

Chapter 8

Features of “Soft Power” in the Eurasian Economic Union and the Role of Russia

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ABSTRACT

The chapter is devoted to the problem of the formation of “soft power” in the Eurasian space. All attempts to find a common language between states in the world lead to the fact that an appeal to “soft power” appears more and more often on the states’ agenda as a tool of achieving the goals of the states, including the states of Eurasian region. The concept of “soft power”, introduced into the circulation of the modern theory of international relations by J. Nye, is being actively discussed in Russia. In recent years, President V. Putin and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia S. Lavrov were repeatedly called upon to multiply the Russian resource of “soft power” for solving foreign policy tasks. Undoubtedly, this is also valid when we speak about Eurasian integration.

INTRODUCTION

Not only the cultural, ideological and spiritual values constitute the essence of “soft power”, which is integral to creating Russia’s positive image and enhancing its political role, but also in shaping a new regional identity in the Eurasian space in the new context. Development of economic ties, cooperation based on “soft power”, common understanding of human values, socio-cultural proximity, strife for high living standards mean a particular type of civilization. And, ultimately, it should bring about a new regional identity. Incontestably, territory of the Russian Federation in geopolitical terms (Eurasia) is a ground for such identification. That is why, the country possesses explicit geopolitical advantages, which enable it to pretend on a considerable role in the Eurasian region. Russia should develop this dimension further. Emergence of stable geopolitical fields of the Eurasian Union (where Russia is engaged in) is aimed at the internal essence resting upon common history, social values, dissemination of the Russian language and foreign regional institutions (accumulated over the integrational process in the Eurasian

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space), incorporating “soft power” issues. Unfortunately, the idea of a regional identity through the “soft power” tools has been regarded as a long-term project so far. Nevertheless, already at this stage these tools, early successes or setbacks can be analyzed.

BACKGROUND

In the modern world grand transformations are shattering world politics; foreign policy of the most states is focused on use of military power as a paramount instrument providing their own security. Interestingly, cultural globalization and ever more interdependent world are complementing the military sources with the non-military factors propelled by political motives, which were generalized in the American notion “soft power”. Even back in 1971 R. Keohane and J. Nye in their article “Transnational Relations and World Politics” (Nye, 2004) remarked that the states were no longer the sole actors of international relations and six years later in 1977 in their book “Power and interdependence: world politics” described a new neo-liberal paradigm in the theory of international relations. Although the Russian scholar D. Lanko believes that the term “soft power” was put forward in early 1970s by S. Strange to denote the level of economic development in international politics. However, we rely on the fact the term “soft power” was introduced by J. Nye in 1990 in his book “Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power”, which later on was elaborated by him in the next book “Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics (Nye, 2004). And cultivating further the neoliberal ideas, it was precisely Keohane and Nye who presented the soft power concept, which accentuates importance of not only military or economic instruments in conducting foreign policy (Transnational Relations and World Politics, 1971). In this context, we are giving consideration to the specific traits of Russian “soft power”, which nowadays is being criticized by the Western researchers, as states are the primary mentors of “soft power” in the Eurasian region (Markushina, Tserpickaya, 2016).

Still, according to T. Volgy one of the most crucial actions with regards to “soft power” is acknowledgement of its frameworks (Volgy, 2011). These frameworks are very hard to set on, as it may appear in the case of integrational processes. But, indeed, it does not mean that soft power has nothing to do with power authority. All forms of power authority have constraints. As long as foreign policy goals abide by promotion of democracy, human rights and liberty, soft power exceeds hard power. In Nye’s opinion, in the era marked by increased information flows and power dissemination that is likely to feature ever more important segment of foreign policy strategies (Nye, 2006). Vast, grand and prospective goals in the foreign policy of any state are needed to put soft power to efficient use, firstly, the governments should estimate, how many resources should be mobilized to achieve the desired result. As far as frameworks are concerned, we always resort to the connotation of “soft power”, and namely, the countries’ aptitude to use their attractiveness and persuasiveness in pursuit of foreign policy goals, by contrast to military power or financial backing. The sense of “soft power” is to pledge provision of the key international attainments without high costs, which often emanate from use of hard power. K. Kosachev assumes that eventually more powerful and mighty governments use this notion so as to meet long-term ends in foreign policy (Kosachev, 2013). But obviously, those principles may well guide the integrational entity. The European Union (EU) case in itself speaks volumes. In particular, with regards to the EU virtues of soft power potential, the following points can be used:

- Positioning of the EU as a successful socio-cultural project;

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