, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Macedonia came under Serbia's authority. After the war Serbia's name was first changed to the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918 and later to Yugoslavia in 1929. Serbs remained the most populous ethnic group in Yugoslavia (Benson, 2001). On the other hand, a revolution in Russia ended the monarchy in 1917 and led to a communist administration headed by Vladimir Lenin and later Joseph Stalin.

Yugoslavia was invaded by Nazi Germany and other Axis Powers during World War II. Following the defeat of the Axis by the Allies, a communist administration was formed under the leadership of Partisan leader Josip Broz Tito. After the war, the communist administrations of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, approached one another to strengthen relations. However,

disputes between Stalin and Tito dispelled the optimistic mood. While other Eastern European communist states aligned themselves with the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia preferred an independent course. Although a *rapprochement* happened after the death of Stalin in 1953, relations between the two communist countries never turned into a close alliance. Yugoslavia stayed neutral during the Cold War and formed the Non-Aligned Movement with other neutral states (Benson, 2001).

Tito ruled Yugoslavia until his death in 1980. He was highly respected by his people, which included many different ethnic and religious groups. After Tito's death, tensions grew among these groups. The end of the Cold War and the break-up of Communist administrations fuelled the breaking up of Yugoslavia despite Serbian opposition. During 1991 and 1992 Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina declared independence. Of these, Bosnia and Herzegovina was the most ethnically diverse country and its break-away led to a three-year war. Bosnian's Serbs, supported by Belgrade, opposed independence from Yugoslavia and fought with separatist Bosnians and Croats. The war continued ended with a 1995 NATO intervention in support of Bosnians and Croats. A peace agreement reached at Dayton proposed an independent Bosnia and Herzegovina and was accepted by all sides (Chenoy, 1996).

Kosovo was the second and final violent conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Kosovo was an autonomous part of Serbia in Communist Yugoslavia with an ethnic Albanian Muslim majority. It had been a disputed region within Serbia, and the Albanian majority wanted independence. In 1998 a war broke out between Albanians and Belgrade, resulting in NATO intervention in support of Albanian separatists. Following a 78-day NATO bombardment Yugoslavia accepted a ceasefire and pulled its troops out of Kosovo (Webber, 2009).

The United States and the EU took a solid stance against the Serbs during the wars which eventually led to independence for Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, Russian policy in these wars showed a remarkable change as events progressed. In the beginning Russia was mainly busy with its own problems relating to the collapse of the Soviet Union (Bowker, 1998, p. 1245). Furthermore, Russia wanted itself to be accepted as a great power and heir to the Soviet Union in international politics. Therefore, its leader Boris Yeltsin pursued an internationalist policy, trying to revive Russia as a Western, civilised, democratic and liberal country (Cohen, 1994, pp 30–32). For this reason, Russian support of their Slavic Orthodox brothers was mainly verbal. During the war in Bosnia, Russia went along with Western plans (Surovell, 2012, p. 301). Later, in the Kosovo War, it took a more pro-Serb stance (Hughes, 2013, p. 993). Although Moscow could not prevent NATO intervention in Yugoslavia, it took a unilateral decision to place its own military force in Kosovo with the aim of protecting Serbian ethnicity. In the eyes of Russians, the West's rigid stance against the Serbians and actions without consultation were the first signs after the Cold War that the West could not be trusted (Simic, 2001, pp 109–11). The change in Russia's foreign policy between the Bosnian War and the Kosovo War shows that Russia's attempts to integrate with the West had been replaced by Russia's traditional power politics (Shevtsova, 2010, p. 156).

All in all, it could be argued that if Russia could have healed the wounds of the Soviet collapse, it would have acted more aggressively to support Serbia, considering its later actions in the Ukraine and Syria. However, Russia deployed only a small force to Kosovo compared to NATO's and further deployment was prevented when neighbouring countries (which are all NATO members now) would not allow Russian troops to pass through their land. This also shows the limits of Russia's military hard power capability in Serbia. The country is surrounded

by NATO countries and to employ a military operation Russia would have to consider trespassing on NATO land.

It appears that a collapsed economy and institutions limited Russia's actions during the 1990s and the West used this opportunity to gain presence in a region that had been a Soviet sphere of influence after World War II.

### **2000s: Kosovo and Energy**

The new century led to many changes both in Russia and Serbia. Russia showed a remarkable resurgence in its economy and institutions under Vladimir Putin's leadership. Furthermore, during this era Russia followed a more self-oriented foreign policy, aiming to revert to its powerful position in international politics (Trenin, 2006). On the other hand, Slobodan Milosevic, leader of the wartime Yugoslavia, was overthrown and sent to the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia along with other Serbian figures for war crimes (Kenny, 2006). These years also witnessed the final dissolution of Yugoslavia. In 2003, the country's name was changed to Serbia and Montenegro. Montenegro separated peacefully from Serbia in 2006.

Unlike Milosevic's administration which had dragged the country from war to war during the 1990s, the new administration followed a more moderate stance in international politics with the aim of integrating with the West. While relations with the Western world, especially the EU, recovered somewhat, Russia continued to be important for Serbia as an historical Slavic Orthodox ally.

Russia–Serbia relations gained momentum in 2008 when Kosovo declared its official independence from Serbia with the support of the Western world. Although Serbia has had no control over Kosovo since its withdrawal in 2008, it still regards the region as its own (Bancroft, 2010). Russia has been the biggest defender of Serbia’s stance against Kosovo’s independence while the dispute has been the biggest challenge between Serbia and *rapprochement* with the West. Conversely, Russia has used Western support for Kosovo’s independence to legitimise its interventions in Georgia in support of breakaway regions South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Levy, 2008). While thus finding an excuse for its aggressive moves in post-Soviet space, Russia has also gained a reputation with the Serbian administration and public.

During the first decade of this century the world witnessed high energy prices. Russia, which harbours extensive energy resources, gained massively in this process. This gave it the chance to heal its broken economy and also expand economically beyond its borders (Rutland, 2008, p. 1051). At the same time, the Serbian government tried to offset the independence of Kosovo by welcoming the Russian energy sector: Russian Gazprom bought a majority share in the Serbian national fuel company and gained control over Serbia’s fuel market. Furthermore, Serbia is almost wholly dependent on Russian natural gas (Dempsey, 2008).

The Russian energy monopoly in Serbia and similar countries is regarded as a vulnerability of these countries *vis-à-vis* Moscow. Furthermore, it is argued that Russia can manipulate the decision-making process of these countries through its power over energy (Newnham, 2011, p. 142). For example, Russia raised the price of the gas that it supplies to the Ukraine during the 2014 crisis and on several occasions cut the flow of gas to the country for a few days. Its main motivation was punishment and also to affect Ukrainian authorities’ decision to turn towards integration with Europe (Kirby, 2014). It should be noted the prices that

Serbian prices for Russian gas are among the highest in Europe; nearly 1/3 higher than the average price (Trivic, 2018). Taking all these into consideration, Russian energy investments and leverage in Serbia may be considered as hard power tools of Moscow *vis-à-vis* Belgrade. However; it is hard to use this hard power tool since international law limits Russia's ability to cut gas off. Furthermore, the Russian economy is highly dependent on energy exports. Even in 2015, when Turkey shot down a Russian jet that entered its airspace, Russia continued gas flowing to Turkey and it is still supplying gas to the Ukraine.

Though Russia has a massive influence in the Serbian energy sector, its economic investment in Serbia slowed after the 2009 global financial crisis and fall in international energy prices, which hit the Russian economy badly (Dawber, 2010). Today, in terms of Serbia's exports and imports, Russia is in the back rows. Serbia imports from Russia only 7.3% of its total imports, and nearly half of this is oil and gas. Serbia exports to Russia 6% of its total exports, less than it imports (Directorate-General for Trade, 2018). These figures show that the Russia–Serbia trade balance is tilted to Russia's advantage; but they also show that Russia is not Serbia's most significant trade partner.

### **Russian Soft Power in Serbia**

Geographic constraints limit Russia's military power capability against Serbia. As seen; the two countries do not share any borders and Serbia is surrounded by NATO members. Moreover, Russia also does not have significant economic leverage against Serbia that can be used as hard power. These factors show that Moscow cannot dominate Belgrade with coercion. Thereby; it is clear that Serbia is outside Russia's sphere of influence. Moscow, taking all this into consideration, is using soft power initiatives in Serbia to pursue its objectives. Russia's main aim is to prevent Serbia joining the EU and also to pull the Western Balkan nation into its orbit.

One of Russia's biggest soft power tools in Serbia is the media. Russia's pro-government international Sputnik News Agency has its regional office in Belgrade and has gained a strong place in the Serbian media. Beside Sputnik more than 20 media outlets in Serbia support Russia. Sputnik operates an internet portal and a radio station in the country. Unlike agencies like Reuters and Associated Press, it also provides free news feed to local media outlets which expands its influence beyond its ordinary followers to the whole country (Byrne, 2017). Moreover, each week Nedeljnik provides a monthly supplement named *R-Magazine* funded by the Russian government as part of the Russia Beyond the Headlines project (Šajkaš, 2016). These media stations aim to undermine the EU's attractiveness in Serbia and steer public opinion into a more pro-Russian stream. They have also been effective at presenting Russia's version of international politics to Serbian society.

Moscow propaganda channels are effective at boosting Russia's already high popularity in Serbia. For example, according to a survey 47% of Serbians believed that Russia was the largest donor of development aid to Serbia. In fact, the biggest donations to Serbia came from the EU and its aid, along with that of the United States, totalled almost 90% of all aid to Serbia (Szpala, 2014, p. 3). Polls also show that 58% of Serbians regard President Putin as the most trusted foreign leader; German chancellor Angela Merkel came second with 42% (Zivanovic, 2018). So, although the EU has contributed more to Serbia, Russian media propaganda has been effective in reversing the perception among Serbians.

A wide range of Russia-backed institutions such as Russkiy Mir, a cultural organisation, Russian Institute of Strategic Research, Fund for Unity of Orthodox Nations and Gorbachev Public Diplomacy Fund have offices in Belgrade and other Serbian cities (Szpala, 2014, p. 4). Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies' (CEAS) research shows at least 110 pro-Russian

organisations operate in Serbia in various fields (CEAS, 2016, p. 2). These institutions are funded by the Russian state and aim to strengthen Russia's image in Serbia and Russia–Serbia relations.

Youth has been a major target of Russia's soft power initiatives via media and non-governmental organisations. CEAS research shows that although young Serbians see the image of the EU and the United States more positively than that of Russia, a majority of them support Russian foreign policy and the possible presence of Russian military bases in Serbia. According to the same research 70% of young Serbians believe that they are more oriented to the West in culture, education, job opportunities and lifestyle. Only 27% answered 'Russia' to the same question (CEAS, 2016, pp 5, 6). It can be observed that although the economic and prosperity gap between the West and Russia cannot be closed by the propaganda of these organisations, Russia can be presented as a non-harmful and faithful historical ally.

Relations between the Russian and Serbian Orthodox Churches have been another front of Russian soft power initiatives in Serbia. The two churches have strong connections and officials hold regular meetings. The Serbian Church has opposed the Serbian government's efforts to solve the Kosovo issue with the EU's mediation. It is also considering adding the name of a historic Kosovo church, 'Pec-Patriarchate', to its own name in an effort to claim Kosovo's orthodox past (Vasovic, 2018). The Russian Church backed by the Kremlin has been a big supporter of its brother's claims over Kosovo and openly criticised the Serbian government's attempts at resolution (Nelaeva and Semenov, 2016, p. 65). The Russian Church is also planning to open a Spiritual Centre in Belgrade in an effort to increase its weight in the region ("Serbia to get another Russian center," 2017). The Russian Church's activities are aimed at strengthening nationalist feeling to foster powerful relations between two Slavic

Orthodox nations against the non-Orthodox Western world. Furthermore, the Serbian Church has been ambivalent to ‘Europeanisation’ of identity and cultural and religious differences (Perica, 2006, p. 177). It is worth noting that the Russian Church has also been an influential source of Russian influence over Serbian minorities in neighbouring countries.

Serbia’s military relations have also required delicate balancing by Belgrade between the West and Russia. During the Cold War the Yugoslavian army mainly relied on Soviet-made military equipment and Serbia is continuing this tradition. This is logical since using familiar equipment would be more beneficial and efficient (Directorate-General for External Policies, 2017, p. 40). However, Russia has been using this situation to gain sympathy. Moscow has donated fighter jets, transport planes, tanks and other military equipment over the last decade to enhance military relations between the two countries (Bhat, 2016). Even so, Serbia has been careful to preserve its neutrality among the rival great powers. In 2007 it declared military neutrality, stating that Serbia would avoid joining any military alliance. This was a message to NATO that the Serbians would not join to the alliance that bombed them nearly ten years ago (Ejdus, 2014). However, this neutrality can also be regarded as a message to Moscow that, while not joining NATO, the country will not form any deep military alliance with Russia either. This shows that, although the trauma of NATO bombing during the Kosovo War is alive in Serbia, still Belgrade does not consider Russia as an alternative to the West.

Comparing Serbia’s military cooperation with NATO and Russia would give a better view of Russia’s impact. Serbia joined NATO’s Partnership for Peace Programme and sent troops to Afghanistan (Sciolino, 2003). Serbia and NATO also started an Individual Partnership Action Plan in 2015 to deepen dialogue and cooperation, especially on reforming Serbia’s defence and security sector (Vasovic, 2018). Moreover; Belgrade has also hosted more than 1400 common activities with NATO since 2006. At the same time, Serbia continues its military

cooperation with Russia. Besides procuring military equipment from Moscow, Serbia also participates in joint military exercises with Russia. However, compared to its cooperation with NATO, cooperation with Russia is low. For example, out of Serbia's 26 multinational training exercises in 2016 only 2 were with Russia and most were with NATO and NATO member countries (Directorate-General for External Policies, 2017, pp 39–40).

One of the most contested Russian activities in Serbia is the Humanitarian Centre in southern city of Niš. Although the centre was built to provide aid during natural disasters it is also working on removal of unexploded remnants of the 1999 NATO bombing. The Centre is seen as a Russian covert operations base by Western governments. They are also concerned that further expansion of the Centre may turn it to a military base which would endanger the delicate balance in the Balkans and also NATO forces in Kosovo. Russia's pressure on Belgrade to allow diplomatic immunity to the staff in the Centre is raising concerns at Russia's activities. However, Belgrade has refused Moscow's requests for immunity. It is worth noting that the Serbian Government gave diplomatic immunity to NATO staff serving in the country.

Taking into consideration all these factors, it can be seen that the Serbian government is seeking to deepen its military ties with NATO while preserving military neutrality. On the other hand, although maintaining close military relations with Russia, it can be argued that Serbian authorities are being careful to draw a line to keep its historical ally at a distance. Russia's aggressive policies in Georgia and the Ukraine, and allegations of interference in other countries' democratic processes, may have raised suspicions in the Serbian authorities (Rukavishnikov, 2011, pp. 90–91).

The pro-Russian coup plot of 2016 in Montenegro may also give a hint of Russia's interference in domestic politics and activities in the wider Balkans. A group of Serbian and Russian nationals tried to overthrow the Montenegrin Government in an effort to prevent the country joining NATO. Former head of Serbian Gendarmerie Bratislav Dikić was among those prosecuted (Higgins, 2016). Although Serbia was not the target, the coup plot was organised in Belgrade by Russian and Serbian citizens. Even though Russia denied any involvement, Russia's chief of the Security Council Nikolai Patrushev flew to Belgrade to smooth the tensions and take Russian intelligence officers suspected of involvement with the coup back to Russia (Galeotti, 2018, p. 5). The involvement of Serbian citizens in plotting a pro-Russian coup in a neighbouring country shows Russia's capacity and what it can do in Serbia if left unsupervised.

### **Serbia and the European Union**

Since the overthrow of Milosevic in 2000, Serbia has turned its face Westwards. It officially applied to join the EU in 2009 and after extraditing all fugitive war criminals to the International Court gained full candidate status in 2012 (Pawlak and Moffett, 2012). The EU has launched a diplomatic effort to accelerate the EU process in the Western Balkans and plans to accept Serbia as a full member by 2025. Serbia is seen as a linchpin of the region (Emmott, 2018), so its development to become an EU member would also lead to stabilisation and peace in the Western Balkans as well as diminishing the chances of Russia's possible expansion to the region.

The EU has also been Serbia's biggest trade partner and donor. In 2017 62.3% of Serbia's imports were from the EU and 67.6% of her exports went to Union countries; nearly eight times higher than her trade with Russia (Directorate-General for Trade, 2018, p. 8).

Moreover, the EU has been the largest aid supplier to Serbia: more than €4 billion between 2000 and 2015. EU countries are the largest foreign direct investors in Serbia: for example, in 2016 80% of foreign direct investment in Serbia came from the EU (Directorate-General for External Policies, 2017, pp 19, 32). Considering that all EU-member neighbours of Serbia have higher GDP per capita, and taking into account the indicators above, Serbia should enhance its links with the EU to become a developed, wealthy country.

Kosovo is, again, a major issue for Serbia's EU application. The Union insists that Serbia and Kosovo should normalise relations which would require Serbia to at least silently recognise Kosovo as an independent state. Much progress has been made on the issue with EU mediation. Although final resolution has not been reached, delegations and even presidents are meeting to work out problems and reach agreement. Normalisation of the Kosovo issue would also put Belgrade at ease in its relations with Russia. As seen above, Moscow has been using its support for Serbia's Kosovo stance as a pretext for increasing its presence in Serbia and derailing Serbia's relations with the West.

### **Serbia at a Crossroads**

Serbian president Aleksandar Vucic describes his country's approach as "we are on our EU path, that's the strategic goal of our country" (Stojanovic and Gec, 2017). It is apparent that, although Serbia and Russia have close historical ties, Belgrade sees the future of the country in the EU. Even though Moscow invests heavily to attract attention and de-rail Serbia's integration with the West, its efforts are not powerful enough to do this.

In a poll conducted by the Serbian Ministry of European Integration, 52% of Serbians support their country's membership of the EU and only 24 oppose it. Moreover, 65% support

the reforms necessary for EU membership regardless of accession ("European Orientation of Serbian Citizens", 2017). Higher support for the proposed reforms shows that the EU's attraction lies in the prospect of a more democratic, more regulated and wealthier Serbia. It is seen as an end to corruption, malfunctioning governance and unemployment. These opportunities are turning Serbia's face Westwards, even towards the same West that bombarded the country less than two decades ago.

On the other hand, Russia is using state-run soft power initiatives such as media channels, think-tanks, religious bodies, cultural centres, youth organisations and military donations to block Serbia's EU path by inflating nationalism and exploiting catastrophic miseries of the 1990s. In other words, a main goal of Russian soft power initiatives is to prevent rather than attract. It is pragmatic and interest-based, so does not present attractiveness, common future or an alternative to the EU.

It should also be noted that Moscow's soft power initiatives are bearing fruit in keeping sympathy towards Russia alive in the public. However, seeing Russia's interference in other countries, the administration is taking care not to allow Russian presence in the country to expand. The Serbian Government's decision to not give diplomatic immunity to Russian Humanitarian Centre staff may stem from its suspicion of Russian activities in the region, such as the attempted Montenegro coup.

One wonders whether, if geography permitted and Russia could have used hard power against Serbia, it would still be using soft power to persuade Serbia or just roll the tanks over the border to Belgrade as it did in its sphere of influence in Georgia and the Ukraine.

## **Chapter VI**

### **Conclusion**

The case study shows that Russia has insufficient hard power over Serbia to prevent its integration with the EU, and that Russian soft power initiatives also are failing to change Serbia's direction. These are mainly based on propaganda and aim to prevent rather than attract because the authoritarian structure of the Russian state is undermining its civil society. This weakens the country's soft power since civil society is the main driver of effective soft power. Furthermore, Russian understanding of world politics as a zero-sum game and its hard power initiatives in its sphere of influence create suspicion. On the other hand, the EU with its democratic order, institutions and advanced economy is attractive to Serbia.

Growing influence of the individual and civil society in the modern globalised world of today has led all states to realise the importance of soft power, even the ones that see the international system as great power politics. However, if these states have authoritarian structures; their use of soft power does not go much beyond propaganda whereas real soft power is based on attraction through culture, political values and foreign policy (Nye, 2013). It is not that authoritarian states do not understand soft power, it is that they do not have the resources to employ effective soft power. Their authoritarian structure prevents the rise of a dynamic civil society on which to base attraction. So, they fall behind their democratic rivals when they venture beyond their spheres of influence where they do not have hard power resources at hand.

It is worth noting that, although Moscow's soft power initiatives in Serbia have been contradictory, Russia has the economic, societal and cultural resources to use soft power to attract (Sergunin, 2016, p. 58). Its large population, developing economy and wide geography offer opportunities to form win-win relations with other countries. However, Moscow's habit of choosing hegemony over cooperation hinders its chances of building new, strong relations. For example, after having problems with its strategic ally the United States, Turkey has been building relations with Russia in several areas. Nonetheless, in Turkish society the biggest debate over the issue is whether it would be possible to form an equal partnership or whether Russia would seek to dominate Turkey. If Moscow finds a way to become a reliable partner, with the opportunities it offers its soft power would be more successful. Furthermore, Moscow must free its civil society if it wants to profit from soft power.

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