



THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE  
SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA  
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RUSSIAN  
SMART POWER IN CENTRAL ASIA

Master's Thesis

**Doston Asoev**

Master of Science in International Relations

August 2022

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To My Mother  
and  
To My Wife



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## ÖZ

SSCB'nin yıkılmasından otuz yıl olduđuna rađmen, halefi Rusya Federasyonu, Orta Asya'daki ÷lkelerde hala güçlü, siyasi güç olmaya devam ediyor. Bu ÷lkelerden bazılarının çok önemli maden zenginliklerine sahip olduđu, diđerlerinin ise diđer siyasi kesimlerin dikkatini çeken büyük bir elektrik üretim potansiyeline sahip olduđu bir gerçektir. Stratejik geçiş yolları ve Afganistan'a yakın konumu, ABD, Avrupa Birliđi, Hindistan ve Çin gibi büyük jeopolitik güçlerin ilgisini çekiyor. Aslında Kazakistan, Kırgızistan, Özbekistan, Türkmenistan gibi etnik olarak Türk olan bu halkların Türkiye ile yakın din, kültür ve dil bağları ve Tacikistan'ın İran ile Fars bağları hem Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'ni hem de İran İslam Cumhuriyeti'ni Orta Asya ÷lkelerinde son derece ilgilendirdiđi göz ardı edilemez. Ancak söz konusu ÷lkelerin hiçbirisi o bölgede Rusya kadar güçlü bir etkiye sahip deđildir. Bu makale, Rusya'nın genel olarak dünya çapında ve özel olarak Orta Asya ÷lkelerinde akıllı gücünü nasıl uyguladıđını tartışıyor.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Rusya, Orta Asya, akıllı güç, yumuşak güç, sert güç, Rus dış politikası.

## ***ABSTRACT***

Three decades later after collapsing of the Soviet Union, its successor Russia still remains a strong influencing political power in Central Asia. It is a matter of fact that some of these countries wield crucial mineral wealth and the others have a huge electricity production potential that attracts attention of other political players. Its strategic transit routes as well as its location near Afghanistan draw the interests of big geopolitical powers, namely US, European Union, India and China. Factually one cannot ignore the close religious, cultural, and language ties of these ethnically Turkic people of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan with Türkiye and Persian ties of Tajikistan with Iran which make both Türkiye and Iran highly interested in the states of Central Asia. However, none of the aforementioned countries have an as strong an influence as Russia does in that region. This article discusses about how Russia implements its smart power worldwide in general and in the Central Asian states in particular.

**Keywords:** Russia, Central Asia, smart power, soft power, hard power, Russian foreign policy.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

**CSTO:** Collective Security Treaty Organization

**CIS:** Commonwealth of Independent States

**EU:** European Union

**EEU:** Eurasian Economic Union

**MFA RF:** Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation

**NATO:** North Atlantic Treaty Organization

**ROC:** Russian Orthodox Church

**RF:** Russian Federation

**SSR:** Soviet Socialist Republic

**SCO:** Shanghai Cooperation Organization

**USSR:** Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

**UN:** United Nations

# CHAPTER 1

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background

In the 19th and 20th centuries when imperialism was in the peak of practice, the Russian Empire as the British, French, German empires sought territories with valuable natural wealth for the exploitation of natural and human resources. As the stronger nations made efforts to separate and conquer the territories of weaker and smaller nations which in contrast with the grand powers wielded underdeveloped armed forces with no sophisticated modern weapons, the smaller nations were targeted by big imperial powers, were invaded, and their natural, cultural, and human resources were exploited for the benefit of empires. Mainly, the colonized countries were conquered by the bloodshed and hard power of armies. However, these imperial powers got engaged in war with each other due to their limitless appetit to the extent that dozens of conflicts between them turned to be the ending point for the lives of millions of their soldiers. It is a historical fact that Russian and British empires were engaged in the numerous bloodshed and armed conflicts for control of the territories in Caucasus, particularly Russians and Brits fought over Crimea which ended up in 1856 with the victory of British Empire. The authorities of the Russian Empire felt ashamed for the losses in the war against Brits in Caucasus. Thus, the Russian emperor and high echelon of power had long ago targeted the territories of Central Asian states for conquest. However, before Russians British Empire on January 12, 1830, when Lord Ellenborough, the president of the Board of Control for India, tasked Lord William Bentinck, the governor-general, wthe establishing a new trade route to the Central Asian states like the Emirate

of Bukhara, fetch control over the Emirate of Afghanistan and make it a protectorate to use the Emirate of Bukhara as the buffer state blocking Russian expansion. Hence, so called “Great Game” the geopolitical competition for controlling the territory of Central Asia started between Russian Empire and British Empire. In this great game competition Russians oversmartered Brits because for the first time the Russian Empire in history of relations with Central Asia used the strategy of winning hearts and minds of people of these Emirates and Khanates by providing them the economical aids to get them closer to their periphery of influence. As the first steps Russian generals negotiated with the Emir of Bukhara that they were ready to help them to defeat his fierce enemy the Kokand Khanate. With the help of Russians Emir of Bukhara defeated the Kokand Khanate and Russians invaded the territory of already exhausted and weak Kokand Khanate in 1878. As the second step Russians were welcome in Emirate of Bukhara and they invaded Kokand Khanate and using these great opportunities the Russian Empire used both soft power and hard power strategies, meaningly by economic support, cultural influence, and armed forces they fully invaded Central Asia and by 1895 Russians established the Turkistan Okrug in the territories of current Central Asian states.

After the dissolution of imperial powers and the establishment of USSR in 1914 in conducting its domestic and foreign policies, Soviets used various levers of control including the approaches which are currently known as the soft and hard power strategies but if these two powers are combined in conducting policies this approach is called “smart power”. The concept and thoughts of "smart" power are associated with the publications of the American Harvard professor Joseph Nye. He defines **smart power as "the potential to mix hard**

**and soft power to form a victorious strategic approach.** The Central Asian states all became the part of Soviet Union. Throughout almost eight decades of Soviet statehood thanks to the smart power approach, Russian language became the lingua franca, and the Russian culture had a great impact in Central Asia. When the Soviet Union crumbled and the current Russian Federation was head by President Boris Yeltsin, he appointed Andrey Kozyrev as a Russian foreign minister who was a western leaning person and seeked to be closer to the abundantly wealthy states of wealth and saw the Central Asian states as a burden on the economy of newly established Russia. The Russofile nature of the leaders of Central Asia at that time who studied, worked, and lived under Soviet rule did not let them turn their back to Russia and they asked the people in charge of the new authority in Russia to continue their bilateral relationships for the common good. However, the political course of Russia was oriented to the west and they took their powerful influence in Central Asia for granted which resulted in the downfall of the economic turnover between Russia and the states of Central Asia. In the following chapters, we will discuss about this historical period in more detail, however, for now, the main focus of this thesis is on the issue that how the Russian Federation still after more than three decades of Soviet dissolution remains powerful in Central Asia and as there are many interested geopolitical players in Central Asia such as USA, China, India, Turkiye, Iran etc. what are the main approaches and strategies that Russia uses to stay powerful and can we call those strategies and implementation of smart power?

## **1.2. Research questions/hypothesis.**

This thesis will try to attempt to find the responses to the following questions:

1. Why does Russia after more than three decades of the dissolution of the Soviet Union still remain the powerful geopolitical player in Central Asia?
2. What strategies and tools of smart power does Russia use to keep its considerable influence in Central Asia?
3. What are the “Russkiy Mir” and “Eurasianism” agendas which Russia uses to keep its influence in Central Asia?

The author hypothesizes that the potential and strengths of Russian smart power mainly depend on Russia's control over the transportation of Central Asian gas and oil resources, having big shares and strong role in the electricity production potential and selling the electricity of Central Asian states, strong influence of Russian media in the region, the influence of Russian education system, the security support of Russia on the basis of Collective Security Treaty Organization, remittances from the economic migrants of Central Asia working in Russia, high economic and security dependence on Russia and many more factors. This thesis explains these factors in more details.

The focus of author is oriented to the tools and strategies of implementing the Russian smart power in Central Asia. The considerable part of the research explains the main tools of Russian smart power.

Another hypothesis is that the Kremlin uses political agendas such as “Russkiy Mir” and “Eurasianism” to ideologically bring the Central Asian states closer to the periphery of its influence. These two political agendas are explained both from the time of their historical appearance and also their effectiveness in implementing the Russian smart power in Central Asia.

### **1.3. Research aims**

The main aims of this research are to determine the strategies,

approaches, and tools of Russian smart power in Central Asia and identify to what extent the Russian smart power is effectively implemented in Central Asia. Russian Federation gets benefits from the outcomes of its smart power in the region but do the Central Asian states get enough benefits from the Russia's presence in the region? In other words, does the presence of Russian smart power benefit only Russia or it also benefits the Central Asian states as well?

#### **1.4. Significance and purpose of the research**

This thesis is significant because there has not been any research conducted comprehensively and specifically about the implementation of Russian smart power in Central Asia at all. So far, there have been so many researches on the Russian smart power in Ukraine and the Baltic states however, no research has been fully focused on explaining the Russian soft power and hard power both combined and called smart power in Central Asia. Indeed, there have been many researches on the Russian soft power in Central Asia but this thesis is one of the first researches on the implementation of Russian smart power in Central Asia. It is a significant research because it covers almost all of the tools of Russian smart power and ideological agenda settings of the Kremlin in Central Asia such as "Russkiy Mir" and "Eurasianism" agendas.

#### **1.5. Research methodology**

In the process of conducting this research both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies have been used. The data were collected in English, Russian, and Tajik languages from the academic books, research papers, monographies, published articles, think tanks' publishing materials, official websites of the Russian agencies implementing Russian smart power in Central Asia and across the world.

Furthermore, the wide range of books of prominent writers of

this field, especially the books, magazine articles, published materials of the founder of smart power term, professor Joseph Nye and dozens of other professors' researches in the fields of soft power and hard power are used.

Also, theoretical and methodological basis of the research compiled a set of theories, scientific methods and approaches, which allowed build a multi-level system for analyzing the formation and functioning of "smart power" tools in the Russian foreign policy mechanism.

The theoretical basis of the dissertation was the provisions of constructivism and structuralism in the theory of international relations. The constructivist approach made it possible to study the modern system of international relations as a construct, purposefully created by actors in the process of international interaction. Based on the theoretical principles of the school of structuralism, the author explored the influence of the structure of modern international relations on the behavior of actors and the effectiveness of their foreign policy strategies.

When writing the study, the author used: systemic, institutional, neo-institutional, comparative, historical and other approaches as well. The systematic approach allowed us to explore the role and significance of "smart power" tools in modern Russian foreign policy in Central Asia. Within the framework of the institutional method, the work of formal institutions of "smart power" were studied, which were created at the beginning of the 21st century in Russia as in the form of state institutions, as well as in the form of news agencies, NGOs and research centers. The neo-institutional approach allowed determine the role of informal conductors of "smart power", which also participate in the process of development and implementation of the Russian strategy of

“smart power” in Central Asia.

### **1.6. Research scope**

This research focuses on studying the potential, strengths and delimitations of Russian smart power in Central Asia and it reveals the main tools and institutions which Russia uses to implement its smart power strategies. Moreover, the thesis talks about agenda setting as one of the important factors of the Russian smart power and explains the differences between so called “Russian World” and “Eurasianism” agendas which Russia mainly relies on in implementing its smart power in Central Asia.

### **1.7. Limitations of the thesis**

In this research the author mainly discusses about the tools, institutions, and agenda setting which Russia uses for the implementation of smart power in Central Asia. As the other researches the author does not focus on explaining challenges to the Russian smart power in Central Asia created by the USA, China, Iran, Turkiye and the other geopolitical actors in details and does not discuss about which countries’ strategic approaches towards Central Asia is dominating, but it mainly concentrates on the implementation of Russian smart power in Central Asia and hypothesizes whether these smart power implementation strategies are effective or ineffective.

### **1.8. Structure of the thesis**

This thesis consists of four chapters. After the introduction, chapter two provides the detailed explanation of potential, means and delimitations of Russian smart power initially in the different parts of the world and then it focuses more on the achievements of Russian soft and hard power in Central Asia. The beginning of this chapter makes clear the historical weakening of Russia in Central Asia after the collapse of

Soviet Union in 1990s during the Yeltsin's presidency and provides explanation of Russia's comeback to Central Asia after Putin's coming to power. After the historical description of the realization of Russian soft and hard power in the world as the final part of this chapter the aforementioned influencing Russian powers' achievements are explained in the region of Central Asia in comparison with the other parts of the world. It explained why Russian soft and hard power seem more effective in Central Asia than in any other continents.

Chapter three focuses on the combination of soft and hard power by the Russian authority in form of smart power in various regions of the world, particularly in states like Ukraine, Syria, Armenia, Georgia, and etc. where the concentration of mass media is the most. The main question is that whether Russia is able to use smart power in these particular countries successfully is answered. To what extent the combination of Russian soft and hard power is effective in other regions and how it differs in Central Asia is explained as well. However, the main focus still in this chapter remains in the question whether the Russians can implement their smart power quite successfully in the Central Asian states or not.

Chapter four provides conclusion on the implementation of Russian smart power in the world and in Central Asia and finalizes the research by mentioning the implications of the thesis on the Russian smart power in the Central Asian region.

## **1.9. Literature review**

The main sources of research were official foreign policy documents of the Russian Federation: National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2020, Concept of Foreign policy of the Russian

Federation in 2020, the Concept of the state policy of the Russian Federation in the field of assistance to international development, as well as documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Rossotrudnichestvo, such as: Action Plan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the period up to 2018, the Action Plan for the revitalization of activities in international development assistance and humanitarian cooperation on the basis of Russian centers of science and culture abroad at 2020-2022, reports on the activities of Rossotrudnichestvo, Russkiy Mir and others.

Analysis of the conceptualization of "smart power" in the Russian public political space, as well as the study of the practical application of this foreign policy instrument was carried out on the basis of official statements, speeches and comments of the high-profile incumbents, Russian government, representatives of executive authorities, responsible for the implementation of foreign policy, leaders of NGOs and church officials, and also academic books, published articles of the prominent American and Russian political and historical scientist on the Russian smart power.

Also, as sources, the author used social media (interactive Internet sites of departments and information agencies, global social networks), which have recently been actively used by the Russian authorities to clarify their foreign policy position, influence on foreign public opinion and diplomatic struggle.

## CHAPTER 2

### RUSSIAN SMART POWER IN CENTRAL ASIA

#### *2.1. The introduction to Russian Smart power.*

Smart power is a concept that was not developed in the walls of the Kremlin. As a theoretical phenomenon, the term smart power is traced back to the Harvard professor Joseph Nye who coined this term in his book “Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics”. He came up with this idea hypothesizing that states do not solely use soft power strategies when they want to get the wanted outcome from the other states and they in case of need combine hard power with soft power to get what they want and the combination of these two aforementioned power according to him is called smart power.

**Thus, smart power relates to the combination of soft power and hard power strategic actions and it is a way that emphasizes the need for powerful armed forces, however, the big investment is necessary in alliance building, partnerships, and institutions of all levels to broaden a state’s impact and build legitimacy of a state’s actions.**

There is no doubt that power wields the main core of politics. Representatives of different theoretical schools throughout the history of humanity described power according to their visions variously. Machiaveli as the representative of realism thought that as far as a state is necessary in the same degree power is necessary for its conduct and survival, to empower a state’s security it may take the necessary measures to strengthen its military. In a nutshell, realism traditionally supports the hard power approaches of military attacks, threats, alliance building etc. to maintain power for a state. On the other hand the

representatives of schools of constructivism and neoliberalism refer to power more according to soft power approaches and they envision a state's power in size of population, resources, political stability, and the most importantly economic and trade capability. In the contemporary era it is a clear fact that in the implementation of their foreign policies most powerful states endeavor to use the most effective strategies that demand the use of combined soft power and hard power tools.

In order to clearly understand the smart power phenomenon its main components like hard power and soft power must be obviously explained in details with their definitions, differences, spectrum of behaviors, and most likely resources. Joseph Nye Jr. the author of coined terms referred to power as a capability to influence others to get the outcomes which one wants. He explains the elements of *hard power* as a capability to fetch the outcomes for national interests via the application of **coercion** and **command**. It can be the usage of extreme measures like armed forces attacks or threats to attack, alliance building, bribing, or economic and political approaches. From the history and practice of hard power its ingredients are tangible. When the hard power is necessary it is mainly implemented and regulated by states and governments. In comparison with soft power only government conducts hard power and its influence is straightaway and quick. As Joseph Nye thinks hard power includes the ability to use the carrots and sticks of economic and army effects to make other states follow your will.

When it comes about soft power as this term was coined by Joseph Nye in the book "Bound to Lead" a state can achieve what it wants for its national interests via using co-option and persuasion by attracting other states to its productive policies, culture, values etc. Strategically one of the main differences of soft power from hard power

is its implementation by individuals and companies which are not related to the state and mostly it is run by the institutions other than states. Making business, conducting trade deals, organizing cultural events, cooperating with educational programs, giving funds for the purpose of relieving the economic hardships, providing various aids in case of need, organizing training programs for intelligence services, police forces, armed forces, carrying out dialogues for building the vital industrial infrastructures, conveying effective public diplomacy are the brilliant examples of implementing soft power. According to the practice of soft power realization of its tools can be both intangible and tangible. In brief, soft power sometimes takes many years to achieve some results as people feel the importance of cooperating with the nation that is implementing soft power once its educational support and positive cultural influence are welcomed by the targeted nation.

To clarify the differences between the main tools of smart power namely soft power and hard power, scientists divided the spectrum of their behaviors and their most likely resources, so one could understand their differences clearly. Hence, the spectrum of behaviors for the hard power are in the following way:

- Command
- Coercion
- Inducement

Command and coercion are mainly implemented by using the most likely resources of using military force, economic sanctions, while inducement is implemented by the ways of payment and bribing.

Meanwhile, the spectrum of behaviors for soft power consist of:

- Co-option
- Agenda setting

- Attraction

The most likely resources of co-option, agenda setting, and attraction are building attracting social institutions, values, culture, and policies.

As Joseph Nye explains, smart power is developed on certain extra main considerations such as:

- Target
- Self-knowledge
- Regional and global context
- Tools

In conclusion, power is ability and capability to influence others to get the outcomes which one wants and there are three main approaches to get it done:

1. Coercion
2. Payment
3. Attraction

Conclusively hard power is the combination of payment and coercion and soft power is implemented via attraction. **On the other hand, smart power is the combination of soft power and hard power which basically means the usage of all tools of power according to the need in certain situations or in other words using of all available tools in the toolkit of a state.**

In the official documents or speeches of the leaders of the Russian Federation the term smart power has never been openly used in comparison with the American high profile politicians like Hillary Clinton who used the smart power term in her speech and that speech was welcomed by Joseph Nye and other supporters of smart power implementation in the US foreign policy.

However, in action the Russian smart power can be observed in Caucasus region, in Latin America, Africa, Arctic Islands, and most effectively its smart power tools are realized in Central Asia. Depending on the area of its implementation the Russian smart power has its own strategic goals and approaches. For instance, RF's main interests in Latin America are building the strong:

- Trade bonds,
- Alliance building,
- Security cooperation.

Via the arms sales and commercial treaties Russia is hyperactive in Latin America and its foreign policy can be characterized by having a good level of political outreach. It is expected that Venezuela will become the second biggest client for RF's weapons after India by 2025.

In Africa, the Russian smart power is active because the Kremlin has military interests in reaching the Red Sea, lowering the effect of the US and other western states in African countries, trade goals, getting access to profitable natural resources.

The implementation of Russian smart power in Central Asia is one of the priorities of the Kremlin as Central Asian states are considered as the closest allies and economic partners of Russia. In its foreign affairs conception, Russia mentions Central Asia as the near abroad and the periphery of its national interests. The states of the region are considered vital because they wield a huge amount of natural resources, human resources, and big economic markets for export of Russian products.

## **2.2. The historical roots of Russian Smart Power in Central Asia**

The historical roots of the political and economic interests of Russia in Central Asia are not novel and they are traced back to the

middle of the 1840<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of 1850<sup>th</sup> when the Russian Empire realized the economic importance of the Central Asian Emirates and Khanates for their progress, especially the exploitation of raw materials and natural resources of this region had key importance for the growing of industrial factories and companies of Russia. The usage of soft and hard power approaches by Russians in the invasion and control of Central Asia was observed firstly in 1846-1847.<sup>1</sup> Russia initially attempted to strengthen its positions economically and diplomatically in the region and make its trade influence considerable in the Emirates of Bukhara, Khiva, and Khuqand Khanates. After a long period of effort Russian soft power approach of winning hearts and minds through the fair trade and attraction brought the good results. However, Russia was challenged by the Great Britain's attempt of gaining political and economic influence in region and it endangered its economic interests in the markets of the region where Russian goods had a good demand. Moreover, if Britain could have succeeded the big influence in the region it had organized a big threat in the southern borders of Russia.

On the one hand, Russia tried its best to use the soft power way of gaining influence in Central Asia by sending several envoys to Emirs and Khans in power, on the other hand as they understood that the diplomacy and trade are not capable of giving them the influence that they wanted to achieve in the region they planned a hard power approach of using their military in conquering the land of those economically and militarily weaker states of Central Asian regions in order to precede the Great Britain in so called the "Great Game" competition in the region. Thus, the Russian army in 1847 from the two directions, one from the

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<sup>1</sup> Ghafurov B. "Tojikon- The ancient, old, Middle Ages, and the modern time history" Dushanbe: Donish 2008. P.620.

side of Orenburg and the second from the side of Omsk started the invasion of Kazakh and Kyrgyz lands<sup>2</sup>.

The gradual invasion of Central Asian states continued for many years both by using soft and hard power by Russian Empire, as in 1853 their army reached the territory of current Tajikistan, Khujand city after invading the Oqmachit fortress. The general governor of Orenburg Perovski V.A. was in charge of this conquering army which did not solely consist of military personnel but there were also many scientists who drew the map of natural resources of Central Asia, built and organized the first water roads for Russian ships to the region in order to be able to transport more products from Russia to Central Asia and obviously, their aim was the transportation of Central Asian natural resources and raw materials to the Russian Empire.

The noticeable proof of Russian soft power realization and its results can be seen in the case of Karakalpak and Kazakh people who helped the Russian troops to build the protection spots in various strategic points of the Russian ship roads from the Aral Sea through Sir Darya and Amu Darya. As Kazakhs and Karakalpak had seen lots of oppression from Khuqand Khanates and lost some of their lands to them, they saw Russians as the liberators and were ready to cooperate with them<sup>3</sup>.

The incredible part of the Russian invasion was both the usage of soft power alongside hard power in Central Asia as they used diplomatic ways of negotiations with Emirs and Khans and by attracting people, they achieved the opening of the trade roads to Khiva and Bukhara for

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<sup>2</sup> Ghafurov B. "Tojikon- The ancient, old, Middle Ages, and the modern time history" Dushanbe: Donish 2008. P.627.

<sup>3</sup> Ghafurov B. "Tojikon- The ancient, old, Middle Ages, and the modern time history" Dushanbe: Donish 2008. P.630.

the Russian goods and businesses. In 1858 the diplomatic mission of the Russian Empire was sent to Khiva and Bukhara under the chairmanship of colonel Ignatev N.P. But their envoy Mr. Ignatev could not achieve any remarkable success in Khiva Khanate. However, he could achieve some success in Bukhara Emirate because the rivalry between the Emir of Bukhara Nasrullah and the Khan of Khiva became the main reason that Bukhara's authority agreed to give some privileges to the Russian merchants in conducting of their business in their territory. Regardless of all the privileges given by Emir Nasrullah as he wished to be supported by Russia in their wars against Khiva Khanates, the Russians did not suffice due to the several reasons:

1. As the Russians lost in the Crimean War earlier, they wanted to resist to the Great Britain in Central Asia and politically challenge Britishers in the region;
2. Central Asia had a great potential of raw materials and natural resources which attracted the Russian Empire and they needed to fully control the Central Asian states in order to exploit all of this natural wealth;
3. The Central Asian region was the big market for selling the Russian goods;
4. The menace of invasion of Central Asia by the Great Britain and the big risk of economic and image whammies for the Russian Empire in the world again. Russia absolutely did not want to lose to the Great Britain in competition for Central Asia;

That is why the Russians decided to use the smart power approach and they started using all the instruments of power, be it soft or hard in order to achieve their geostrategic goals.

Step by step, in several decades from 1847 until 1880 they

conquered the territories of several Khanates and Emirates by engaging in dozens of military conflicts and setting the emirs and khans who were dependent on the Russian Empire. Namely they created the Turkistan Okrug which consisted of the entire territory of current five Central Asian states.

Although at the beginning of invasion of Central Asia, Russians used both soft and hard power tools actively, after their full conquest and gaining control over the entire territory of this region, Russians used more hard power tools to control these economically and militarily weaker Emirates and Khanates. Throughout many decades of the Russian control, the people of Central Asian countries were under the severe exploitation by the Emirates' and Russian office holders and in 1917 when the Proletarians Revolution led by Vladimir Illich Lenin broke out, after a period of time it found millions of supporters in Central Asia. This revolution brought a wholesale change to Russia in general and its Central Asian colonies in particular. Poor and underprivileged people reached an authority and the first bricks of the USSR Empire have been laid. The epoch of Soviet Union statehood was the peak of soft power usage in Central Asia as the ideology of communism focused on empowering poor people. However, it also had its dark side of the hard power tools usage of forcefully sending the intelligent people of Central Asia to the Siberian prisons, human rights violations, including the ban on religion, freedom of movement etc.

The dominant influence of Russia in Central Asia has the history of almost two centuries and in order to have a control over the states of region Russia has used all of the instruments of power. However, in the modern time the Russian approaches of influence in Central Asia have changed to the big extent.

### **2.3. The contemporary implementation of Russian Smart Power in Central Asia and its narratives**

Thereafter fall of USSR even though, during the time of Yeltsin's presidency as it is mentioned before, the presidents of Central Asian states were highly motivated to continue their cooperation calloused hands by calloused hands with Russia. However, the western oriented approaches of President Yeltsin and his Foreign Minister Kozyrev were focused on getting closer to the economically developed countries of the Northern America and the Western Europe and they saw the Central Asian states as developing or underdeveloped burdens on the shoulders of Russia. To some extent Russians had all types of cooperation with the states of Central Asia, however the amount of annual business turnover between Russia and Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan rapidly went down from 1990 until 1996.

The considerable achievements in reconnecting Central Asia with Russia happened after Vladimir Putin came to Power as he personally visited the Central Asian countries and was dedicated to build the international status of Russia back up around the globe. The realities on the ground changed and the Russian high echelon of power understood that in the twenty first century the combination of both soft and hard power jointly named by Joseph Nye as the smart power is a reasonable approach of building a positive image for Russia and gaining a power of influence in the international arena.

However, there is another component that is often overlooked from the gaze of researchers and ignored by politicians in general. Speaking of "soft power", J. Nye often mentions an element that seems to be fundamentally important for an effective "soft power" strategy. This element can be called the "fifth element", thanks to which all the

components of the strategy begin to "work at a full capacity." This element is the narrative, which should run like a red thread through the foreign policy of an international actor.

Meanwhile, the Russian foreign policy discourse begins to show the outlines of some narrative, which manifests itself in two concepts that come to the fore in the work of Russian Foreign Ministry: this is the concept of Russian world and the concept of Eurasia. It seems interesting to study the content of these concepts and find out what narratives form their basis? What are their prospects in the emerging international situation? Are they complementary to each other? Or are they mutually contradictory and antagonistic?

The year 2015 was a landmark year for the processes of economic integration in the ex-Soviet states: since January, the Eurasian Economic Union's (EAEU) launch gave experts a reason to say about the "Eurasian turn" in Russia's foreign policy, and about the successes of common hard work of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan to create a competitive economic program. Creation of the EAEU was preceded by a work in the formats of the CIS, EurAsEC, the Common Economic space, the Customs Union. However, these formats, according to the expression E.U. Vinokurov, Director of the Center for Integration Processes Eurasian Development Bank, became integration's false start in 1990 until 2000s. The new integration association could, on the one hand, gather around you those interested in a closer economic cooperation of the CIS countries, on the other hand, to clearly define the areas of interactions and the most effective format. Members of the EAEU Customs Union were - Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan. A little later Armenia and Kyrgyzstan joined to them. The Union involves the creation of a single market for goods, services, capital and labor, as well

as the implementation of an agreed macroeconomic, trade and migration policies. In 2016 within the framework of the Union, it is planned to unite the regulation of pharmaceuticals, in 2019 - to create a common electricity market, in 2022 - common financial mega-regulators, and in 2024-2025 - a common market of oil and gas products. For more than 13 years, a military alliance has been operating in the CIS space – Collective Security Treaty Organization. It includes 5 member countries of the EAEU, as well as Tajikistan. Security cooperation is equally important for all countries participating in the treaty: the tension around Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, neighborhood with unstable Afghanistan, the statehood of Taliban remain challenges for the stability in the Eurasian space.

Thus, there is assertive dynamics in the enhancement of integration proceedings in the ex-Soviet states, both in the economy and military spheres. The backbone of integration are five post-Soviet countries - Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, and Belarus,. The participation of some of them is socially, economically and geopolitically determined, the participation of others due to the effectiveness of Russia's diplomatic efforts.

Belarus consistently took part in all integration initiatives of the Russian Federation. It is associated with Russia, both military cooperation and strong trade ties: Russia is the main trading partner of Belarus, 48% of whose exports oriented towards the eastern neighbor. Kazakhstan also from the moment of declaration of independence was enthusiastic about the ideas of institutionalization of the closer cooperation between the post-Soviet states. It is Nursultan Nazarbayev who owns the authorship of the Eurasian concept, which he proposed in a general form back in 1994 in his presentation at Moscow State

University. There are programs between Russia and Kazakhstan economic cooperation for 2012-2020. Twenty large Russian companies work in Kazakhstan and in total there are 5600 companies with Russian participation, mainly in the field of oil and gas production, manufacturing industry, transport, communications, engineering, collaboration in the space field and the peaceful use of nuclear energy<sup>4</sup>. The participation of Kyrgyzstan in the Eurasian integration processes is in largely due to the socio-economic enhancement of this state. Its economy has low competitiveness, based on the re-exports of Chinese products, and high dependence on remittances from the labor migrants working in Russia. According to the special report of the Eurasian Development Bank and the United Nations Development Program, cash receipts from the latter are about 30% of GDP of Kyrgyzstan<sup>5</sup>. With the entry into the EAEU, Kyrgyz analysts associate development of the mining industry and large-scale agriculture farms in the country, as well as additional dividends from access to cheaper energy carriers from Kazakhstan and Russia. Joining the EAEU for Armenia meant to make a choice between taking part in the European Eastern Partnership and the closer cooperation with a new integration entity led by Russia. Rapprochement with Russia was pushed as economic benefits along with considerations security, as well as the uncertainty of the prospects for institutional rapprochement with European partners.

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<sup>4</sup> Russia - Kazakhstan [Electronic resource]// Website of the Russian Embassy in Kazakhstan. – Access mode:  
[http://www.rfembassy.kz/lm/dvustoronnie\\_otnosheniya/rossiya-kazakhstan/](http://www.rfembassy.kz/lm/dvustoronnie_otnosheniya/rossiya-kazakhstan/)  
(accessed 06/09/2022).

<sup>5</sup> Report of the EDB and UNDP "Labor migration, remittances and human development in the countries of Central Asia" [Electronic resource] // Eurasian Development Bank. Access mode -  
<http://www.eabr.org/general/upload/news/DokladMigraciyaden.perevodyRus.pdf>  
(Accessed 06/08/2022). P.88

Participation of Tajikistan in integration processes is still limited to membership in the CSTO. Undoubtedly, cooperation with Russia in the field of security is critical for Tajikistan. Russia wields the military base with 7,500 personnel throughout the country. Also, within the cooperation framework of the CSTO, the Russian border services are involved in the protection of the Tajik-Afghan border, which has some zones of instability. Tajikistan is one of the most likely candidates for membership in the EAEU. The dependence of the budget on cash transfers of labor migrants (working mainly in Russia) is impressive - 40% gross domestic product. In addition, 70% of the population of Tajikistan advocate joining the Union and deepening the integration processes with partners in the ex-Soviet states.<sup>6</sup>

At the moment, Uzbekistan has the positive trend of interest in the joint integration processes with Russia in Eurasia. In 2012 Uzbekistan finally withdrew from the CSTO, depriving Russia of access to the Karshi-Khanabad airbase. Having behind him the experience of membership in the EurAsEC in 2006-2008, the country's leadership is also not yet considering the possibility of their participation in the new integration project initiated by Russia. At the same time, both countries are connected by mutually important economic and social issues: after all, it is Uzbekistan that sends the largest number of labor migrants to Russia to work. Uzbekistan continues cooperation with Russia in a multilateral format only within the CIS and within the SCO. However, experts prefer to talk about the first "either good or nothing", and the second in the scientific community is called "extremely promising, but

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<sup>6</sup> Kamolov S. "Economic migration from Central Asia to Russia" Dushanbe: Donish 2016. P.129.

still in a half-asleep condition"<sup>7</sup>.

Also from the strategically important post-Soviet partners, located in Eurasia, Russia develops special relations with Turkmenistan. From the very beginning of sovereign existence, the republic distanced itself from alliances and associations with the former Soviet countries. Even Turkmenistan joined the CIS only as an associate member. Russia has no significant political and socio-economic levers of pressure on Turkmenistan: the number of Turkmen labor migrants in Russia is insignificant, monetary remittances received from migrants do not wield a considerable influence on the economy of the state. In recent years, the country has managed to neutralize dependence on Gazprom and reorient gas export flows to China and Iran.

Thus, today in the Eurasian space in integration processes there is a positive trend. Launched a new economic project - the EAEU - which has already begun to influence lives of citizens of the participating countries (due to the introduction of special labor conditions for incoming migrants) and whose agenda includes further deepening of mutual trade and financial obligations. The military bloc, which unites 6 countries, also functions effectively in the ex-Soviet states. Participation in it is a strategic interest in ensuring security at their borders, as well as in zones of unrelenting conflicts. However, in the existing positive trend it is necessary to note two important aspects that may influence the sustainability of the results achieved in the future, and subsequent enhancement of integration proceedings in Eurasia. First, from closer cooperation are distancing a number of countries that have strong economic ties with Russia and cooperation with which in multilateral

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<sup>7</sup>Karaganov S. The Promise of Eurasia [Electronic resource] // Rossiyskaya Gazeta. - Access mode: <http://www.rg.ru/2015/10/26/karaganov.html> (accessed 09/06/2022).

format can be mutually beneficial for Uzbekistan, as well as Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. Secondly, existing integration projects lack a common political agenda and unifying values. And if today the absence of a value dimension in the Eurasian concept seems not a paramount task, then in 10 years, in conditions of continuous “struggle for hearts and minds” it can lead to the collapse of all integration initiatives that suddenly turn out to be ad hoc coalitions.

Competition, both in the sphere of economy and in the sphere of ideas, on Eurasian space continues to be high. The Eurasian region is rich in natural resources (oil, gas, gold, uranium, metals, etc.), and is also located in a strategically important area, in terms of providing international security, a space that is of interest to the parties of major geopolitical players - the US, EU, and China.

The foreign policy of the European Union in this region works in two formats: within the framework of the Eastern Partnership program and within the framework of two side relationships with the Central Asian countries. The Eastern Partnership program, started in 2009, brought together 6 ex-Soviet countries: Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Moldova, and Belarus. From the outset aimed at providing security in the EU border areas, the program will eventually lead to a conflict of integrations, which significantly destabilized political and socio-economic situation in some countries (Ukraine and Moldova), and forced others to refuse to sign the Association Agreement and further deepen partnership with the EU (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus). According to experts, the program of Eastern Partnership did not lead to positive results due to the fact that initially it did not clearly articulate the goals and objectives of rapprochement between program participants and the EU, and there was no serious foreign policy analysis of the

consequences of developing partnerships of the EU with its neighbors in the context of the formation of other integration associations. So, for example, F. Lukyanov claims that in the end “The EU has lost understanding of what is the purpose of its policy in the east direction”<sup>8</sup>. On a bilateral basis, the EU is actively engaged with Kazakhstan: a representative office of the Union operates in the country, agreements in the field of energy, space, and development of transport networks. Until January 2015, negotiations were completed on the treaty on enhanced partnership and cooperation amidst the EU and the Republic of Kazakhstan, and Brussels hosted the initialing ceremony of the agreement. With Kyrgyzstan the EU interacts within the framework of a special Committee for Cooperation. Every year, the European budget funds are sent to Kyrgyzstan within the framework of the grant supports for the development of the legal spheres (rule of law), educational programs and projects in agriculture (comprehensive rural development). Similar indicative programs, providing for the allocation of financial resources, operate with respect in Tajikistan, Belarus, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Interaction of the European Union with the Central Asian countries is built based on the program of “EU and Central Asia: strategy for the new partnership”, accepted in the year 2007. This document covers all areas of cooperation, including political dialogue between the EU and Central Asia, and provides for assistance from the European Union reforms in education, the rule of law, energy, transport, environmental protection and water resources (including borders, the fight against drug trafficking), and the development on trade and economic relations. Also, in the European Union since 2005 the post of

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<sup>8</sup>Lukyanov F. Absolutely "Eastern Partnership" [Electronic resource] // Russia in Global Affairs. - Access mode: <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/redcol/Sovsem-Vostochnoe-partnerstvo-17472> (accessed 06/07/2022)..

Special Representative for Central Asia was established.

The United States of America is also active in Eurasian direction. Since the 1990s they have been very active in Central Asia, allocating large grants for the development of democracy, technical support, modernization of the healthcare sector. USAID helped in organizing vaccinations and special training, thanks to which the states of region were not affected by the outbreak of polio and Covid-19. Also, because of the American projects, a significant reduction of child and maternal mortality - by 2/3 was achieved. In addition, on territory of Kyrgyzstan for a long time the American Peace Corps, functions which also has the close cooperation links between the United States and Kazakhstan. So, in Alma-Ata for many years there has been a Kazakh-American University (KAU), which synthesized the American and Kazakh systems of higher education and became a member Association of American Colleges and Universities. Besides, American companies are leaders in terms of investment in energy complex of Kazakhstan. The development vector in this area determines the Joint Kazakh-American Commission on energy partnership. The Americans are also actively investing in the economy of Kazakhstan: in the mining sector (18% of all investments), in real estate, rent and services to businesses (16%), in financial activities (5%), in the activities of professional organizations, associations and unions (3%). Between Kazakhstan and the USA the military cooperation has been established, according to which, in 2012, a separate action plan for 2013-2017 was achieved. In connection with the former American military presence in Afghanistan, cooperation with Uzbekistan was of a strategic nature and developed mainly in the military technical direction.

However, despite the obvious successes of the American policy in these countries, there has recently been a tendency to limit the

influence of overseas partners on the domestic policy of states. In autumn 2015, the Kyrgyz authorities denounced the cooperation agreement with USA from 1993 due to the decision of the leadership of the States to award Kyrgyz Human Rights Activist Award from the US State Department. According to experts, such a sharp step by the Kyrgyz government to a greater extent is a political action, which in reality will not affect the volume of American participation in the life of the country. Kazakh-American relations are also not as unambiguous as it might seem on the surface at first glance. Their main intrigue will be the presidential elections in Kazakhstan, which are scheduled for April 2020, but preparation for which is going on now. S. Karaganov believes that the United States is betting on “to ride the inevitable generational change of leaders in Kazakhstan”<sup>9</sup> and lead political circles loyal to the States to power.

The activity of Chinese diplomacy and business is also very high on Eurasian space, especially in the countries of Central Asia. Recently, the PRC even established the post of Minister for Eurasian integration. China's regional expansion aims to formation of a buffer zone around itself from friendly states in which it will assume the role of hegemon. Regional China's leadership is not painted in any political tone: it is first the queue is built on mutually beneficial economic projects. Celestial declares a policy of economic openness and free trade. The most ambitious Chinese project in Eurasia so far is the Silk Road Economic Belt project, representing an extensive transport and infrastructure network, which will ensure the delivery of Chinese products to the markets of Europe and the Middle East. Meanwhile, China is actively

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<sup>9</sup> Karaganov S. The Promise of Eurasia [Electronic resource]// Rossiyskaya Gazeta. - Access mode: <http://www.rg.ru/2015/10/26/karaganov.html> (accessed 06/07/2022).

working with the Eurasian states and on a bilateral basis as well. Thus, in 2005, China created the Chinese-Kazakhstani subcommittee on cultural and humanitarian cooperation, which holds annual regular meetings. Closer China maintains trade contacts, as previously mentioned with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, which receive their main budget income from re-exports. However, the cooperation of the Central Asian countries with China is subject to fears of the “Chinese threat”. As indicated Zeleneva I.V., the leadership of these countries expresses a dissatisfaction with the current relations with China that can hardly be called equal -regional economies are “adjusting” to the needs of China<sup>10</sup>.

At the same time, the countries participating in the Eurasian integration processes tend not to be limited to the formats of the EAEU, SCO and CSTO. And in some of these countries, participation in these associations causes conflict interests.

At the same time, Kazakhstan is generally working on creating its own foreign policy project, the center of which will be himself. Since the 1990s, the country has been conducting an open foreign economic politics, positioning itself as a geopolitical crossroads multiple identities and influences, and the Eurasian bridge between East and West. Today Kazakhstan bears truly ambitious plans: to create an International Financial Center and be in 10 years in the top ten Asian financial centers. According to experts, the country has a huge potential in this area. So, V. Inozemtsev believes that Kazakhstan may soon become the new Singapore, located in the neighborhood with Russia<sup>11</sup>. On the other hand, participation in the EAEU is not economically beneficial for Kazakhstan

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<sup>10</sup>Zeleneva I.V. Prospects for the economic and political presence of Russia and China in Central Asia // Administrative Consulting No. 9(69), 2014. P.37..

in terms of its foreign trade, which is more than half oriented outside the Union. In addition, experts predict an increase in prices for household goods in the country, in connection with participation in the new integration association. It is obvious that the membership of Kazakhstan in the EAEU is characterized by contradictions: the economic benefits of cooperation in multilateral format is still unclear, while Kazakhstan is nurturing its foreign policy project, in which it is assigned the leading role.

In recent years, Russian diplomacy has stepped up its duties in the sphere of culture, language, science, education, in the space of Eurasia. Soft power tools are purposefully used in cooperation with Eurasian countries. Stress on the ex-Soviet states is clearly seen in the work of Rossotrudnichestvo and the Foundation support for the development of public diplomacy named after Gorchakov.

In the work of Rossotrudnichestvo, a special place is occupied by the Eurasian direction. Popularization of ideas among the foreign public Eurasian integration is one of the tasks of the agency. For this, the department holds discussion meetings, festivals and sports competition. So, in 2014 the Conferences were held on: "Public Diplomacy for Eurasian Integration" (Moscow); Festival of school sports among the CIS member states (Kazan); Festival of Youth and Students of the Countries of the Neighborhood Belt (Eurasian youth) "Eurasia is us!" (Ryazan); Second Kazan Forum "Eurasian integration: achievements and problems" (Kazan).

In scientific and educational projects implemented by the Gorchakov Foundation the great focus is given to the space of Eurasia: in regular mode, Caucasian Dialogue is held (Abkhazia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Iran, Slovenia, Türkiye and South Ossetia), CSTO

Academy, School of young experts on Central Asia, (Iran, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan), Russian-Georgian dialogue.

In the Eurasian space, the Russian language occupies privileged position: it is a regional lingua franca, so it acts as the language of education, trade, and the labor market. At strength of common historical roots, Russian customs and culture seem close and understandable to most peoples of the ex-Soviet countries. Even though the presence of this kind of “abundant soil” is not a guarantee of success in projects and activities implemented by Russian institutions in this region. Despite the number of events and volumes of allocated funding, in the Eurasian space are planned negative trends in relation to the Russian language and culture. In Kazakhstan English and Chinese are actively spreading as foreign languages in educational institutions. The President of the country, Nursultan Nazarbayev, is proud that the country is celebrating the growth of the Kazakh language’s usage both in the business environment and in the field of science and culture. In Uzbekistan in 2013 at the direction of Islam Karimov English is taught from Grade 1, while Russian is taught from Grade 2. Tajikistan has recently adopted a number of laws, completely removing the Russian language from official use. Experts say about the widespread decline in desire of learning the Russian language in Central Asia.

Between Russia and the Eurasian space there is a great likelihood of a gap in the educational space, since the Russian education system is focused on integration into Europe, and the countries of Central Asia are looking more towards the Asia-Pacific region. In addition, RF, regardless of the present historical customs in providing educational opportunities in region, nowadays the Russian schools, colleges, and

universities are still demanded in region<sup>12</sup>. According to Alexey Fominykh, Russian cultural and educational presence in the countries of the Eurasian space as a whole is inferior to the American one. The number of American resource centers (under resource centers refers to the relevant departments of embassies and consulates, representative offices of educational exchange programs, non-governmental organizations) surpasses Russian ones in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. According to this indicator, Russia is the leader only in Kazakhstan, mainly at the expense of 26 organizations of compatriots. In Uzbekistan, one can speak of parity between the Russian and American centers<sup>13</sup>.

Is it possible today to talk about the existence of an ideological project of "Eurasia" as a group of approaches and ideas on the globe, which are shared by the participants of the Eurasian integration processes? Initially, integration associations in the Eurasian space were exclusively economic in nature: since 2001, the Eurasian Economic Community began its work, since 2006 - Eurasian development Bank, and since 2011 - the Eurasian Economic Commission embarked on.

A new page in the history of Eurasian integration, according to researchers, opened an article by V. Putin, published in October 2011 in the "Izvestia" newspaper, under the title of "New integration project for Eurasia". In the article, the Russian leader wrote that a reintegration of the post-Soviet space around Russia is a natural geopolitical fate of the Eurasian countries, as well as the fact that "only together, our countries

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<sup>12</sup>Lebedeva M.M. "Soft power in relation to Central Asia: participants and their actions [Electronic resource] // Bulletin of MGIMO-University. - Access mode: <http://www.vestnik.mgimo.ru/sites/default/files/pdf/lebedeva.pdf> (accessed 06/08/2022). P.52..

<sup>13</sup> Fominykh A. Projection of "soft power": US and Russian public diplomacy in post-Soviet Central Asia // Central Asia and the Caucasus, 2010, no. 3. pp. 78-79.

can become leaders in global growth and civilizational progress"<sup>14</sup>. In the article, the politician, first of all, emphasized the economic prospects of the new project; joint work of the Eurasian countries as a bridge between Europe and a dynamically developing Asia-Pacific region. It will be beneficial both for the countries' future union, and for all participants in the world market. It's interesting that this article traces the first indications of the prospects for more deep - ideological and political integration in the space of Eurasia. V. Putin writes that the geopolitical unity of Eurasia will be secured by the common values of freedom, democracy and market laws, as universal integration principles that have proven their efficiency on the example of the European Union.

Two years later, at the opening of the next meeting of the Valdai club in October 2013, V. Putin again spoke about the values that unite the Eurasian states. However, this time the accents were arranged somewhat differently. Speaking of the Eurasian Union, President of the Russian Federation pointed out that taking part in the Eurasia program is an opportunity to keep their historical roots, and political unbiasedness. As Putin thinks, Europe has left its Christian foundations, religion began to be forced out of a society. This led to the fact that family values began to be distorted and receive excuses for non-traditional relationships. Eurasian states are united in belief that this is the wrong way of development: in Russian society, as well as in the societies of other Eurasian countries, there is strong support for traditional family values, as well as trust in state and religious leaders. Putin's speech emphasizes that only by maintaining its cultural identity, the Eurasian countries can claim to become "an independent center of development, and not a

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<sup>14</sup> Fominykh A. Projection of "soft power": US and Russian public diplomacy in post-Soviet Central Asia // *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, 2010, no. 3. pp. 78-79.

periphery of Europe and Asia»<sup>15</sup>. The need to create an ideological concept of unity of the Eurasian region is so widely discussed in the scientific research community. So, S. Karaganov writes that the promise of Eurasia, as promising foreign policy project of Russia, may not receive only economic, but also technological and cultural dimensions<sup>16</sup>. S. Ivanov, President of the Russian International Affairs Council and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation in 1998-2004, based on the extremely pessimistic forecasts regarding overcoming the value gap between Europe and Russia, prefers to talk about the "Great Eurasia" as a project in which Russia can take its rightful place both as economic and political leader. T. Bordachev believes correct Eurasian turn in Russian foreign policy and notes that "Eurasia of a common destiny" will be a multidimensional project<sup>17</sup>. N. Mezhevich notes that Eurasia is changing, and integration processes in this region are gaining more and more depth and dynamics<sup>18</sup>. V. Kutenev, in turn, considers it important to focus on the value of dimension cooperation between Russia and the Eurasian countries: it points to the importance of J. Nye's thesis on the need to develop the common long-term goals for all partners<sup>19</sup>. About working on Eurasian values, as follows step towards deepening Eurasian integration, P. Salin also wrote in article "Spiritual

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<sup>15</sup>Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club 09/19/2013 [Electronic resource]// Official network resources of the President of Russia. – Access mode: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19243> (accessed 08/07/2022)..

<sup>16</sup>Karaganov S. The Promise of Eurasia [Electronic resource] // Rossiyskaya Gazeta. - Access mode: <http://www.rg.ru/2015/10/26/karaganov.html> (accessed 08/07/2022)..

<sup>17</sup> Bordachev T. New Eurasianism. How to make pairing work [Electronic resource] // Russia in Global Affairs. - Access mode: <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/Novoe-evraziistvo-17754> (accessed 06/07/2022).

<sup>18</sup>Mezhevich N. "Integration of integrations": is it worth looking for a black cat in a dark room? [Electronic resource] // RIAC. - Access mode: [http://russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id\\_4=6590#top-content](http://russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id_4=6590#top-content) (accessed 05/07/2022)..

<sup>19</sup>Kutenev V.V. Eurasian integration and "soft power" of Russia // Vestnik KRSU. 2013. Volume 13. No. 4..

bonds" for the Eurasian Union", and V. Gulevich in the article "Eurasian values". Abroad integration processes in the Eurasian space have not been considered purely economic for a long time. The researcher Marlene Laruelle argues that "scientists and the media tend to consider the launch of the Eurasian Union project by Vladimir Putin in 2011 as a victory for the ideology of "Eurasianism". Laruelle herself is sure that the project "Eurasia" is not just a regional partnership, but an "ideological concept of the region.

However, if some experts see the prospect of political unification of Eurasian countries the possibility of socio-economic development of the region (for example, Marine Voskanyan writes about this in the article "Eurasian Union has its own "ideology"<sup>20</sup>), others point out to the fact that the ideological union of the Eurasian states can become a "new totalitarian challenge to Europe"<sup>21</sup>.

Before starting to analyze the ideological content of the project of "Eurasia", it is necessary to decide which countries this project covers? As P.Salin rightly notes, "far from everyone who operates with the concept of "Eurasian Union", they fully understand what it is from a geographical point of view. It is these three countries Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan which most actively participated in all integration initiatives beginning of the XXI century. Traditionally, Ukraine was also referred to this space. However, after the revolutionary events of autumn 2013 and the final turn of Ukraine to the West, Ukraine fell out of Eurasia. Often, the space of Eurasia is determined by the borders of the

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<sup>20</sup> Voskanyan M. The Eurasian Union has its own "ideology" [Electronic resource] // Newscom. – Access mode: <http://www.newscom.md/rus/u-evrazijskogo-soyuza-poyavlyaetsya-svoya-ideologiya.html> (accessed 06/06/2022).

<sup>21</sup>Mannteuffel I. Putin's Dangerous Eurasian Idea [Electronic resource] // InoSMI. – Access mode: <http://inosmi.ru/russia/20140530/220679465.html> (accessed 03/07/2022)..

USSR, including the maximum possible number of countries: Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and others.

M. Laruelle successfully presented the perception of the space of Eurasia in the form of several concentric circles that form around the core of Eurasia, which is represented by Russia, Kazakhstan and part of Ukraine, as well as Belarus (which has fallen out of the geographical picture). These countries symbolize historical interaction between the Slavic world and the world of the steppes. Near concentric circle, which is added to the core are sedentary and predominantly Islamic states of Central Asia, as well as Christian Armenia and Georgia. To the second distant concentric circle of countries, located outside a well-defined Eurasia, but which are potential partners in the Eurasian project, Laruelle considers Iran and Japan. The researcher points out that the living practice of the EAEU indicates that the second circle includes Vietnam, Syria and Egypt.

This geographic uncertainty of the Eurasia project, on the one hand, presents a difficulty for theoretical analysis of integration processes in the region.

Turning to the analysis of the ideological content of the Eurasia project, which is emerging before our eyes, it is necessary to trace its relationship with ideological principles of the philosophy of Eurasianism. Eurasianism as philosophy has gone through several stages of development. It is customary for the research community to single out: 1) the classical version of Eurasianism, presented by N.S. Trubetskoy, P. Savitsky 2) later Eurasianism in the version of Lev Gumilyov 3) neo-Eurasian ideologies, most the famous of which is the doctrine of Alexander Dugin. M. Laruelle also points to original versions of Eurasianism, which developed in the autonomous republics of Russia,

such as: Tatarstan, Yakutia, Bashkortostan, Buryatia, Tuva, Kalmykia. Besides, Eurasianism was perceived in its own way in the post-Soviet states: for example, official Astana made Eurasianism its official ideology, according to which Kazakhstan is a crossroad identity between East and West.

The most studied versions of Eurasianism at the moment are - the classical Eurasianism of N. Trubetskoy and P. Savitsky and later Eurasianism of L. Gumilyov. Can we say that the philosophy of the classical Eurasianism was reflected in the foreign policy project of "Eurasia" of the 21st century?

Professor of Moscow State University I.A. Vasilenko believes that the revival of the Eurasian idea is an important part of the Russian turn towards East. She is sure that it is the Eurasian ideology that is capable to enrich Russian foreign policy with many bright and profound humanitarian symbols that express a special synthetic Eurasian political vision of the world. According to I. Vasilenko, there is a special type of Eurasian culture, Eurasian identity, Eurasian politics and geopolitics. The historical purpose of Eurasia is unification and reconciliation of East and West, unity of cultures of all surrounding peoples, eastern and western. Leading role in this belongs to Russia which is called upon to play the process: as a result of the stratification of various cultural strata that took place during its history, organically combines European and Asian elements. That's why Russian foreign policy must invariably act on two directions - east and west. Symbolically, in this thesis Eurasianism was clearly expressed by Pyotr Stolypin, who argued that it is no coincidence that the Russian emblem depicts a double-headed eagle: after all, cutting off this eagle with one head turned to the East, it is impossible to make it powerful eagle.

I. Vasilenko believes that the Eurasian image has a bright and deep socio-cultural symbolism and is able to adequately represent humanitarian mission of the Russian culture, and the Eurasian project itself can become the most powerful pole of the modern world, which will play a role of an "effective link" between Europe and the dynamic Asia-Pacific region.

However, it would be fair to point out that in addition to the synthesis of the European and Asian cultures, the Eurasians expressed other thoughts. In particular, one of the fundamental ideas of classical Eurasianism was conviction in the importance of the Mongolian heritage in Russian culture. N. Trubetskoy preferred to talk about the Mongolian monarchy, and not about Kievan Rus as the forerunner of the Russian state. P. Savitsky, in his turn, argued that "without the "Tatars" there would be no Russia"<sup>22</sup>.

According to Eurasian doctrine, the culture of the Turanian, nomadic, peoples is much closer to the Russian culture than the West Slavic culture. Eurasians generally denied Slavic cultural and historical type of civilization and, accordingly, the prospects of the pan-Slavic political project. They called for a total ideological "exodus to the East", which search for their cultural roots and their future in the Asian steppes.

These ideological attitudes are not reflected in the political project of "Eurasia" in the XXI century. Eurasian leitmotif in foreign policy of the countries participating in the integration processes is based on classical Eurasianism as a philosophical and political direction. As M. Laruelle rightly writes, modern Russian Eurasianism belongs mainly to the sphere of meta politics and functions independently of the political

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<sup>22</sup>Savitsky P.N. Geographical overview of Russia-Eurasia. – Continent of Eurasia. M.: Agraf. S. 332..

projects of the leadership of the Russian Federation. She notes an interesting paradox of the fate of Eurasianism in Russia: its significant contribution to Russian intellectual life in the twentieth century, but at the present time, it is both relevant and forgotten, since it is the ideology of Eurasianism in its entirety did not form the basis of the political and economic project of Eurasia. Laruelle argues, not in vain, that instead of the Eurasian ideologists, “in Kremlin circles they prefer quote conservative thinkers with clear political messages”<sup>23</sup>. From the philosophy of Eurasianism and its predecessor Slavophilism mainly takes individual attitudes and vivid images: as, for example, the concept of “blooming complexity” by K. Leontiev, which mentions V. Putin, speaking about the Eurasian space at the opening of Valdai Club in 2013.

At the same time, the modern Eurasian project, form its own ideological content, which finds support both among the regional elite and in the society of the majority Eurasian countries.

Eurasian political attitudes and values were born and developed as an alternative to the world's dominant Western ideas. The liberal principles upon which the Western civilization, led Europe to a dead end - say the ideologists of modern Eurasian project. This is evidenced by the financial instability, migration crises, rise of nationalism, destruction of family institution. Eurasian countries have never abandoned traditional values, so right now its historical mission will be the return of Europe and the whole world to the conservative roots. Modern researchers of Eurasian values say that the dichotomy of "liberalism -

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<sup>23</sup> Laruelle M. Eurasia, Eurasianism, the Eurasian Union: Terminological Gaps and Coincidences [Electronic resource] // Russia in Global Politics. – Access mode: <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/PONARS-Eurasia/Evraziya-evraziistvo-Evraziiskii-Soyuz-Terminologicheskie-probelyi-sovpadeniya-17795>.

conservatism" has always been a cornerstone of relations between Europe and Eurasia, West and East. For example, Gulevich writes that Europe and Eurasia have always acted as a binary composition with opposite settings. According to him, unlike the Western countries, the Eurasian states have always firmly stood on the platform of political and cultural conservatism. More broadly, Eastern countries have always adhered to the philosophical and strategic approach to public administration and international order, while the Western ones are political and tactical, which led them to a civilizational dead end. Therefore, the Eurasian project provides an alternative to the Western model of the world order. Idea alternatives have in common the modern Eurasian project with the classical Eurasianism, which, calling for an ideological exodus to the East, positioned itself as the antithesis of Westernism.

What is the positive ideological content of the project "Eurasia"? After all, there is a little opposition to the Western system of values - it needs its own agenda and ethical and civilizational guidelines. At the moment, it is obvious that the ideology of conservatism is the unifying for all Eurasian countries. Commitment to the conservative ideals is manifested both in the official statements of the Eurasian political leaders, as well as in the domestic policy pursued in their states. The conservative ideology of Eurasianism is most clearly illustrates the interpretation of issues that are most of all exciting to the contemporary world community. Attitudes towards the same-sex relationships and legalization of homosexual marriages, the place of the state and religion in modern society. To these questions, the Eurasian ideology gives opposite answers to the Western standards.

The concept of "sovereign democracy", which appeared in the

2000s years within the walls of the Kremlin, found its response in countries that are actively included in the Eurasian integration processes today (we are not talking only about the EAEU, but also about the CSTO and the SCO). So, it cannot be said that the regimes operating today in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, fully meet the Western standards of democracy. Some Eurasian ideologists do not see this as a disadvantage, but rather advantages that guarantee stability to society, arguing that “the countries of the contemplative East think in epochs, the countries of the rational West – from elections to elections”<sup>24</sup>.

The question of the role of religion in the life of the state and society is also cornerstone for the Eurasian ideology. In modern secularized Europe, religion is placed within the boundaries of spiritual life of individual and does not affect the work of the government and the life of the whole society. In the Eurasian space, things are somewhat different. Societies in most Eurasian countries are more religious. In the countries of Central Asia, the vast majority of the population is Muslims. Practice of close interaction between secular and religious authorities in these countries is well-established, and religious leaders have a significant influence on society.

The emerging Eurasian ideology, components of which are listed above, meet the strategic interests of the ruling elites on Eurasian space. It gives legitimacy to the existing ruling class, guarantees its stability and, if necessary, will provide a protection from the Eurasian allies from the interference in internal affairs of a state. On the other hand, the presence of its own ideology, representing an alternative to Western discourse, makes it possible for Eurasian countries, to stay united, break

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<sup>24</sup> Gulevich V. Eurasian values [Electronic resource] // International life. – Access mode: <https://interaffairs.ru/news/show/10292> (accessed 03/07/2022).

out of the international periphery and become an independent center of global development.

The Russian World is another vital narrative for the proper understanding of Russian smart power in Central Asia. In September 2014, after joining of Crimea to Russia Putin made a number of important statements about the Russian World. Addressing viewers, he announced that today it is important to preserve a single spiritual and cultural world of Eastern Slavs- the "Russian World". He introduced the audience to the doctrine substantiating his thesis. According to him, Russia is distinguished from other countries with the presence of many nationalities, different religions; but the most important thing that distinguishes Russia from other countries, is its history, its tradition and system of values. The President is convinced that Russia is part of a community which is the way more expanded than Russia. He calls this civilization as the Russian world. He argues that “the Russian World is not the world of the Russian Federation, this is not the world of the Russian Empire. The Russian World is a special civilization, to which belong people who today call themselves by different names – and Russians, and Ukrainians, and Belarusians. People can belong to this world who are not the part of Slavonic ethnicity at all, however those who perceived faithful and cultural parts of this world as their own”<sup>25</sup>. According to the President, “The Russian World is spirit-oriented, and cultural, and value dimension of the human personality. Russians, even those who call themselves Russians, may not be considered as a part of this world because of speaking Russian or understanding

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<sup>25</sup> His Holiness Patriarch Kirill: The Russian world is a special civilization that needs to be preserved [Electronic resource] // Official website of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church. 09/08/2014. – Access mode: <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/3730705.html> (accessed 05/9/2022).

the Russian language is not the only condition for belonging to the Russian World. So, he emphasized that, in his understanding, the “Russian World” is, first of all, a civilization concept.

It would mean that a country considers itself to be part of the Russian World if there is a Russian language which holds the status of interethnic lingua franca, Russian culture is developing, general historical memory is being preserved. Proposing to put into circulation the concept of the “country of the Russian World” President Putin appeals to examples of British Commonwealth of Nations, Commonwealth of Francophones and Portuguese-speaking countries, arguing that there is nothing in this proposal fundamentally new for international politics. To strengthen the area of Russian world, he proposed to act simultaneously on several levels. First, to strengthen the interaction of civil societies relevant states, and secondly, to establish a “system of strong relations between the elites of the Russian World.

Apparently, the analyses of Russia’s smart power in Central Asia bring to the hypothesis that Russia’s main interests in the region are attributed to political and monetary objectives. Russia’s interests are in keeping the security of its borders by deterring the radical groups in Central Asia which can pose a threat to Russian sovereignty by recruiting the residents of the region and gradually having a big influence in the Caucasus region of Russia. If Russia loses its control over Central Asia its position in the world diminishes and it is also dangerous for its national security as radicalism and extremism through Central Asia can reach Russia and cause many troubles. Furthermore, the alleviated access to Central Asia empowers Russia to reach the rich markets of India, Iran, and China and it enables Russian goods to reach the abundant markets of the biggest populated countries of the world.

Even though the huge amount of Russian products can reach the markets of Central Asia easily it also enables the countries of the region to have access to Russian markets, particularly the large number of migrants from Central Asia go to Russia and influence the grow of Russia's economy.

When Putin became the head of state the importance of getting along with the post-Soviet countries, especially Central Asia, and making the Russian influence and control stronger over their natural resources became his priority in foreign policy. Russians realized that using smart power has more beneficial effects. It started building the means and institutions of smart power. Their efforts paid off and they made a successful comeback to Central Asia.

It is vital to mention that these institutions and phenomena make up the Russian smart power potential and strengths in Central Asia:

- **Eurasian Economic Union;**
- **Customs Union under the EEU;**
- **Central Asian economic migrants in Russia;**
- **Control over the transportation of Central Asian gas and oil resources;**
- **Having a big stake and strong role in the electricity production potential of the Central Asian countries;**
- **Collective Security Treaty Organization;**
- **Russian Military bases; in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan;**
- **Strong Influence of Russian Media in the region;**
- **Russian Diaspora;**
- **Dual Citizenship**
- **Rossotrudnichestvo;**

- **The Russian World institutes;**
- **The influence of Russian higher education's soft power in the region;**
- **The influence of Russian universities and schools in the region;**
- **The influence of the Russian Orthodox Church (only in Kazakhstan);**

## Chapter 3

### THE STRENGTH AND DELIMITATIONS OF RUSSIAN SMART POWER

#### 3.1. The potential, means and instruments of Russian Smart Power

Hoped and expected as an “unbreakable union of freeborn Republics” in the Soviet anthem the Soviet Union to somebody’s sorrow and to somebody’s joy was witnessed to be breakable. “Great Russia has welded forever to stand” was said too strongly in the Soviet anthem as time told never it could be said forever in the political arena. The Russians themselves call those times “*likhiye devynostie*” dashing or the wild and evil 90’s when the Soviets collapsed every country that arose from the debris of USSR conceded at the time to recognize the republics in their existing borders. Many nationalistic Russians felt that the dissolving of that Empire was a horrific thing because it made the Russian people and Russia itself smaller.

The newly elected head of state Boris Yeltsin and Andrey Kozyrev who was appointed as foreign minister were Western-leaning politicians having in mind a Euro-Atlanticism concept of foreign policy, aiming at creating bilateral as well as multilateral relationships with the North American and Western European countries. They saw the Central Asian states as a hinder to their objectives of getting closer to the western world because they seemed an extra burden on the Russian shoulders due to the underdeveloped economic conditions of these countries at that time. The infamous Yeltsin’s speech on August 6, 1990, in Kazan city which was addressed to the entire post-Soviet space “Take sovereignty as much as you can swallow, but you are in the center of Russia- also think about it” had a big detrimental effect to the Russian

statehood. The Russian oligarchs as well as all of the ex-Soviet states followed the saying of the new leader, the first ones ripped off the money of Russian people illegally and the latter gained their independence as much as they could and as fast as they could.

There was another political figure in the Caucasus region, the Chechen Republic's leader Dzhokhar Dudayev who also regarded the statements of Yeltsin and started claiming their independence. Hence, Boris Yeltsin after ensuing the Euro-Atlantic family membership, ignoring the orientation toward Central Asia and setting some unsuccessful internal policies ended up with two internal Russo-Chechen bloody conflicts, oligarchy control over the state institutions, poor economic conditions in the country, the rise of mafia and bandits, de-Russification and the strengthening of nationalism in Central Asia, the economic migrants' influx from Central Asia to Russia, etc.

Regardless of many initiatives offered by the Russian-leaning Central Asian leaders to create strong regional organizations to connect strong ties with each other, Moscow remained unassertive in adopting those ideas. As a result, the trade income of Russia and Central Asia went down considerably from \$60 billion to \$6.7 billion between 1992-95.<sup>26</sup> Other big powers, like the US, the European Union, and People Republic of China took advantage of the vacuum left by Russia and started signing many beneficial agreements with the Central Asian states. Deep ethnical, language, and cultural bonds with Türkiye and Iran made these countries become more active geopolitical players in Central Asia. The Russian approach of ignoring and taking for granted the inherited strong geopolitical impact in Central Asia cost it chaotic consequences in

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<sup>26</sup> A. Zhunisbek. Jul 2019. Russia's Policy in Central Asia during the Putin Era. Eurasian Research Journal vol.1, No.2

the internal affairs of Russia. The illegal proceeds gained from the drug and weapon trafficking in Central Asia were sent to the Chechen separatists armed groups who fought the Russians, creating for the Yeltsin's government a nightmare as well as the rise of extremism, terrorism, de-Russification and increasing of nationalism in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, the outbreak of Civil War in Tajikistan and the rise of Islamic extremism in Tajikistan which forced thousands of ethnic Russians to escape from Dushanbe and other cities of this state.

In 1996 when Yevgeniy Primakov was appointed as Russia's foreign minister the chaotic foreign affairs approach toward the Russians called "near abroad" or the ex-Soviet space became a bit normalized. Several years later after Vladimir Putin came to power the situation cardinally changed not only in the internal affairs of Russia by putting an end to the Russo-Chechen Civil War, weakening oligarchs and substantially eradicating them, eliminating mafia groups, and pulling the almost dead economy of Russia up by making considerable progress. Putin literally brought a breath of fresh air not only in the internal affairs but the foreign affairs of Russia from its chaotic conditions transformed to pragmatic methods and approaches. It was clear from the very get-go that Putin was dedicated to creating and developing Russia with the multipolar world doctrine in mind where he saw Russia as a strong influencing actor in the world arena. As the "New great game" in Central Asia was continuing with the involvement of Iran, US, China, the EU, and Türkiye over gaining influence, the Russian position seemed a bit weaker. Putin started building it back up.

The concept of smart power comparatively appeared later in the official Russian documents and programs of foreign cooperation under the name of "active measures". Although the smart power approaches

were established earlier in the practice of RF's foreign policy implementation, this concept became considerable when it was mentioned in Vladimir Putin's pre-election article "Russia and the Changing World" further it is enshrined in the "Foreign Policy Concept of Russian Federation" in 2013 and 2015 as an important foreign policy instrument.

Meanwhile, in the Russian discursive space, there is tendency of skepticism towards this foreign policy instrument invented in the United States. With distrust of "smart power" included some Russian specialists, pointing out that such a foreign policy approach ultimately leads to soft powerlessness. Amidst the highest government circles, it was considered important to emphasize that "smart power" has a dark side that manifests itself in the political manipulation of other countries.

Despite this, since the mid-2000s in Russia, "smart power" starts to become institutionalized: Russia Today channel starts (2005), an English-language supplement to the Rossiyskaya Gazeta is published "Russia Beyond The Headlines", the The Russian World Foundation and the Institute for Democracy and Cooperation are founded ( 2007 ), after the reform in a new form "Rossotrudnichestvo" (2008) begins to work, one of the tasks of which the formation and realization of the RF's strategy of "soft power" is declared and, finally, a new Russian International Affairs Council (2011) Russian think tank –commences influencing the internal and external audiences.

It is obvious that Russian analysts have learned from the implementation of "smart power" by other countries: primarily the United States, France, Great Britain and Germany, which tirelessly occupy the first lines of international ratings of "smart power". Special media have appeared in the Russian toolkit, which are focused on

foreign audiences and put its task to present to the world an alternative to the dominant point of view; the work of cultural centers included in a single network has been strengthened, operated by a government agency; non-commercial funds that implement projects in the field of education, science, and academic mobility.

The new elected president Putin personally visited Tajikistan in November 2000 after its vicious and destroying Civil War and in the next month of the same year he visited Uzbekistan. The common question which westerners asked a lot “Who is Mr. Putin?” did not let them wait for a long time because of his pragmatic and strategic approaches in the domestic and foreign affairs. They got to know him as a leader who knew how to work the system. In the following year he was welcomed in Uzbekistan again and for the first time visited Turkmenistan. He prioritized to develop his diplomatic relationships through the CIS organization and to build a good relationship with the strategic partners in Central Asia like China, Iran, Türkiye, and India. Turkmenistan was the only post-Soviet country which accepted the neutrality, officially on December 12<sup>th</sup> 1995 by the Resolution 50/80 the UN General Assembly recognized and supported the status of permanent neutrality declared by this country. The neutrality status of Turkmenistan, the western leaning approaches of Islam Karimov in Uzbekistan, “Kazakhization” or the rise of Kazakh nationalism, the laws on the official state language determination and de-Sovietization of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan made the building of stronger ties with Moscow more challenging to the new government. Though the newly formulated foreign policy strategy of Kremlin on June 28, 2000 and Putin’s personal visits to these countries gradually did defreeze the frozen relationships of Russia with this region. Putin vitally considered

several key problematic issues and took action on the trade turnover increase between Russia and the region, building the close economic ties, particularly revive influence over the hydrocarbon resources of Central Asia, especially in Caspian Sea, emphasizing on collective security actions viewing the rise of Islamic radicalism in the entire region, especially Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.<sup>27</sup>

Moscow leadership was well-aware of proceeds gained by the radical groups in Afghanistan, drug trafficking, weapon smuggling and sending of those illegal money to the Chechen terrorist groups. It was crucial to Moscow not only to eradicate these actions but build an organization which can seriously provide the collective security. Although step by step the bilateral relationships between Russia and region on the ground of CIS and other newly created organizations started to get better from the mid 2000's, the ideas and attempts of developing smart power concept, its means, instruments, and mechanisms started to grow gradually.

Despite the fact of the very late developing of the idea and mechanisms of smart power by the Kremlin, the Russian government under Putin could build to some extent the effective means and instruments of smart power which brought a positive result to the image of Russia, today in the global arena. The Soviet Union was very well-known for the implementation of smart power to gain its wide ambitions and objectives all over the world calling those approaches public diplomacy, humanitarian actions or active measures. As a former KGB operative Putin knows how to maneuver politically because the KGB was a key factor in the spreading of USSR's smart power. In the

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<sup>27</sup> Marlene Laruelle. April, 2008 "Russia's Central Asia Policy and the Role of Russian Nationalism". Massachusetts. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program. Available at [www.files.ethz.ch/isn/10...PDF](http://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/10...PDF)

newly formed Russia Putin supported the mayor of Saint Petersburg Anatoly Sobchak and became his deputy mayor, but he was also organizing this incredible network of former KGB operatives so called “siloviki” (the operatives of law enforcement agencies) in order to protect foreign economic interests and local interests of Russia by appointing them later on to the key leading and ruling positions in the country. He was appointed as the FSB director, and this ladder that brought him to power and to the Russian presidency provided him with a big intelligence background helping him to enliven and create more effective institutions of smart power.

When one analyzes the Russian smart power phenomena, means, mechanisms, and instruments, one can clearly come up with an idea that these incredibly created networks consist of several first-phase and second-phase importance institutions. Briefly, the Russian smart power means and instruments can be divided to:

1. The military, economic, and political means;
2. The educational, cultural, and social means;

In the following papers, the author discusses these means and instruments in detail as well as their strengths and weaknesses.

### **3.2. The means of Russian smart power**

It is noteworthy to mention that during the formation of Russian Federation, the ordinary Russians faced a tough economic, security, and political challenges which forced them to seriously conceive about the new state and national identity. They encountered the falling apart of economy of their country, brutalities in the both Chechen conflicts, killing of Russians by non-Russian ethnics, the influx of economic migrants from Central Asia and North Caucasus which cost them the working vacancies, the market and trade invasion by non-Russian

people, the lack of Yeltsin's leadership in the controlling of illegal migrants and protection of Russian statehood which forced them to become nationalistic and protect themselves from the destruction. The rising of patriotic waves separated the nationalistic political parties and movements to mainly three groups.

- 1) Supporters of Isolationist ideas to the South considered as "ethno-nationalist" argue to implement an isolationist policy toward Central Asia, leaving these countries to their own destiny and invite the Russian leadership to focus on mainly Slavic people. Their number is not big and also their representatives do not wield any political positions.
- 2) Defenders of Russians of the Near Abroad. This group does not advocate the isolationist policies. They want Moscow to keep the geopolitical supremacy over the post-Soviet Central Asian countries, protect the Russian people living in those countries, own the economic and political power over the countries of the region but they do not support the collective economic, political, or military institutions to bind Russia with the weak post-Soviet states. They have some active lobbies in the Duma and have more representatives in authority
- 3) Militants for Russian Domination in Central Asia. This group aims at imperialistic desires for Russia to regain its key role in the entire ex-Soviet states. They are divided by several sub-groups which one of those groups feels nostalgic about the Soviet Union time and wishes to create it again but they formulate only a minority, another one advocates using of hard power more regularly than soft one in order to keep the Russian position stronger in those countries, the third group is mainly interested in

the effective implementation of RF's soft power in the whole ex-Soviet states by creating the new institutions of soft power and the modern Russian domination in the region.<sup>28</sup>

Obviously, the supporters for Russian dominating influence in Central Asia not only formulate the majority but also the vast number of their representatives have the key political positions. Thus, indeed the third sub-group seems more successful because they could succeed in organizing many modernized military, economic, and political means, institutions, and instruments in Central Asia which are discussed below.

### ***Military Force***

#### ***1) Russian Military access in Central Asia***

Several decades of Soviet existence and its state practice of strictness in the question of military service enabled them to enlist millions of youngsters from the entire Soviet space to the Armed Forces of USSR known as the Red Army. The interesting part of recruiting young people to this military service was the experience of sending them to the military bases not inside of their own country rather sending them to the different parts of the Soviet Empire. Hence, Kazakhs, Tajiks, Uzbeks were sent to Russia or the Baltic states and Russians, Belarusians, Ukrainians ended up in the warm climate of the Central Asian countries. This approach was so smartly implemented with the aims and objectives of driving Soviet people closer to each other. During the joint military service, the friendship and brotherhoods were created between youths. Those ties remained strong due to staying shoulder by shoulder and calloused hands by calloused hands with each other

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<sup>28</sup> Marlene Laruelle. April, 2008 "Russia's Central Asia Policy and the Role of Russian Nationalism". Massachusetts. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program. Available at [www.files.ethz.ch/isn/10...PDF](http://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/10...PDF)

throughout the Afghanistan's War with a massive amounts of Afghan War veterans from Central Asia and Slavic countries.

Closed organized military ties were terribly shaken, but not torn during the economic crises both in Russia and the region which during their independence became reliable features for the continuation of the military cooperation with Russia. Tajikistan in 1990's underwent a dire Civil War caused by the radicals, extremists and was under the pressure of insecurity and bloodshed. The demands for the Russian military support and arms provision became higher than ever before in Tajikistan during those times. Russian military under the aegis of the CIS supported the newly elected president Emomali Rahmon. After achieving peace and unity the government of Tajikistan signed an agreement with Russia which led to the replacement of peacekeeping troops with Russian military forces. Those replaced forces were commanded to protect Tajik-Afghan borders. It is crucial to note that prior to the collapse of Soviets the 201 Gatchina Motorized Rifle Division was placed in Tajikistan in order to strengthen the protection of 1400 kilometers lengthy border with unstable Afghanistan. As it was mentioned before the Russian troops in Tajikistan are not viewed as strangers or invaders and their presence is accepted positively by locals, even in 1990s and 2000s many Tajik military and civil personnel were hired to the Russian Division but they were supervised by the Russian officers. The location of Russian military base from the Dushanbe city center is 30-35 kilometers away. For now this military division serves to defend the Tajikistan's security, especially near the Afghan border. Tajik people welcome them with hospitality for their smart power importance as the defenders. However, in the Ukraine's scenario the Russian Black Sea Navy was seen also as defenders. The practice showed that when the Ukrainian authority

disagreed to remain with Russia this navy forces were used to attack the Ukrainian territories. In case of Tajikistan hypothetically if the authority chooses not to be with Russia the Russian forces are able to invade the key vital premises for defence in several hours.

Russia also wields a military base in Kyrgyzstan which initially was deployed on the Chinese border in 1992-1999. In 2003 Russia opened a military base in Kant city where it was very close to American military base in Manas. In 2015 Kyrgyz authority offered to Russia to build another military base in the country due to instability in the relationships between Uzbek neighbors.

Thus, Russia keeps two military bases in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, rents the Baikonur Cosmodrome and the Sary Shagan anti-ballistic missile testing range in Kazakhstan<sup>29</sup> and also has a signed major accord on strategic cooperation with Uzbekistan which gifts to Russian military to enter to ten airports and allows Kremlin to initiate the RF's army basis on their territory. However, Russia still has not built and deployed there its military forces.<sup>30</sup>

### **Economic means**

#### **2) Control over the natural resources of Central Asia.**

The domination of Russia in the export of hydrocarbons of Central Asia is to that extent considerable that through its different state-run companies Kremlin transports the major amount of these valuable natural resources of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan via Central Asia- Center gas pipeline which is remained from the Soviet time and renovated by Gazprom.

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<sup>29</sup> Sharkov, Damien (3 June 2018). "[Russia's military compared to the U.S. across the world](#)". *Newsweek*.

<sup>30</sup> Marlene Laruelle. April, 2008 "Russia's Central Asia Policy and the Role of Russian Nationalism". Massachusetts. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program. Available at [www.files.ethz.ch/isn/101010](http://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/101010)...PDF

A policy of obstruction which brought a big loss for the Russian positions in the export of hydrocarbons in the ex-Soviet states in the example of Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline taught incumbents of the Kremlin a big lesson of changing their policy and altering their tune to the cooperation approaches. Thus, since 2001 the Russian giant gas and oil export companies like Gazprom, Yukos, and Lukoil came together to work on the vital zone of Russian interest to form the advantageous Caspian Pipeline Consortium in order to transport Tengiz oil to Novorossiysk. A big comeback in the control over the gas and oil potential of Central Asian region that Russia fetched is quite considerable in Kazakhstan. The example of it can be an agreement between the state-run KazMunayGas Company of Kazakhstan with three Russian companies on the joint exploitation of three sites namely Tsentralnoye by Gazprom, Kurmangazy by Rosneft and Khvalinskoye by Lukoil. Mainly the Caspian Sea region is very beneficial for Russian companies, as an instance the agreement between KazMunayGas and Gazprom in 2005 over the joint exploitation of the Imashecskoye gas sites on the border between Russia and Kazakhstan can be mentioned that brought another success to the Russian companies in the following 2006 which resulted the establishing of KazRosGas that is estimated to get approximately 15 bcm a year from the site of Karachaganak in Kazakhstan.<sup>31</sup>

The deals over control, exploitation, export of gas and oil of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan by Russia are big examples of profit

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<sup>31</sup> Marlene Laruelle. April, 2008 “Russia’s Central Asia Policy and the Role of Russian Nationalism”. Massachusetts. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program. Available at [www.files.ethz.ch/isn/mi0...PDF](http://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/mi0...PDF)

gaining and influence of Moscow in these countries. Contracts signed between Gazprom and Turkmenistan gas companies guarantee Moscow in exportation of this country's gas to Europe. From the North to the East and from the South to the West of Uzbekistan since 2002 Russian gas companies such as Gazprom, Soyuzneftgas, and Lukoil got several agreements signed with Tashkent that enable these companies to exploit and export Uzbek gas by partnering with Uzbekneftegas and working in the several gas sites such as – Urga, Kuanysh, Akchalak, Khauzak, Kandym, Shady, Ustyurt which have presumably 280 bcm of gas. In addition, since 2003 Gazprom signed agreements with officials in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan on the guarantee of participating in the processing of regional energy resources as well as the safe-keeping of transporting routes and pipelines. However, in these two countries, the big potential of gas sites is not yet found to be exported but they wield a huge electricity production potential which is seriously considered by Kremlin.

Previously the state-run Unified Energy System of Russia RAO-UES worked together with the countries of the region, especially Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan on the building of new hydro-electric power plants. Tajikistan wields a vast potential of electricity production which attracts the attention of not only Russia but other geopolitical players in the region, specifically Iran. However, that potential which it has is not fully utilized due to the emergence of Civil War in country which badly damaged its economy and caused brain drain in the 1990s. After gaining its peace and national unity Tajik authority started calling investments for building those potentially beneficial power plants. The agreements between Russia and Tajikistan were signed in October 2004 for the building of the second biggest

hydro-electric power plant in the country Sangtuda-1 which has a capacity of 670 mw. Following that a joint Russia, Tajikistan, and Iran protocol was signed in January 2005 according to which Russia agreed to build Sangtuda-1 and the construction of Sangtuda-2 was given to Iran. The construction of Sangtuda-1 by Russia was completed on July 31, 2009, and launched by the presidents of two countries.<sup>32</sup>

The Russian RusAl company which mainly works on the trade of aluminum in Central Asia, particularly in Tajikistan in October 2004 signed an agreement with the Tajikistan's government to carry out the building of Rogun hydroelectric power plant, to construct a modern aluminum plant and also the agreement required from RusAl to rebuild the Tursunzade Aluminum Smelter. In 2007 the side of agreement could not agree about sharing the percentage of stake in the project and it was rejected by both sides. Tajik government continues to build Rogun power plant against all of the overwhelming odds such as previous Uzbekistan's disagreement on completing of this project and economic limits of the country.

Russia's influence over the Central Asian states natural resources is still very high, because Moscow is worried of being changed by other interested countries in the region, especially the United States.

### **3) Economic Migrants**

Statistically Russia is enlisted as a number four in the list of countries according to attractiveness for the economic migration after the USA, Germany, and Saudi Arabia, having nearly ten million guest workers mostly from the former Soviet republics, particularly Central Asia because of its free visa regime opportunity (for the almost all post-

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<sup>32</sup> "RF, Tajik presidents launch Sangtuda HPP-1". ITAR TASS. 31 July 2009. Retrieved 31 July 2009.

Soviet space nationals, except Turkmenistan, the Baltic states, and Georgia). The number of economic migrants from Central Asia according to the FMS and the MIA data reaches the number of almost four million migrants, more than one million Tajiks, 700,000 Kyrgyz, and two million Uzbek citizens.<sup>33</sup>

The working conditions and Russian nationalistic and racist environment are not so welcoming to the migrants from Central Asia due to the tough immigration laws and regulations, police bribery, Islamophobia, xenophobia, and the shrunk of Russian economy which is badly hit after the annexation of Crimea and sanctions by the West, decrease in oil price which is the basic source of huge wages for the RF's economy, the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, and the recent Russian military conflict with Ukraine. Russian officials pretend that they do not need the service of economic migrants from Central Asia but one cannot ignore the facts that migrants are the cheap working power and the Kremlin's geopolitical instrument of influence in the countries of the region and doubtlessly Russians benefit from using the working power of migrants in the construction areas where the local Russians are unwilling to work. The remittances sent home by Central Asian migrants in 2022 totally made the sum of \$3.9 billion to Tajikistan, \$2,1 billion to Kyrgyzstan and \$7.8 billion to Uzbekistan.<sup>34</sup>

As the sum of income from economic migrants' labor to their families make billions of dollars and as far as the interests of millions of

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<sup>33</sup> Eraliev, Urinboyev. November 2020. "Precarious Times for Central Asian Migrants in Russia". <http://online.ucpress.edu/currenthistory/article-pdf/119/819/258/413207/curh.2020.119.819.258>

<sup>34</sup> Kamolov S. January 2023. "Remittances from the Central Asian migrants in Russia". <https://sputnik-tj.com/20230210/rusiya-tojikiston-muhojirat-sozishnoma-imzo-1054831560.html>

migrants and their family members who consume from their labor in Russia are under effect, these statistics are the clear factors that the economic migrants can be a powerful tool of hard power influence in the hand of Kremlin towards the countries of the region.

### **Political means**

#### ***4) Eurasian Economic Union***

It is a focal point to mention that the natural resources of the Central Asian states like gas, oil, electricity always remained essential determinants for the main geopolitical players' competition in the region to get influence and connect with the states of the region in order to have a massive benefit of these resources. Especially India and China wielding big populations are in need of mutual agreements with the states of the region to get their gas and oil for the huge number of consumers that they have. Additionally, the European Union countries also want to use the hydrocarbons from Central Asia independently from Moscow to be less dependent on the Kremlin's control in the region. In seriousness, several important factors must be perceived in the relationships between Russia and the states of the region like their emerged cultural ties between each other as well as the Russophile nature of Central Asian leaders who studied and worked in the Russo-Soviet environment. Right after the Soviet collapse and emerging of CIS, all countries of this commonwealth including Central Asia (except Turkmenistan which adopted permanent neutrality) naturally continued to cooperate in the economic sphere by signing the Free Trade Agreement which later brought the Customs Union into existence with 5 country members, particularly 3 countries of the region Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1996) and Tajikistan

(February 26<sup>th</sup> 1999).<sup>35</sup>

In his speech Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev given in 1994 at MSU (Moscow State University) suggested an idea to create a "Eurasian Union" to alleviate the free flow of goods across Eurasia. The idea was accepted assertively by many former Soviet countries as a pragmatic approach to increasing trade and bringing many investments to one another's countries. In this order, the Custom's Union was altered by the Eurasian Economic Community in 2000. At that time Uzbekistan as one of the highest populated countries of the region did not demonstrate an interest of membership in this organization. A year before that Uzbekistan joined GUAM (organized by Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova on October 10, 1997 aiming at economic, military, diplomatic, political cooperation, promoting democracy, ensuring stable economic development, and the European Integration), an organization which Moscow thinks that is built to weaken the Russian influence in the ex-Soviet states by US. However, Uzbekistan was a member of the Organization for Central Asian Cooperation (OCAC). Russia joined OCAC in October 2004 and in the same time was the member of Eurasian Economic Community with the purpose of gaining the influence over Uzbekistan which was interested to cooperate more with the West rather than Kremlin. The civil unrest in Andijan in 2005 and following massacre provoked a lot of criticisms of Uzbek leadership's actions against its own people by the western countries. Uzbekistan immediately took action and withdrew from GUAM. It was quite good opportunity for Moscow to

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<sup>35</sup> A. Wlodkowska-Bagan. 2012. "Russian Foreign Policy towards Central Asia". <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261402477>

finally bring the reluctant Uzbekistan's authority back into its influence. Hence in October 2005 the OCAC dissolved into the Eurasian Economic Community.

More innovatively by supporting the idea of Kazakh President Nazarbayev on the 18th of November, 2011 the presidents of Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus signed a treaty for establishing the organization called EEU (Eurasian Economic Union) by 2015. After signing the treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union on the 29th of May, 2014, finally the EEU started functioning on the 1st of January, 2015. Doubtlessly this created an organization as the most essential tool of Russian soft power in the region because it contains **the Eurasian Customs Union (EACU)** which is established not to levy on goods travelling within the union but functions by setting a common external tariff on all goods entering the union as well as **the Eurasian Economic Space** that is aimed at provision of the free movement of people, goods, services, and capital between the EEU member states.<sup>36</sup>

### **Educational and cultural means**

**5)Rossotrudnichestvo** (Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation). This agency very widely functions with the mission of implementing Russia's international humanitarian cooperation, building better image for the country abroad, promotion of Russian language by providing learning opportunities in the representative centers of the agency, supporting the ethnical Russians as they call them "sootchestveniki" compatriots abroad by providing

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<sup>36</sup> [Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan Agree on Customs Union Archived 2014-07-04 at the Wayback Machine](#) Saturday, 5 December 2009

them the information assistance as an active part of the State program of assistance to compatriots abroad, and other wide range of activities working with youth on the programs which are approved by the Presidential Decree on October 11, 2011, aiming at creating an opportunity for the short-term study programs of youths from different countries in order to visit Russia and study about business spheres, scientific, public, and political fields of foreign states which got the name of “New Generation.”

Rossotrudnichestvo widely operates with the 97 working offices in 80 states around the globe, containing 72 Russian cultural centers in 62 states, the interesting part is around 24 representative offices that function inside of the Russian Embassies in 21 more states.<sup>37</sup>

The agency functions under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia and one of its big priorities is cooperating with the member states of CIS, and also it collaborates with the regional organizations established by Russia and the CIS countries. The agency has its centers for sciences and culture in four countries of Central Asia including Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan (except Turkmenistan).

**6) The Russian World (Russian World).** The establishment of this Foundation took place in the year of 2007 with aims and objectives of elevating and advancing Russian language, culture, and education worldwide as an NGO, focusing on organizing programs, meetings, competitions, internet portal etc. mainly among the Russian compatriots abroad and other Russian speaking communities and individuals. The name of Foundation by itself demonstrates those regions where people are aware of Russian culture and language but in fact this organization

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<sup>37</sup> Official Website of Rossotrudnichestvo // <http://rs.gov.ru>

does not merely focus on those places and it can be regarded as an effective Russian soft power tool because since 2007 it was actively promoting the Russian values and language worldwide. Particularly in Central Asia by keeping language learning centers, conducting various Russian language Olympiads, creating nominations such as “the Student of the Russian World”, “the Professor of The Russian World” among the learning and teaching staff of the Russian centers.

This Foundation was created by the initiatives of Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Foreign affairs of Russia which quickly started to establish its Russian Centers worldwide, including Central Asian region where a big number of ethnic Russians reside and also a wide range of Kazakhs (99.9%), Kyrgyz (87.1%), Tajiks (68.5%), Uzbeks and Turkmens have a great command of Russian language.<sup>38</sup>

The considerable successes of this Foundation are a lot but several of them are really noteworthy such as the “Russian World” Internet Portal project which attracts 1 million users from 185 countries where learners use diverse contents for mastering their knowledge of Russian language. In the list of those countries which have the most active users in this portal one of the Central Asian states, Kazakhstan stays at the top after Ukraine. Other active consumers of this project are France, the United States, Germany, Israel, Belarus, Bulgaria, Latvia, and Moldova.<sup>39</sup>

Another distinguished success of this Foundation is the establishing of the “Russian World” Broadcasting Company which has a

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<sup>38</sup> Русский Язык начинает уходить из стран СНГ?  
[//http://www.ruskiymir.ru/publications/86120/](http://www.ruskiymir.ru/publications/86120/)

<sup>39</sup> A. Gussarova. Y. Khon. 2017. “Russian Soft Power in Kazakhstan (and Central Asia): Taken for granted?”. Almaty. Central Asia Institute for Strategic Studies

lot of educational, research, analytical, historical, and literature publishing.

In sum, Russian World as the Foundation which was created by the presidential decree has a fundamental importance as the Russian soft power tool in order to strengthen the Russian language, particularly in the ex-Soviet states and beyond to attract the attention of people by creating the assertive status of Russia and increasing chances of learning the Russian language. Obviously, as more people are interested in Russian language as stronger the Russian influence becomes.

***6)The Russian higher education system's soft power potential.***

The education system of Russia still remains very attractive to the students from Central Asia and beyond due to the scholarships and a wide range of quotas provided by the Russian universities. Moreover, Russia has some universities that their professor staff, teaching methods and the class organizations are stronger and more professional than some of the Central Asian universities by far. Sharing the Soviet heritage, colossal fluency in Russian, visa-free opportunities and dozens of other features attract thousands of students from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan, some of which are eager to study in Russia as a part of the state scholarship programs or by individually paying tuition fees. The state incumbents realize the importance of internationalizing their educational system by having clear geopolitical views of attracting as more people who are eager about the Russian language and culture as possible through the Bologna process by gradually building up the soft power potential of their education and science. The Russian academicians through several years also developed enough power to represent the potential of Russian science and education soft power. Russian scientists community also activated its

soft power realization ability, particularly in the Northwestern universities of Russia many academic students and teachers' exchange programs function which illustrate the considerable results of RF's soft power implementation in the Baltic Sea.

In fact, through Rossotrudnichestvo, The Russian World as well as direct quotas provided by the top Russian universities thousands of youths from Central Asia apply and study in Russia. By this approach Russia remains at the top in the statistics of amount of students from the Central Asian states who choose Russia as their destination for education. According to the Russian statistics there were 237,538 international students in 2015/2016 academic year which 188,130 of them were from the Central Asian states.<sup>40</sup>

For instance, the statistics of Education and Science Ministry of Tajikistan in 2017-2018 academic years 600 quotas were provided by the Russian government to Tajik students through different programs and the total amount of Tajik students who chose Russia as the destination of studying for the Russian language learning courses, Bachelor's, Master's, Doctorate degrees composes of 4,370 students<sup>41</sup>, undoubtedly triple amount of these numbers of Tajik students study in Russia which are not officially registered in the scope of these statistics.

### ***7)The Russian Universities and schools' soft power potential in Central Asia***

Regardless of significant fall in the amount of Russian speakers in some of the Central Asian states like Tajikistan, until now the role of RF's schools and Universities remain colossal in backing the Russia's

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<sup>40</sup> НИУ ВШЭ. 2016. Факты образования Академическая мобильность иностранных студентов в Россию Выпуск № 7.  
[//https://ioe.hse.ru/data/2016/08/04/1119531130/%D0%A4%D0%9E7.pdf](https://ioe.hse.ru/data/2016/08/04/1119531130/%D0%A4%D0%9E7.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> The official Statistics of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Tajikistan for 2017-2018 years. Dushanbe 2018. p 14-18.

activeness in Central Asia. Tajikistan as one of the Central Asian countries according to the reports of the Ministry of Education and Science of Tajikistan this country where 30% of the people are fluent in Russian demonstrate their willingness to learn Russian language due to the active role of Russia in economic, social, and political, life of the state. Many people are in favor of sending their children to the Russian schools or Russian classes in Tajik-Russian joint educational programs in some schools because they think that, the Russian educational standards are more effective than the local ones. Russian or joint Tajik-Russian educational institutions actively function in Tajikistan. Some of them are directly supported by Russia like the secondary school at the military base of the Russian Defense Ministry, the RF's School under the aegis of the Russian-Tajik Slavic University. There are five more Russian schools which have recently been being built by the Russian Federation. Also, there are several Tajik universities where students can study their fields entirely in the Russian language as well as the fully Russian government supported universities such as Russian-Tajik Slavic University and the branches of Moscow State University in Tajikistan. Russian-Kyrgyz Slavic University is also active in Kyrgyzstan.

Kazakh students can choose between the wide range of opportunities for taking their degree under the Russian education standards in various branches of Russia's universities. Moscow Aviation Institute in Baikonur, Moscow State University branch in Astana, Statistics and Informatics University in Ust-Kamenogorsk, Moscow State University of Economics, as well as Chelyabinsk State University in Kostanay, Saint Petersburg Humanitarian University of Trade Unions in Almaty, and the Academy of Labor and Social Affairs in Almaty are in service of the citizens of Kazakhstan.

## **Social means**

### ***8)The Impact of Russia's Media in Central Asia***

The impact of RF's Media in the Central Asian countries is undoubtedly higher than any other foreign states in the region. Even the local media in the Central Asian countries are not fully satisfiable due to their lower professionalism and immediate informing ability. These are the main reasons why majority of Central Asian people see the world from the Russia's viewpoint. For some of the Central Asian residents, Russian language became closer than their mother tongue and the preference of gaining news is fully given to the Russian TV channels. Although, there are officially 111 registered TV channels functioning in Kazakhstan still Russian TV Channels and media have more popularity and thanks to fluency in Russian, political, economic, diplomatic, social any other issues are seen from the Russian viewpoint.

Russian TV Channels, and internet news websites to the lower degree of the Russian newspaper are effective in implementing the RF's soft power in Tajikistan as a big number of Tajiks have fluency in the Russian language. They accept news from Russian media like something native and close to heart and seemingly the population of Tajikistan to the big extent do not receive the news from the western media, even though if they receive it they accept it like something alien due to being oriented to Russian news.

It is essential to talk about the biggest multilingual Russian Media "Russia Today" which was initially organized in order to enhance the status of Russia abroad. RT is a state-run TV network which is provided by the Russian state money directing to the audiences outside of Russia by airing the news in English, Russian, Arabic, French, and German.

In addition to its most important English language channel RT International, Russia Today America, Russia Today UK, and Russia Today also manage Russia Today's channel in Spanish and Arabic and it also has a Russia Today Documentary channel. Russia Today runs twenty-one offices in sixteen countries, consisting of these in Washington, London, New York City, Paris, Cairo, Delhi, and Baghdad. It hires more than 2,000 media experts worldwide.

### **9) Russian Diaspora**

Without any hesitation beginning of the 1990s and 2000s were the hardest years for the massive 25 million communities of ethnically Russian people who remained in the ex-Soviet countries after the fall of the Soviet Union. Russians who lived in Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia and other Baltic states felt more secure than the Russians who lived in Central Asia.

Right after gaining independence the rise of nationalistic tunes and moods started in all of the former Soviet Central Asian countries. They began nation building process which included de-Sovietization/de-Russification in their government systems, strengthening the role of their mother tongues, and accepting the laws which required using of local languages in the official state institutions. Worse than that due to the Civil War bloodshed which was sparked by the radical and extremist uprisings of people of Gharm region against the former Communist party in Tajikistan forced thousands of Russians living in that country to flee and turn back to their motherland.

Although solely Tajikistan was destined to have a Civil War but the rest of other countries of Central Asia lived through a turbulent time. However, the Russians' migrations rocketed from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan due to the regulations and

laws on giving the status of state languages to “Kazakh”, “Uzbek”, “Kyrgyz”, “Turkmen”, the beginning of nationalization and partly discrimination against the ethnic Russians.

Russians left with three choices to select; staying in those countries and live their lives in loyalty to the newly independent states, struggle and lobby to sustain the privileged status within the country; or leave every livelihood that they had, selling their homes and other properties and turn back to Russia. Majority of them chose the last option and left the countries where once they lived and turned over a new leaf in Russia. Another part remained in the countries of the region fighting for their rights.

The considerable and genuine attention turned toward them when president Putin began regarding them in his foreign policy strategy by providing an opportunity of migrating back home with the monetary supportive Migration Program run by the Kremlin. Additionally, it is a fact that several millions of ethnical Russians still remain in all of the five states of Central Asia but some of them integrated with the local population, assimilated the local traditions and keep less connection with Russia. It is significant fact for many countries of the world that money which some of the developing countries receive from their diasporas which are located in some economically durable and strong countries is so considerable and high and it contributes to the economy of their home country. However, the Russian diaspora does not have these kind of high monetary income in the country of their residence which could be significant for Russian economy. Russian diaspora also poses a minimum risk to the security of those countries where they reside.

### **3.2. The strengths and delimitations of Russian Smart power in the Central Asian region and beyond**

#### **1) The delimitations of Russian Smart power**

Russian smart power also has delimitations and shortcomings which sometimes deteriorate Russian image in Central Asia, nullify and limit the hard work of the aforementioned soft power institutions and create hatred toward Russians. They are:

- ❖ **Racism and xenophobia** (racist skinhead movements, Russian neo-Nazi and ultranationalist movements);
- ❖ **Islamophobia;** (hatred toward Muslims of Caucasus, Central Asia, etc);
- ❖ **Migrantophobia;** (violation of economic migrants' rights and freedoms by police and locals as well as the pejorative depiction of the Central Asian migrants in some of the Russian mass media);
- ❖ **Corruption in the realization of soft power;**
- ❖ **Statist nature of soft power institutions and the lack of civil society participation in the implementation of soft power;**
- ❖ **Yet undeveloped socio-economic and political model of attracting other nations;**
- ❖ **Decrease in the economies, remittances, and turnover of the EEU member states;**
- ❖ **Delimitations in the funding of the most effective soft power institutions due to the arisen economic difficulties;**
- ❖ **Economic losses during the Covid-19 pandemic;**
- ❖ **The damage to the Russian image and economy after the invasion of Ukraine;**

# Chapter 4

## CONCLUSION

### 4.1. Summary

With the advent of the era of globalization, the international system qualitatively transformed, and the concept of "power" acquired new values and measurements. Economic dependence to each other, revolution in informational field, the enhancement of cutting-edge technologies made theory scientists of various schools to have a different view at the idea of "power" and recognize that army power is not the "alpha and omega" of international relations anymore. Collaborations in the fields of media, education, culture, economy, and ideology nowadays work together with the army power like a significant instruments of influence of international actor.

The idea of "smart power" by J. Nye got a theory-based answer to those alterations that took part in the global system during the era of globalization. According to the concept of J. Nye, which defines the success of an actor in the international arena, if one state wants to achieve a success "the ability to influence others with the aid of co-optive tools that determine international agenda, as well as through persuasion and positive attraction must be used together."

An interesting feature of the Russian perception of the theory of "smart power" is a special attention to the destructive nature of this concept. To this perspective of studying soft influence in world politics domestic experts are pushed by the Russian politicians who regularly repeat the thesis about the "dark side" of these foreign policy concepts. Vivid examples are Putin's article "Russia and the changing world" and the Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation of the year

2013.

The years of 2012-2013 can be considered the peak of the popularity of "smart power" in the official actions of the Russian leadership. In this period the Russian politicians in their speeches highly appreciate the importance of tools of "smart power" to strengthen foreign policy influence of Russia. V. Putin, D. Medvedev, S. Lavrov, D. Rogozin say that it is vital to adopt a policy of "smart power", to promote their interests by ensuring the charming interest for Russia, in the bases of its gains, more on intellectual and spiritual culture and it must not be more concentrated on material gains. They unanimously point out that Russia should actively work on its image abroad, not allowing deliberate distortions by unscrupulous actors.

In 2013, the concept of "smart power" acquired a high status: it became part of RF's Foreign Policy Concept. Current regulation generalizes the conflicting perceptions of these foreign policy tools of the RF's government. The concept clarified "smart power" as an inseparable piece of contemporary politics and presented the official explanation of this term as a wide toolkit for dealing with policy tasks on the bases of society, humanitarian, information, communication, and other options of conventional diplomacy approaches and ways. In 2013-2015, the need to process instruments of "smart power" was enshrined in a number of official legal documents: the Action Plan of RF's Foreign Ministry for the period up to 2018, the Concept of the state policy of the Russian Federation in promoting international development, the Action Plan for the revitalization of activities in the field of international enhancement aid and humanitarian collaboration on the basis of the RF's Science and Culture Centers (RCSC) in the period of 2014-2016.

The Government of the Russian Federation has chosen an

institutional approach to the processing of "smart power" tools in foreign policy. A number of institutions have been created in Russia, the purpose of which is to coordinate the use of "smart power" tools in Russian foreign policy. The key agency of RF's "smart power" has become Rossotrudnichestvo - Federal Agency for CIS Affairs, compatriots living abroad and international humanitarian cooperation, which was formed by the decree of the President of RF on September 6, 2008, based on Roszarubezhtsentr. Over the past period, the Agency did a lot of work to expand the set of RF's Science and Culture centers (RCSC), attracting foreign learners to Russian colleges and universities, strengthening the common humanitarian space of the CIS, and developing Eurasian integration. Alongside this, within the walls of the Agency there was developed its own concept of Russian "smart power", the author and which was expressed by the head of the department K. Kosachev from 2012-2015. According to his concept, Russian "smart power" should not oppose globally approved men's rights, norms, and values of public international law protecting the main democratic principles of a citizen in the 21st century. He proposes three "pillars" which can be based on the unique Russian concept of "smartt power" – these are cooperation, security, and sovereignty. K. Kosachev also notes the weak side of the modern concept of Russian "smart power" – its ideological content, or in the terminology of J. Nye- narrative. Like Russian experts, he points out that today Russia does not have a global idea or political message that it could present to the world. He also points out that Russian "smart power" will become truly effective only when the socio-economic model, implemented in Russia will prove its attractiveness in the eyes of both Russian and foreign societies. However, this is essential to note that the idea of "smart power" by K. Kosachev was not reflected in any

practical work, nor in the Agency's policy documents.

Also, over the past period, a number of NGOs have been created in Russia, which were invited to become unofficial conductors of the RF's "smart power." This is, first of all, the Russian World Foundation, the World Without Nazism", the Foundation for the Support and Protection of the Rights of Compatriots, living abroad, and the Fund for Cooperation with the Russian-language Press. The key fields of work of current NGOs were: promoting and popularizing Russian support for compatriots living abroad, language and culture, promoting the dissemination of unbiased information on contemporary Russia, help for offering Russian educational opportunities abroad.

From 2007-2015, the Russian leadership has done successful work to expand the Russian humanitarian presence in the world. Over the past period, the Russian authorities managed to bring the number of foreign representative offices of Russian smart power" to 334 centers. This figure includes 93 centers and representative offices of Rossotrudnichestvo, 239 centers, and offices of the Russian World, 1 foreign representation of the Gorchakov's Fund, and 1 office of the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights in Paris.

At the moment, Russia is undoubtedly inferior in number of cultural and educational centers abroad to such leaders of the "smart power" as the USA, Great Britain, France, and China. The cumulative Quantity of French institutions and representations of the "Alliance Française" in the world equals 1072 centers operating in 146 countries. PRC leadership also did a lot of work to expand the network of Confucius Institutes, which today there are 900 in 96 countries of the world. The created specialist communities and think tanks, like: the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), International Discussion

Club Valdai, World Public Forum "Dialogue of Civilizations", A.M. Gorchakov Foundation for the Support of Public Diplomacy, Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, Institute for Democracy and Cooperation,. Part of them was highly appreciated by the expert community - this is, first of all, through, the Dialogue of Civilizations forum and the Valdai Club. The work of the INF received high marks from the international expert communities. Considering luggage of the Soviet scientific school, and in case of successful work, Russian think tanks can become effective tools for Russian "smart power". The Russian leadership has also done a lot of work on strengthening the Russian activeness in the global news space: global RT TV channel got created (2005), international broadcasting of the renewed Rossiya today”, a new multimedia information hub “Sputnik” was launched.

Alongside the soft power tools also, the Russian army has been developed and widely used as a tool of its foreign policy in Syria and Ukraine in the recent years and it seems that the Kremlin’s military to some extent is the effective tool for achieving the outcomes which the Russians want. After the full attack of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, in so called “the special operation” Russia demonstrated that when the soft power tools do not seem productive Moscow is ready to solve the issues by using the hard power approaches of military attacks, economic sanctions etc.

Thus, in the contemporary era Russia is actively using its smart power tools in Central Asia. Even though, mostly the soft power tools are used to keep the region under the Russian influence sometimes when things go wrong Russia can likely use the hard power tools such as illegally deporting the economic migrants from Central Asia and even armed forces if a need arises for it.

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## **Authobiography**

My name is Doston Asoev. I was born on September 12, 1996 in Dushanbe city the capital of Republic of Tajikistan. I studied at high school number 42 in the field of social sciences and I graduated the school with the city-wide-olympiad medal from the law subject and I got enrolled to the law faculty of Tajik National University with the fully-funded scholarship of Tajikistan's government for gifted students. I got the Confucious center scholarship and I learnt the Chinese culture in China during my studentship. Also, I was honored to get selected as the finalist of US Department of State's UGRAD scholarship and I gained an opportunity of studying in the University of Minnesota in the field of Political science as an Exchange Student where I studied and gained knowledge from the international academicians. I got my Bachelor's Degree in the field of International law and I achieved the Türkiye Bursları scholarship to study my Master's Degree in the field of International Relations.

Previously, I used to work for the two Tajik TV Channels "Bahoriston" and "Safina" as the news TV Presenter for about six years since my childhood and I worked as the Teacher of English language in the Educational Centers "Dusti" and "Safir".

Currently, I work as the Professor Assistant in Law Faculty of Tajik National University and I conduct the International Law, Diplomatic Law, European Union Law subjects in English language for students.

I am highly interested in the conduct of Russian foreign policy across the globe and particularly in the region of Central Asia as the patriot of my country I am passionate to learn about the main geopolitical actors and factors which can change the course of history

for my beloved Tajikistan and the entire Central Asian states,  
especially Russian foreign policy's impact in this region.

