

## The concept of soft power in the theory of international relations

**Abstract.** *The article is devoted to the current topic of international relations - the role and place of soft and hard power. The concept of «soft power» is considered in the context of theories of international relations. The authors describe the concept of the emergence of «soft power», the principles of the liberal theory of international relations, and also describe the connection with the theory of neorealism. In this article, the authors analyze the theory of J. Nye, the founder of the concept of «soft power», the authors describe the mechanism of action of «soft power». A feature of this article is the understanding by the authors of the role of this concept, which affects the image of the state abroad and the strategy for the implementation of national interests through reliance on cooperation and the use of soft power tools through culture, education, humanitarian aid, and the popularization of ideology and lifestyle.*

**Keywords:** *soft power, hard power, smart power, transformational diplomacy, culture, theory of international relations, Joseph Nye, coercive diplomacy.*

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**Introduction.** The history of states is marked by the pursuit of territories, spheres of influence, energy resources, and qualified personnel, through various peaceful and aggressive means. In the current context of a new transformation of the world order, major powers employ both «soft» and «hard» power.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the world experienced significant transformations that impacted the theory of international relations. Scholars from different theoretical approaches, including neoliberalism, neorealism, and constructivism, proposed their approaches to address traditional and emerging issues in international relations.

During the mid-1980s, scholars began to rethink the concept of «traditional strength» in the theory of international relations. The neoliberal school introduced the concept of «soft power», which soon became an independent theoretical concept. However, neorealists continued to advocate for «hard power» to reinforce the role and influence of states in international relations. The concept

of «soft power» challenged political realism's absolute reliance on «hard power».

Overall, the concept of «soft power» provides states with non-coercive and persuasive tools to advance their interests in the international arena, in contrast to «hard power», which emphasizes military and economic force. In contemporary international relations, «soft power» and «hard power» are interrelated and employed in various combinations depending on states' objectives and the circumstances of the international system.

The aim of the research is to examine the concept of soft power in the theory of international relations. A feature of this article is the understanding by the authors of the role of this concept, which affects the image of the state abroad and the strategy for the implementation of national interests through reliance on cooperation and the use of soft power tools through culture, education, humanitarian aid, and the popularization of ideology and lifestyle.

## Research methods

This scientific article utilized several theoretical and empirical methodologies to achieve its research objectives. First, a terminological analysis was conducted to understand and clarify the key concepts and terms used in the article. Second, comparative historical analysis was utilized to compare and contrast historical events or processes relevant to the article's research question. Third, categorization was used to group and classify relevant data into meaningful categories. Fourth, description was employed to provide detailed explanations of the key concepts, terms, and empirical findings. Fifth, the problem-chronological method was utilized to analyze the evolution of the problem under consideration over time. Lastly, situational analysis was employed to investigate the contextual factors that may influence the phenomenon under study.

By using these various methodologies, the article aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research question and its empirical context. The terminological analysis helped ensure that the key concepts and terms used throughout the article were well-defined and understood by the reader. The comparative historical analysis allowed for a deeper exploration of the historical context and the factors that may have influenced the phenomenon under investigation. Categorization and description were used to organize and provide a clear presentation of the empirical data. The problem-chronological method allowed for an analysis of how the problem has evolved over time, while situational analysis facilitated an understanding of the broader context in which the research question is situated.

Overall, these methodologies allowed for a rigorous and comprehensive analysis of the research question, and ensured that the empirical findings were presented in a clear and concise manner. By utilizing a variety of methodologies, the article was able to provide a multi-faceted analysis of the phenomenon under study, which is crucial for advancing the field of political science research.

## Literature review

The notion of soft power has been the subject of considerable scholarly inquiry. Dutch historian Rob Kroes has argued that as early as the 19th century, posters disseminated by shipping companies and emigration societies in Europe helped to cultivate the image of the American West as a symbol of freedom, well before the rise of consumer culture in the 20th century. This image exerted a lasting influence on the worldview of subsequent generations of Europeans, who incorporated many aspects of American culture into their own societies [1].

During the late 19th century, the American leadership started to formulate plans for global expansion, and a variety of geopolitical theories and doctrines emerged to justify this agenda. One influential figure in this intellectual movement was Admiral A. Mahan, who laid the groundwork for a doctrine of divine and geopolitical predestination of American power. Mahan believed that the United States was destined to expand its influence throughout the world, and saw the navy as the primary instrument of this mission [2].

The work of Russian author MM. Lebedeva is relevant to the issue at hand. In their article «Soft Power»: Concept and Approaches, they explore the relationship between the concepts of «soft power» and propaganda. Lebedeva demonstrates that the realistic approach tends to conflate these two concepts, while the neoliberal approach emphasizes their fundamental differences. The article also presents a comparison of the neoliberal and realistic approaches to the concept of soft power, highlighting key parameters of difference between the two perspectives. Despite the distinctions between soft and hard power, and between propaganda and soft power, the article argues that these concepts should not be seen as wholly oppositional. In fact, J. Nye's concept of a «continuum» suggests that soft and hard power can be seen as interconnected, and that propaganda and soft power can also overlap and interact with one another [3].

Another Russian researcher M. Kharkevich analyzes the political use and adaptation of the American concept of «soft power» in the

foreign policy rhetoric of the United States and Russia. Drawing upon the theory of communicative action by J. Habermas and its application to international relations theory by T. Risse, Kharkevich explores how the concept of soft power has been utilized and transformed in the two countries' official foreign policy discourse. In the field of international relations, the diffusion of the concept of soft power is often interpreted as reflecting an ideological competition among states [4].

Although the idea of soft power has significant appeal as a tool of foreign policy, it has only recently entered into political discourse in South Korea. Despite the recognition of new positive characteristics of international relations, Lee Geun argues that Joseph Nye's concept is descriptive and lacks theoretical structure. Lee's critique centers on the contrast between Nye's concept of soft power and the resources that enable soft power. According to Lee, being «soft» alone does not imply possession of soft power. Instead, resources such as cultural values, ideology, and know-how must be transformed into soft power through a three-stage process: 1) utilization of «soft» resources; 2) cognitive processes of the receivers; and 3) the generation of soft power.

In addition, Lee Geun identifies five different categories of soft power in his article «A Theory of Soft Power and Korea's Soft Power Strategy», according to the unique purposes of soft power. Soft power is divided into five types, according to Lee:

1. Soft power, which aims to improve global security by presenting a policy of peace and democratic political principles;
2. Soft power, which aims to generate international support for its foreign and security policies.
3. Soft power, which has an impact on other countries' ideas and tastes;
4. Soft power, which contributes to the international community's and countries' unity;
5. Soft power, whose purpose is to elevate the stature of the country's political leaders and to strengthen the country's internal policies [5].

## Discussion

At the end of the 20th century, Joseph Nye, an American political scientist, developed a categorization of government capabilities into two forms of power: «hard» and «soft.» Hard power was defined as the ability to protect foreign policy objectives at the expense of military and economic strength, while soft power referred to a state's capacity to attract others through its cultural, social, and political ideals. The globalized, unified, and liberal values that emerged after the Cold War have led to a more connected and democratic world, where coercion and intimidation are increasingly ineffective. With the United Nations' support, increased economic cooperation has resulted in significant growth in civil society and greater attention to long-term security and development worldwide. The use of hard force seems to be less effective than soft power [6, p. 153].

In the context of soft power, culture is defined as a collection of experiences that give meaning to society, including high culture geared towards mass entertainment markets, such as literature, art, television, film, and music. While the idea that a society influenced by soft power is humanistic, good, and nonviolent is appealing, it is important to consider whether this notion holds true. Art, for example, may help bridge differences, foster mutual respect, and influence people's thoughts and behaviors. However, this may not fully address the diverse concerns of various groups. Questions such as whether there is space for other local arts or whether professionally polished forms of culture dominate require consideration. Additionally, the capacity to assess soft power's effectiveness needs to be addressed.

Soft power is contrasted with the traditional conception of power, which is defined by hard power and is associated with military and economic might. Examples of hard power include armed intervention, coercive diplomacy, and economic sanctions, all of which rely on material resources such as military troops and economic means. The notion of power, which encompasses strength, influence, and authority, has long been associated with American thinking and

has been of particular interest to the American political and military elite.

Joseph Nye mainly constructed his thesis, basing not only on the findings of his theoretical research, but also on his experience working at the Pentagon and the US State Department, the National Intelligence Council, and the United Nations Committee on Disarmament Problems throughout the years. He is properly regarded as one of the most known specialists in international relations, as a graduate of the prestigious Princeton University and a Harvard professor with 40 years of expertise. Professor J. Nye, a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences of the United States Diplomatic Academy, progressively evolved his own theory of power, which he outlined in his book «Soft Power» (2004). «Soft power» is defined as «the capacity to persuade others to desire what you want or as an indirect / cooperative technique of wielding power», according to his thesis. That example, «soft power» is the capacity to attract rather than force what you desire [7, p. 8].

Although there is no contradiction between the theories of realism and the concept of «soft power», Joseph Nye's concept of «soft power» typically fits within the liberal theory of international relations.

The idea of «soft power» is also linked to liberal theories of international affairs, such as:

1. The theory of a democratic world.
2. The theory of commercial liberalism.
3. The theory of international organizations.

Democratic governments do not fight each other, according to the liberal idea of the democratic world. Democrats prefer to employ soft power over harsh force. Furthermore, Nye claims that a democratic state retains its soft power even under tough circumstances. «Democratic propaganda and self-criticism is highly important,» for example, since it «increases the legitimacy of the country's statements.» When a policy is challenged, it might gain «soft power» by serving as an evidence of truth and a demonstration of freedom of expression for the target countries.

Commercial liberalism, according to which the route to peace is to foster free commerce and economic interdependence, is another significant liberal philosophy of international affairs.

Economic globalization «forces» the government to work with others, which is coercion and more akin to «hard power» than «soft power.» A country with strong economic resources can exert pressure on those that are economically weak. Economic resources, on the other hand, may be utilized to generate not only «hard power,» but also «soft power,» and can be used not only for coercion, but also to boost the state's appeal.

With a free market economy, the state might become appealing to others in the context of modern economic interdependence, and its model of a liberal economy can become an example to follow.

V. Calahan, a British scientist, coined the phrase «negative soft power,» which literally translates as «negative soft power,» but refers to the foundation on which it is constructed rather than the bad effect it has. These are usually some unfavorable facts and feelings that allow the subject to have a beneficial impact on the object. «Soft power» isn't just a nebulous concept that only scientists and international relations students are interested in. Its idea is still evolving, but it is assisting nations and businesses in gaining financial and other benefits without resorting to costly and dangerous measures.

The theory of international organizations also informs the concept of soft power. In the framework of international relations regulation, international structures play a crucial function as a unifying format for diverse nations or as independent topics. International organizations, which are viewed as a way of reducing the impacts of anarchy in neoliberal theory, foster cooperation between nations by establishing shared laws and standards.

States utilize their own methods and approaches as soft power tools, focusing on two primary areas of «public diplomacy»: radio and television broadcasting, information technology, and educational initiatives. The first step is to form one's own perspective on events, as well as to affirm the universality of the state's principles and ideology and communicate them to a foreign audience. Educational initiatives, which include multiple cultural and exchange programs, are aimed to foster long-term community partnerships.

## **Results**

The concept of «soft power» has gained considerable attention and importance in international relations since its introduction by Joseph Nye in his book «Bound to Lead» in 1991. This idea has been studied and debated by scholars and practitioners alike, and has evolved into a more nuanced understanding of how power is exercised in the international arena. The concept of «smart power» has emerged as a balance between «soft» and «hard» power, recognizing that both types of power can be effective in different situations.

The idea of «soft power» gained particular relevance during the presidency of George W. Bush, who sought to incorporate it into the US's foreign policy as a means of enhancing the country's image abroad. However, this effort was not successful in achieving its intended goals. In contrast, when Barack Obama became President in 2009, he inherited a country whose global popularity had reached an all-time low. As a result, his administration made it a priority to reclaim America's global leadership through a variety of soft power initiatives.

One of the key features of «soft power» is its ability to generate attraction and admiration from other countries and peoples, rather than relying on coercion or force. This can be achieved through a range of means, such as cultural diplomacy, education and exchange programs, humanitarian aid, and public diplomacy. These initiatives can help to build trust and cooperation between nations, and create a more favorable global image for the country in question.

However, the effectiveness of soft power also depends on a range of factors, such as the credibility and legitimacy of the country in question, the receptivity of the target audience, and the broader geopolitical context. In addition, soft power initiatives may not always be sufficient on their own, and may need to be complemented by other forms of power, such as military or economic power.

Overall, the concept of «soft power» has become an increasingly important aspect of international relations, as countries seek to enhance their global influence and achieve their foreign policy goals. While there are limitations to the effectiveness of soft power,

it remains an important tool in the diplomatic toolkit of nations around the world.

## **Findings**

In a time when the global political order is in transition, the resurgence of great power competition has become a prominent feature of international relations. This competition is driven by a struggle for influence in the global system, as well as conflicts between the national interests of various actors. However, it poses a significant threat to the global community due to economic and military asymmetry among actors and the potential for non-military conflicts to escalate into military confrontations, especially when battles are fought on multiple fronts.

The concept of «soft power,» which encompasses both «influence» and «attractive power,» has gained increasing prominence in international relations. According to Joseph Nye, «soft power» resources refer to all the ways that inspire and draw people to the source of the corresponding influence, enabling those seeking to manage it to achieve the desired outcome. Soft power relies on the attraction of ideas, with the potential to alter choices associated with non-material resources like culture, ideology, and institutions. As such, the «soft» technique of influence serves as a counterbalance to «hard» force, which is usually associated with substantial resources such as military might and economic power.

Nye's concept of «soft power» has expanded the state's view in international relations, incorporating the core concepts of liberal theory of international relations, but also incorporating some aspects of neorealism, such as the role of the state and military might. As the notion of «soft power» gains increasing attention and practical application, the academic community is expected to continue focusing on the concept's development and operationalization.

## **Conclusion**

In today's world, the use of traditional «hard power» methods such as military might and economic pressure has become increasingly ineffective in achieving a state's

desired outcomes in international relations. Instead, the concept of “soft power,” which encompasses a state’s ability to influence others through attraction and persuasion, has gained popularity and is now considered a significant measure of a country’s national strength. This idea is based on the belief that a state’s image and reputation can have a profound impact on the values and orientations of individuals and society as a whole. Therefore, a state’s soft power, which is built on non-material resources such as culture, ideology, and institutions, serves as a counterbalance to hard power and is crucial to a state’s ability to compete globally.

The concept of “soft power” that was introduced by Joseph Nye, who sought to expand the traditional view of power in international relations to include non-material resources. Nye’s approach draws on the core ideas of liberal theory but also incorporates aspects of neorealism, including the role of the state and military power. This unique perspective has opened up new avenues for research and exploration in the field of cratology, which focuses on the study of power and its various forms.

In the current global environment, a state’s ability to compete on the three boards of economic growth, military-technological development, and value-cultural impact is essential for it to be considered a full-fledged power. This concept is rooted in the belief that a state’s power cannot be fully understood without taking into account its intangible

foundations, including its soft power resources. In this context, the economic indicators and the creation of new types of weaponry are just a part of a state’s overall power, which also includes its ability to influence others through its cultural attractiveness and values.

Although soft power has proved to be a valuable tool for states in achieving their foreign policy objectives, it is important to note that it is not a panacea for all conflict situations. There are scenarios where military resolution may still be necessary, and in such cases, soft power alone may not be sufficient. However, it is important for policymakers and scholars to recognize the value of soft power in today’s world and seek ways to incorporate it into their strategies. One potential way to do so is to focus on increasing the number of police officers, which can help to address security concerns while also improving a state’s image and reputation.

In conclusion, the concept of soft power has become increasingly important in today’s global politics, as traditional hard power methods have become less effective. A state’s ability to compete on the three boards of economic growth, military-technological development, and value-cultural impact is crucial to its overall power, which cannot be fully understood without taking into account its intangible foundations. While soft power is not a panacea for all conflict situations, it is a valuable tool for states to achieve their foreign policy objectives and should be incorporated into their strategies.

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**А. Сейлхан**

*Л.Н. Гумилев атындағы Еуразия ұлттық университеті,  
Астана, Қазақстан*

### **Халықаралық қатынастар теориясындағы жұмсақ күш концепциясы**

**Аңдатпа.** Мақала халықаралық қатынастардың өзекті тақырыбы – жұмсақ және қатты күштің ролі мен орнына арналған. «Жұмсақ күш» ұғымы халықаралық қатынастар теориялары аясында қарастырылады. Авторлар «жұмсақ күштің» пайда болу тұжырымдамасын, халықаралық қатынастардың либералды теориясының принциптерін сипаттайды, сонымен қатар неореализм теориясымен байланыстырып қарастырады. Төмендегі ғылыми мақалада авторлар «жұмсақ күш» тұжырымдамасының негізін қалаушы Дж. Найдың теориясын талдап, «жұмсақ күштің» әсер ету механизмін анықтайды. Бұл мақаланың ерекшелігі - мемлекеттің шетелдегі имиджіне және жұмсақ күштің құралдарын мәдениет, білім беру, гуманитарлық көмек, идеологияны популяциялау, өмір салты арқылы қолдануына әсер ететін осы тұжырымдаманың ролін авторлардың түсінуі.

**Түйін сөздер:** жұмсақ күш, қатты күш, ақылды күш, трансформациялық дипломатия, мәдениет, білім, халықаралық қатынастар теориясы, Джозеф Най, мәжбүрлі дипломатия.

**А. Сейлхан**

*Евразийский национальный университет имени Л.Н. Гумилева,  
Астана, Казахстан*

### **Концепция мягкой силы в теории международных отношений**

**Аннотация.** Статья посвящена актуальной теме международных отношений – роли и месте мягкой и жесткая силе. Рассматривается концепция «мягкой силы» в контексте теорий международных отношений. Авторы описывают концепцию возникновения «мягкой силы», принципы либеральной теории международных отношений, а также описывают связь с теорией неореализма. В научной статье авторы дают анализ теории Дж. Ная родоначальника концепции «мягкая сила», авторы описывают механизм действия «мягкой силы». Особенностью данной статьи является понимание авторами, роли данной концепции, который влияет на имидж государства за рубежом и стратегия по реализации национальных интересов через опору на сотрудничество и использования инструментов мягкой силы через культуру, образование, гуманитарную помощь, популизацию идеологии, образа жизни.

**Ключевые слова:** мягкая сила, жесткая сила, умная сила, дипломатия преобразований, культура, образование, теория международных отношений, Джозеф Най, принудительную дипломатию.

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### **Information about author:**

*Seilkhan Aisulu* – The 3rd year doctoral student of the Department of Regional Studies, Department of International Relations, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan.

*Сейлхан Айсулу* – аймақтану кафедрасының 3 курс докторанты, халықаралық қатынастар факультеті, Л.Н. Гумилев атындағы Еуразия ұлттық университеті, Астана, Қазақстан.