

RPTSS 2017
**International Conference on Research Paradigm Transformation
in Social Sciences**

**FACTORS OF SOFT POWER IN RUSSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY
TOWARDS MONGOLIA**

Vladimir Rodionov (a)*, Timur Badmatsyrenov (b), Innokentii Aktamov (c), Damdin Badaraev
(d), Vinokurova Anna (e)

*Corresponding author

(a) Buryat State University, Smolina 24a, Ulan-Ude, Russia, vladimir_198025@mail.ru

(b) Buryat State University, Smolina 24a, Ulan-Ude, Russia, batorovitch@mail.ru

(c) Buryat State University, Smolina 24a, Ulan-Ude, Russia, kenti81@mail

(d) Institute for Mongolian, Buddhist and Tibetan studies, Sakhyanovoy 8, Ulan-Ude, Russia, damdin80@mail.ru

(e) Far Eastern Federal University, Sukhanova 8, Vladivostok, Russia, vinokurova77@mail.ru.

Abstract

The paper deals with the role of "soft power" in the foreign policy of modern Russia. Soft power is a concept developed by Joseph Nye. It divided the methods of foreign policy of countries into hard and soft. The first group of methods includes armed violence, military intervention, economic pressure, bribery. The second group of methods is attractiveness of economic growth and well-being of the population, creative power of the nation, attractive foreign policy strategy, culture, and science. Along with political, economic, military methods of influence, no less important are methods, related to education, science, mass information and culture. Considering the rich history of Russia's cultural influence on Mongolia in the socialist period, cooperation in this area seems promising and significant for modern Russian-Mongolian relations. Among the positive grounds for the successful use of Russian education as an instrument of foreign policy influence towards Mongolia are the historical tradition of involving Mongolian citizens in the system of higher education of the Soviet Union, the Russian language that relatively widely spread in Mongolia, the presence of branches of several Russian universities of Moscow, Ulan-Ude, and Irkutsk in Mongolia. At the same time, there is a number of impediments related to successful use of education as an instrument of Russia's foreign policy in Mongolia.

© 2018 Published by Future Academy www.FutureAcademy.org.UK

Keywords: Soft power, Russia, Mongolia, language, relationship.



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported License, permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

1. Introduction

One of the significant trends in development of modern international relations is various approaches of the leading countries of the world to their foreign policy. Cultural influence and impact on public opinion of the partner country increasingly replaces the primacy of direct military intervention and economic pressure. Theoretically, non-traditional methods of foreign policy are characterized as a soft power.

1.1. Concept of soft power

Soft power is a concept developed by Joseph Nye, the former USA Deputy Minister for Defense in Clinton Administration and the professor of Harvard University. The American researcher divided the methods of foreign policy of countries into hard and soft. The first group of methods includes armed violence, military intervention, economic pressure, bribery. The second group of methods is attractiveness of economic growth and well-being of the population, creative power of the nation, attractive foreign policy strategy, culture, and science (Holik, 2011, p. 232-242). By now, conceptualization of the substantive content of soft power has been expanded. The factors of soft power include economic attractiveness, attractive system of general and university education, scientific environment, international recognition of the greatness and significance of country's cultural heritage, the level of development of democratic institutions, etc. Joseph Nye determined hard power is "the ability to get others to act in ways that are contrary to their initial preferences and strategies" (Nye, 2007, p. 64). Actually, soft power means an ability to do foreign policy without military methods and direct economic pressure. The main contextual background of the concept is situation after II World War, when two superpowers can't to beat each other by traditional methods and forms of war. These circumstances had created necessity for using such foreign policy instruments as ideology, information, culture, science. Thus, soft power concept is a product of Cold War epoch.

1.2. Discussions and critique

The controversy surrounding the concept of soft power and its content occupy a prominent place in political science. Despite the popularity soft power concept has many critics. According to some, Nye has failed to make a distinction between modes of persuasion and methods of forming preferences. Others criticize the very notion of power incompatible with the terms persuasion and influence. In ideal liberal theory assumes that soft power gives the range of ideologies and imagery, to whom it is directed. The latter should only choose the most complementary ally and the most acceptable ideology. However, practice shows that it is impossible because making such decisions is either authoritarian or based on misconception. In the end, soft power ceases to be a liberal tool. In this situation, it is also important to dilute the terms of power (power) and domination. The first implies a kind of consensus and mutual benefit, albeit at times based on unequal exchange. Dominance comes through the clash and conflict of interest and involves the subordination of some to others. The specifics of soft power often lies in the ability of the dominant nation to issue its own interests as the interests of the countries affected.

Contemporary Chinese theorists pay great attention to the study of the phenomenon of soft power and its practical application. Today we can say that in the world there was Chinese school the study of this phenomenon. Working in the world's largest centers for the study of global political processes, the Chinese researchers propose your directions this analysis focused on very specific material Africa and South-East Asia. According to some Chinese researchers, the key concept of soft power should be the concept, characterizing its potential, based on historical and cultural traditions of diplomacy. The potential of soft power, according to Chinese academic tradition is a historically formed the reputation of the country, orienting its foreign partners on the formation of bilateral dialogue in the framework of established norms and traditions.

In addition, there is also the dilemma of assessing the effectiveness of soft power. The theory of soft power requires a more detailed elaboration, particularly in the field of categorical apparatus. This will avoid the existing confusion associated with the fact that such soft power, which is its resource, and that its Institute To analyze the process of soft impact effectively would be to use institutional analysis. The fact that institutions almost always in sight, everything else is in the sphere of consciousness and in the motivations and drivers for action of individuals or the political elite as a whole.

2. Problem Statement

Attempts to use soft power in practice (successful and not so) have a quite long history. The United States are rightly considered the most successful power in use of soft power in foreign policy. Along with the United States, other countries are also actively aspire to apply soft power. Member States of the European Union, using the category "European values", affect the political culture of many non-European countries and regions — from East Asia to Africa and Latin America (Tsaturyan, 2010, p. 181). The phenomenon of the Korean wave as a mass dissemination of modern South Korean culture in the world is also an example of the use of soft power. At the 17th Congress of Korea's Communist Party, President Hu Jintao repeatedly referred to soft power and the tasks of developing China's soft power strategy (Liu Zaizi, 2009, p. 150).

Far from remaining on the sidelines from key international and political trends, the Russian leadership has declared in recent years that it is necessary to use soft power in Russia's foreign policy. The term "soft power" is enshrined in the new Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, adopted in early 2013 (The Concept, 2013, para 2). "A wider use of the so-called soft power will help to increase the practical effectiveness of Russia's foreign policy," said Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on January 23, 2013 (Lavrov, 2013).

One of the priorities of Russia's foreign policy, which has a solid historical experience and certain perspectives, is use of soft power factors towards Mongolia. Why the problem of soft power in contemporary Russian-Mongolian relations is so relevant? Unlike the socialist period, when relations between the USSR and the MPR were allied, in the last two decades the situation had radically changed. Mongolia refused membership in any military-political alliances and relied on a multi-vector foreign policy. Thus, Russia has lost its monopoly position in relations with Mongolia and is compelled to compete with other powers for influence in this country. Moreover, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Mongolia at the turn of the 1980s –1990s led to a situation when the country ceased to be considered as

an arena for direct military confrontation of the great powers. These changes became the prerequisite for a fundamentally new international political situation around Mongolia, characterized by non-military rivalry of the great powers for influence in the region. Therefore, along with such traditional spheres of interstate relations as policy, military and economy, the sphere of cultural and educational cooperation between the two countries is no less significant.

It should be recognized that in the socialist period, scientific and cultural cooperation between the USSR and the MPR was an important channel for strengthening allied relations. With the direct assistance of the Soviet Union, Mongolia was able to create its own scientific and technical base, the system of secondary and higher education, the health care system, to train national scientists and specialists in various fields of high technology. In the period from 1922 to 1991, about 55 000 Mongolian citizens were educated in the USSR universities (Russia and Mongolia, 2011, p. 287). A positive image of the Soviet Union, its social and political system, the Soviet people was formed through the scientific, cultural and humanitarian ties. In other words, the use of soft power was one of the instruments of Moscow's foreign policy.

3. Research Questions

With the beginning of the crisis in Soviet-Mongolian relations, the level of cooperation between the countries in science and culture, as well as in all other fields of bilateral relations, has been decreased. The end of the 1980s – the beginning of the 1990s were characterized by the significant rise of anti-Russian / anti-Soviet sentiments in Mongolia. The recall of the Soviet technical specialists from Mongolia, carried out at the insistence of the Mongolian leadership, became a kind of reaction to such nationalistic sentiments in Mongolian society. In the atmosphere of the systemic social crisis being experienced by Mongolian society, Soviet / Russian cultural influence was perceived as a part of the Soviet "colonial policy" towards Mongolia. Often attempts to distance from any attributes of the country's socialist past, which became part of state policy, were in fact actions aimed at rejection of the cultural influence of Russia.

Since the mid-1990s, in view of deterioration of the socio-economic situation in the country, decline in the living standards of the population and the quality of medical care, increased mortality, social diseases and other problems, most of the Mongols turned to the layers of historical memory associated with nostalgia for more prosperous living conditions in the socialist past. As currently there are no artificial obstacles to cultural contacts with any country in the world, the revival of the interest of the Mongols in Russia and the Russian (Russian) culture at the turn of the 20th —21st centuries demonstrates the Mongolian people's natural attraction to cultural contacts with their northern neighbour.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the paper is to find the main features, strengths and weaknesses of soft power of Russian foreign policy towards Mongolia.

5. Research Methods

In Mongolian public sentiment Russia had come to be considered at the mass level as a desirable foreign policy partner. The results of sociological surveys of recent years invariably put Russia on the first place in the list of the most welcomed by Mongolia partners. So, according to the sociological surveys annually carried out by the most authoritative in Mongolia sociological fund "Sant Maral", Russia had been considered the most desirable foreign partner in 2013–2015 (51.1%, 53.3%, 59.0% respectively). Similar indicators for other countries were following: the USA — 8.2%, 7.6%, 6.5%; China — 0.7%, 1.2%, 1.3%; Japan — 7.0 %, 4.8%, 7.0% (Political Barometer, 2016).

6. Findings

At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, scientific and cultural contacts between the two countries revived. Intergovernmental programs of cooperation between Mongolia and Russia in the field of science, culture and education are being signed. During the Moscow meeting of the Presidents of the two countries in 2006, The program of cooperation between The Russian Federal Agency for Culture and Cinematography and The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture of Mongolia for 2006–2008 was signed. After a long break, the Days of Mongolian Culture are annually held in Moscow, St. Petersburg and other cities of Russia, as well as the Days of Russian Culture in Ulaanbaatar, Darkhan, Erdenet. In 2009, two centers of Russkiy Mir Foundation were opened in Ulaanbaatar, aimed at popularization of the Russian language and culture abroad.

Special attention is still paid to higher education as a key factor in Russia's soft power in relations with Mongolia. Here it is impossible not to agree with the opinion of the rector of Moscow State Institute of International Relations A. Torkunov, that "certain values and views of young people are formed in student years. Creatively thinking and inquisitive students from other countries actively learn the language of the host country and with the sincere interest get acquainted with its achievements in science and culture during their education. Such students acquire valuable social capital and, having returned home with a new baggage of accumulated knowledge, connections, sympathies and new friends, as a rule, become effective conductors of the language and culture of the country where they studied" (Torkunov, 2012).

The education system is one of the key factors in development of States in modern conditions. A special role here belongs to the system of higher education as a universal model of training qualified personnel for the country on the one hand, and as an important mechanism for including the state in global socio-cultural and geopolitical processes, on the other. One of the important aspects of modern education development is workout of educational programs and courses by many leading countries that stimulate the export of educational services as an income item. At the same time, the system of higher education is still in the process of searching for optimal models of development as at the national level as at the interstate, regional and global levels. Among the most important conditions for development of the national educational system is a balanced system of university management, according to the territorial location, socio-economic conditions of the region, demographic characteristics and other factors.

An example of the greatest progress in this area is a number of decisions by the Russian side on increasing the quota for training Mongolian citizens in Russian universities from the federal budget. In 2004–2005 200 places were offered, in 2008 — 215 places, in 2011 — 300 places, in 2015–2016 — 350 places. Today, according to the data of The Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, over 2 000 citizens of Mongolia study in Russian universities. About 1 000 of them are educated on a commercial basis (Russia and Mongolia, 2011, p. 312).

In recent years, the Russian foreign policy towards Mongolia, more and more emphasizes development of direct contacts with the Mongolian audience through systems of exchanges, scientific and educational scholarship programs that allow Mongolian citizens to get acquainted with Russia.

Cooperation is implemented in the following areas:

- additional educational programs, including practical study (mainly Russian language courses, language practice);
- joint educational programs;
- scientific research (mainly through the work of Russian Humanitarian Scientific Foundation and Russian Foundation for Basic Research, which were integrated into one fund in 2017).

Another trend in development of Russian-Mongolian bilateral cooperation in education is ensuring by the Mongolian side scholarships for Russian students, post-graduates, teaching and research staff in conformity with the letter from the International Department of The Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation No. 16-639 of April 17, 2017.

Various unions and associations of graduates from Russian universities plays a large role in promotion of the Russia's influence. One of the most famous is The Mongolian Association of Graduates from Russian (Soviet) Universities, graduates from Irkutsk higher educational institutions active participate in its work (Association of Graduates, 2016).

Among the positive grounds for the successful use of Russian education as an instrument of foreign policy influence towards Mongolia are the following.

1. The historical tradition of involving Mongolian citizens, primarily political and intellectual elite, in the system of higher and partly secondary education of the Soviet Union. Thus, 6 ministers of the current government of Mongolia got higher education in Soviet / Russian universities.

2. The Russian language is relatively widely spread in Mongolia. The study of the professor Ts. Saranzatsral showed that Russian is one of the most popular foreign languages in Mongolia, second only to English. According to the data of the fund "Sant Maral" for 2007, more than half of the respondents gave a good and satisfactory assessment of their Russian language proficiency — 50.1% (13.3% — good assessment, 36.8% — satisfactory assessment). 21.6% of respondents consider their language skills to be poor. So, almost 3/4 of the metropolitan residents more or less know the Russian. And most importantly, 93.3% of respondents favor teaching Russian at secondary schools of Mongolia, 98.5% — training Mongolian students in Russia (Zheleznyakov, 2007, p. 6-7). At the same time in recent years there is a decline in number of people who speak Russian. According to P. Tsagaan, head of Mongolian Presidential Administration, "time is not on our side, quite the opposite. The number of people who know the Russian language, culture, values will decrease, we can not stop the time" (Interview with Head,

2016). According to Yu. Kruchkin, today "maximum 3% of the population are proficient in the Russian language and use it" (Comments by Yuri Kruchkin, 2016)

3. Nowadays, there are branches of several Russian universities of Moscow, Ulan-Ude, and Irkutsk in Mongolia (Ulaanbaatar and Darkhan), which makes Russian education more accessible for Mongolian students.

At the same time, there is a number of impediments related to successful use of education as an instrument of Russia's foreign policy in Mongolia.

1. The quality of Russian higher education is relatively poor. As you know, in recent years Russian universities haven't been included in the top 100 leading universities of the world.

2. There is a sharp competition with other foreign universities, actively admitting Mongolian students. In 2011–2012 more than 2 000 Mongolian students studied in China (Russia and Mongolia, 2011, p. 315). Every year, hundreds of Mongolian citizens enter the universities and institutes of the United States, Europe, Japan, Korea and Australia.

3. The system of providing quotas for training Mongolian students in Russia have some problems. According to the information by the chief specialist of The Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, T. Soboleva, many of the Mongolian students entering Russian universities present certificates from The Russian school in Ulaanbaatar, but they do not speak Russian at all. Inspections show a significant number of falsifications of school certificates. This leads to a large percentage of expulsions the Mongols from Russian universities, what has a negative impact on the overall image of Russian higher education and undermines the effectiveness of the system of providing quotas (Mongolian Parents, 2014).

4. An important condition for distribution of foreign students in the world's educational centers is not only the attractiveness of a particular educational system, but also non-academic factors, such as the cost of living, quality of life, the level of tolerance in the host society and personal security. Russia doesn't have the leading positions in some of these aspects. For example, among negative factors, Mongolian citizens note the problems associated with the spread of drunkenness in Russia (23.4%), high prices (31.8%), and insecurity (25.2%) (Zheleznyakov, 2007, p. 6-7).

In addition, we should take into consideration that education with all its advantages can not be a panacea for the existing problems and issues of mutual interest. For example, an argument confirming the desired loyalty of a Mongolian politician to Russia is often a reference to his / her Russian (Soviet) education. For a long time the Soviet Union successfully used higher education as an instrument of geopolitics and "ideological weapon" in the conditions of bloc confrontation and "cold war" well before the emergence of the concept of soft power. However, firstly, modern Russia does not have such an ideology embedded in the system of higher education. Secondly, along with Russian education, many Mongolian politicians have got education in the West, Japan, Australia. Thus, the multi-vector principle is implemented at the level of personal career strategies of Mongolian politicians. Thirdly, some Mongolian politicians with the reputation of pro-Western actors, also got a higher education in Russia or the USSR.

7. Conclusion

Is it possible to use Russian education and culture in general as a factor of Russian policy soft power towards Mongolia? Yes, if the work for overcoming the impediments will be systemic and focus on a long-term perspective. Resource-intensive, but short-term steps, combined with the situational nature of decision-making, are not able to give a solid result. Russian culture may become an important factor of soft power, including foreign policy towards Mongolia, and an example for other countries and regions to follow, if the overall level of Russia's socio-economic development increases.

Acknowledgments

The study was conducted within the framework of the project of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research, "Foreign factors of political process in contemporary Mongolia" project №17-27-03001

References

- Comments by Yuri Kruchkin to the Latest Articles about Mongolia in the Russian media. Retrieved from http://news.mongolnow.com/08_06_001.html (In Russ.).
- Holik, G. (2011) Paper Tiger? Chinese Soft Power in East Asia. *Political Science Quarterly*, 2, 232–242.
- Intervyu c glavoi administracii prezidenta Mongolii P. Tsagaanom [Interview with Head of Mongolian Presidential Administration P. Tsagaan]. Retrieved from <http://mongolnow.com/Tsagaan.html> (In Russ.)
- Lavrov: Rossiya prodolzhit politiku "myagkoy sily" [Lavrov: Russia Will Continue the Policy of "Soft Power"]. Retrieved from <https://ria.ru/politics/20130123/919370016.html> (In Russ.)
- Liu Zaizi (2009). "Myagkaya sila" v strategii razvitiya Kitaya ["Soft Power" in the Development Strategy of China]. *Politicheskie issledovaniya*, 4. 149-155.
- Mongolian Parents Buy Children Places in Universities of Russia. Retrieved from <http://rus.ruvr.ru>
- Nye, J. (2007). *Notes for a soft power research agenda*. London: Routledge
- Political Barometer 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016. Retrieved from <http://santmaral.mn>
- Rossiia i Mongolia na puti k strategicheskomu partnerstvu [Russia and Mongolia on the Path of Strategic Partnership] (2011). Moscow: Nauka (In Russ.)
- The Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (February 12, 2013). Retrieved from <http://www.mid.ru>
- Torkunov, A. V. (2012). Obrazovanie kak instrument "myagkoi sily" vo vneshnei politike Rossiya [Education as an Instrument of "Soft Power" in Russia's Foreign Policy]. Retrieved from <http://russiancouncil.ru> (In Russ.)
- Tsaturyan, S. A. (2010). "Myagkaya sila" ES: instrument sozdanya edinoi sverhderzhavy ["Soft Power" of the EU: the Instrument for Creating a Single Superpower]. *Molodoi uchenyi*, 1-2, 181–186. (In Russ.)
- Zheleznyakov, A. S. (2007). Sotsiologijn sudalgaany dyn.[Sociological studies]. *Umar d khorsh*, 11, 6-7 (In Mong.).