

THE CONCEPT OF SOFT POWER IN MODERN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS. DEVELOPMENT OF A SOFT POWER STRATEGY IN THE FOREIGN POLICY OF UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract. This article discusses soft power theories in modern international relations. Today, various countries are using the concept of soft power to achieve their foreign policy goals. Although the concept of soft power is no longer new in modern international relations, some countries are not able to use its full potential. Soft power is a new form of power that helps control political consciousness through culture. At this point, the development of a soft power strategy in Uzbekistan's foreign policy is one of the most important issues, and this article discusses this issue.

Key words: modern international relations, soft power, foreign political goal, culture, political consciousness, new power, foreign policy of Uzbekistan, soft power strategy.

The emergence of the term "soft power" is related to its specific use, a political term first used by Harvard University professor Joseph Nye in his 1990 book, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. Later, the professor elaborated the term in 2004 in the book *"Soft Power: Tools for Success in World Politics"* and in the article *"Soft Power and US-European Relations"* through more precise and understandable definitions and examples. According to him, soft power is the ability to coerce one's desires, achieve a goal not through certain threats or contributions, but through interest and persuasion. The main attraction is the country's culture, political goals and political system. Joseph Nye believes that the influence of soft power will increase only if the current policy is seen by others as a legitimate policy based on justice. Also, the term "soft power" has historically meant the concept of cultural-ideological hegemony and was developed by the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci in the 1930s in his *"Prison Notebooks"*. The idea of using the term to assert one's power goes back to ancient Chinese philosophers such as Laozi, who lived in the 7th century BC. According to them, "There is nothing in the world weaker and softer than water, but it can destroy even the hardest body."

That is, in politics, "soft power" is the transformation of one's own interests into the interests and wishes of others. In this case, the idea offered by one country to the other ultimately serves the interests of the former. In addition to Joseph Nye, the former

chairman of the American Federal Commission, Newton Minow, comments on "soft" and "hard power" and says that "\$1 spent on ideas is equivalent to \$100 spent on bombs." Until the end of the 20th century, "hard power" played the main role in international politics, but by the 21st century, "soft power" has gained the main place. Today, in any country, be it the United States or any other, the power to influence others is limited. Therefore, it is no coincidence that today the importance of "soft power" is increasing.¹

Soft power is based on the ability to demonstrate the strengths of others. Everyone knows from personal experience what the power of attraction and destruction is. In relationships, for example, in a family, the power factor is manifested not in the possibility of living together with a close partner, but through the mysterious effects of attraction. Even the most famous and smartest people in the business world know that leadership is not just about giving orders, but about leading by example and getting others to do what they want. It is a difficult task to manage large organizations and institutions in isolation through a single command. Also, a person should be able to force others to buy his values. Similarly, modern practices of public interest politics make them friendly and attractive to the community, so that the community wants to help them achieve common goals.²

Soft power is not just influence. After all, the impact can also rely on the hard power of threats or certain payments. Also, although the ability to persuade or move people through arguments are important parts of soft power, it is capable of much more. The persuasive power of soft power is often the reason parties agree. Simply put, soft power in behavioral terms is attractive power. The degree of influence of soft power sources can be determined and analyzed through surveys or influence groups. Whether this principle of attraction always produces the desired political results must be judged according to the situation in which it is applied. It is often interpreted that reliance on soft power sources does not allow for an accurate assessment of the balance of power. However, this situation is reflected in all criteria of strength. For example, in 1940, England and France had more tanks than Germany, but this superiority in military resources did not determine the outcome of the battle.

In today's modern international relations, the policy of "soft power" is having effective results in the way of getting the states to act and follow the desired direction of their own free will. Therefore, soft power has become a key part of everyday democratic politics. It is based on intangible factors such as culture, political values and institutions, and policies with legal or moral authority. If a leader can embody the values that others want to possess, he will not miss the opportunity to use less resources to lead.

Three factors are important for the effective implementation of the "soft power" policy:

¹ Suhrob Bo'ronov. (2023) "Tirilish" nashriyoti tomonidan o'tkazilgan kitoblar taqdimoti ma'ruzasidan.

² Jozef Nay. Yumshoq kuch: jahon siyosatida muvaffaqiyatga erishish vositalari. – T. 2023. 29 b.

- organizational and institutional foundations (determining the strategy and main directions of "soft power"; choosing the institutions implementing it; providing them with all-round support);
- informational and cultural space (organization of ideological and ideological propaganda; creation of a positive information space; monitoring of public opinion, etc.);
- personnel system (that is, having a group of specialists capable of implementing "soft power" - a political scientist, experts in international relations, an imageologist, a political technologist, etc.).

Today, almost all world leaders who are subjects of international relations have already understood the advantages of soft power and are trying to use soft power policy. But although some countries have managed to become known to the world with their culture, they are still unable to use the opportunities of soft power uniformly, efficiently and fully. For example, the Portland-PR international organization constantly studies the use of the "soft power" factor by different countries and publishes their ranking. The ranking of the soft power index³ includes only 30 countries, which effectively use "soft power" in one way or another in their foreign policy. In turn, the main tools of "soft power" diplomacy in these indexes are political PR, information flow, global marketing, the popularity of the state language in the world, the position of the state in the global hierarchy, cultural exchange, sports, tourism, public diplomacy, the education system, the ability to conduct information wars, intercultural communication, national diasporas, migration policy, etc. are covered.

In this regard, the development of soft power strategies has become one of the most important political issues in Uzbekistan's foreign policy. Uzbekistan does not yet have such a strategy. Before developing such a strategy, it is necessary to solve a number of problems and obstacles.

First of all, there are many shortcomings in promoting and celebrating the cultural and historical heritage in Uzbekistan. For example, Uzbekistan actively worked with UNESCO from the time of independence until 2000. But later these relations cooled down. This organization is the most important organization that increases the cultural appeal of Uzbekistan in the world. But today the dynamics have fallen. Or embodying our historical heritage - in Uzbekistan today, we do not have a well-known historical film that can be seen abroad, and we do not have a good film that can be celebrated in the world. Why is South Korea known today as a great country and a great nation, through its movies. However, there have been only a few states in their history. But the movies show the greatness of their history.

Thirdly, the issue of nationality and language. According to information, more than 60 million people speak Uzbek today. This means that the number of Uzbeks in the

³ The soft power index. <https://softpower30.com/>

world is close to 60 million. If efforts are made to increase the influence and development of this language abroad, it can be turned into a great tool of "soft power". Because there are many Uzbeks, influential Uzbeks, living outside Uzbekistan. Many goals can be achieved through them. But things are not noticeable in this regard either.

The fourth and most important factor is the information tool. Such a large weapon cannot be used today. There are no information resources outside. In developed countries, there are many foreign news publications of their own. They use these information tools to realize their foreign political interests. But such a weapon is not available even for Central Asia. That is, there are no information tools that can respond to some of the resources of the region or the countries in the region.

Considering these problems, the question arises as to what Uzbekistan should pay attention to in order to be able to use the factor of "soft power" in international relations. In this case, it is necessary to analyze several aspects.

1. An actor who wants to use the "soft power" policy should first of all determine its geographical boundaries (global or regional). As a country that has just entered the path of development of Uzbekistan, it is inevitable that the place of its "soft power" will be the Central Asian region. Uzbekistan should take on the tasks of cooperation and integration in the Central Asian region. This is primarily due to the fact that Uzbekistan is located in the geographical center of Central Asia and has borders with all five countries. Now the political leadership of Uzbekistan faces the issues of solving all kinds of border problems (delimitation and demarcation). In the future, consultative meetings of the heads of states of Central Asia, initiated directly by Uzbekistan, can be an effective tool in this regard. Turning these "consultative meetings" into a full-fledged integrated association in the near future fully corresponds to the geopolitical interests of not only Uzbekistan, but the entire region.

2. The Afghanistan factor occupies an important place in the regional foreign policy implemented by Uzbekistan in recent years. The organization of an international conference dedicated to the problems of Afghanistan in Tashkent in March 2018 on the topic "Peace process, cooperation in the field of security and regional partnership", and the successful negotiations with the leadership of the "Taliban" movement in Tashkent on August 7-10, 2019 are a clear proof of this. These political processes can be evaluated as an achievement of Uzbek diplomacy in an alternative form to the Russian-led "Moscow-format" consultation on the Afghanistan issue and the "SCO + Afghanistan" dialogue group, which was created at the initiative of China. Uzbekistan's active participation in the process of socio-economic restoration of Afghanistan, cooperation in the fields of education and culture has a positive effect on its image. Now, Uzbekistan should take the leading role in establishing peace and stability in Afghanistan, pulling it into the integration orbit of Central Asia.

3. It is known that the factor of nationality and language is of great importance in

"soft power" policy. The Uzbek language, its rich lexicology and corpus are often emphasized. Now is the time to use this factor. According to statistics, there are about 3 million Uzbeks in Afghanistan, 1.3 million in Tajikistan, more than 918 thousand in Kyrgyzstan, 576 thousand in Kazakhstan, and more than 250 thousand in Turkmenistan. The Uzbek language has an official status in Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, while it has local importance in other countries of the region.

Due to some subjective reasons, relations with these compatriots were cut off. Today, it is necessary to strengthen cultural ties with them, to study and promote the Uzbek language more widely. In this regard, it is necessary to make good use of the experience of leading countries (for example, projects such as Goethe Institute of Germany, "Alliance Française" of France, "Russky Mir" of Russia).

4. Uzbekistan has the potential to become a "cultural-tourist hub" and an "educational hub" of the Central Asian region. To date, Uzbekistan has included 5 tangible cultural heritage sites and 8 intangible cultural heritage nominations in the UNESCO World Heritage List, and it is planned to include 10 cultural heritage sites and more than 5 intangible heritage nominations by 2030. Historical cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Kokand, Shakhrisabz, Termez should be interpreted as the cultural heritage not only of Uzbekistan, but also of the peoples of Central Asia. In this regard, it is especially necessary to popularize pilgrimage tourism and provide benefits to the citizens of the region. It is also very important to make Uzbekistan more attractive for young people from the region. It is desirable to establish new higher education institutions, open branches of the world's leading universities, and introduce various educational grants for CA youth (developing projects analogous to the European "Erasmus" program).

5. It is known that the most effective of the "soft power" tools is the support of the non-governmental organization (NGO). Leading countries that are masters of "soft power" have the ability to create a positive image by creating international NGO networks or by allocating grants to social projects of local NGOs. Uzbekistan should also form a network of NGOs operating in the Central Asian region. In this regard, it is necessary to strengthen the *fundraising* strategies of national NGOs, along with increasing the capabilities of the Public Fund for NGO Support under the Parliament of Uzbekistan - Oliy Majlis.

It is also necessary to form mass media with a strong ideological and infrastructural basis. It would be appropriate for Uzbekistan to carry out work on the creation of a single information space in the Central Asian region. This requires the development of not only traditional, but also modern mass information and communication networks.

6. Using the "soft power" factor, conducting an effective and active foreign policy in general depends, first of all, on the issue of personnel. Today, we can witness the lack

of active and dynamic young personnel with modern knowledge and skills in this system. Also, most importantly, the philosophy of Uzbekistan's foreign policy should be fundamentally reviewed. Implementation of modern political management and innovative ideas, attracting new generation personnel who think in a new way are among the strategic tasks. This, in turn, will serve as a basis for the transformation of Uzbekistan's soft power into smart power in the future.⁴

In conclusion, it should be noted that the means of "soft power" and the political image are, first of all, a part of the country's economic, social and political ability. Perhaps very important, but only a part. And competence should be reflected not only in symbolic manifestations, but in real reality. On the basis of conducting its regional policy on the basis of "soft power", Uzbekistan is required to implement fundamental democratic reforms in its internal policy. For this reason, the republic can achieve the status of regional leadership only if it implements democratic values in its socio-political system.

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