NEW PERCEPTIONS IN NATIONAL "SOFT POWER" CONCEPTS

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Abstract: *The research of theoretical and practical aspects of "soft power" continues growing rapidly as a key field within international power investigations. The text explores potential applications of "soft power" solutions for contemporary domestic political goals. The "soft power" theory consists of a beneficial concept alongside a philosophy that creates organizational principles to build enduring non-violent social systems. The commentary explores different interpretations of "soft power" by researchers and explores debates around definitions from sociological, political, scientific, and cultural perspectives.*

Keywords: *"soft power," international relations, states, foreign and domestic policy, culture, cultural diplomacy.*

American political scientist Joseph Nye defined "soft power" as a concept after the twentieth century. Nye explored the new global order through his article "Soft Power," which appeared in the 1990 "Foreign Policy" issue. He developed the concept of interdependence with Robert Keohane, then explored how transnational corporations' world power structure and influence as non-state actors became growing forces in international politics. The world's transforming nature emphasizes sustained importance for information technologies and communications, while state accomplishments depend on active attraction abilities through "want-creation" success. The foundation of Nye's work stands on "soft power," which uses national culture, values, and attractive foreign policy to win support from international actors. The counterpoint to "hard" power emerges when nations focus on persuasion instead of forced financial incentives. He subsequently developed the

concept "smart power" to describe blended approaches of "soft" and "hard" power applications.[1]

The replacement of "brutal force" with "soft power" and "smart power" now guides international politics through new diplomatic channels that substitute traditional interactive methods. Public diplomacy labels the new diplomatic pathways through which governments establish communications that link different state societies. The time brought heightened attention to culture, historical heritage, language, and beliefs while focusing intensely on public organizations and civil societies. International politics has begun transitioning from military action to dialogue-based relationships as countries move away from using force. As a diplomatic instrument, cultural diplomacy combines knowledge exchange with art dissemination and value systems movement alongside religion exchange and custom sharing to create political relationships while encouraging stability.

Modern international relations cannot exist without states applying their soft power strategy globally. According to today's international relations standards, the concept of "soft power" needs to be examined within its context of cultural role. We believe soft power represents a state's capacity to defend its interests by using native strengths alongside operational capabilities, discouraging harmful forces and offering economic rewards to the state through cultural and policy promotion. States establish partnerships to fulfill their mutual goals, and cultural diplomacy develops its skills and grows more professional through international institutional and political connections.

Academic researchers have approached the task of converting the English phrase "soft power" into the Uzbek language. The terms present two obstacles stemming from their metaphoric tone and vocabulary differences that exit

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[1] Nye J. Smart power. New Perspectives Quarterly, 2009. – Vol. 26. – No 2. – P. 7-9.

between languages. The Uzbek language comprises three translational terms for "power": "kuch," "qudrat," or "quvvat," although some situations may require "influence."

This term functions as a synonym for "power" during usage (for instance "great power" – "qudratli kuch"). The scientific literature of the area utilizes "qudrat" and "kuch" as its primary power-related terminology. Regarding international relations, the term "kuch" has become the most widely accepted traditional translation of the English word "power": International relations participants wield power rather than exercise authority, so we should discuss power dynamics instead. When used as a translation for "kuch," no hierarchical control exists (instead of "someone's power over someone else"). In Uzbek, "kuch" functions like its English counterpart "power" when describing expansive concepts.[2]

The content of this study accepts "power" in international political contexts, which originates from political authority foundations, so it selects "kuch" or "qudrat" as equivalents to translate "power" when the idea emerges in particular scenarios. Within Uzbek, there are multiple ways to translate the English word "soft," which includes "yumshoq" together with "mayin" and "moslashuvchan," along with "zaif" and "yumshoq" and other terms.[3]

A direct equivalent translation for the term appears resistant to discovery in Uzbekistan. The three main proposals for translating "soft power" in Uzbek literature are "moslashuvchan kuch" and "yumshoq kuch," which is today most commonly used. A wide range of academics from Uzbekistan and around the world agree that the distinctive soft

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[2] Nye J. Think again: soft power. // Foreign policy 23.02.2006. Available at: http://foreignpolicy.com/2006/02/23/think-again-soft-power
[3] Fan Y. Soft power: power of attraction or confusion? // Place Branding and Public Diplomacy. – 2008. – V.
4. – No 2. – P. 148.

power metaphor gives misinformation about its comparative value relative to hard power.

Researchers face a challenging task when attempting to comprehend what comprises the so-called "soft power." Joseph Nye simultaneously employs the "soft power" metaphor to establish international relations theory and advance homegrown political influence in foreign policy initiatives. Nye uses his writing to present fresh ideas about worldwide processes while offering concrete solutions to practical foreign policy questions. Based on his analysis Nye believes the West succeeded against the USSR during the "Cold War" through using "hard" and "soft" power combinations and these experiences could help solve current foreign policy problems.

Many contemporary global issues find solutions through this concept and it has gained immense appeal across both Western societies and their elite governing bodies. The public awareness about "soft power" accelerated during the 2000s, along with the 2010s, after Nye introduced the concept in the 1990s. Foreign military operations in the Middle East during the 2000s and early 2010s produced disappointing results. At the same time, terrorist and extremist threats increased because Western public opinion turned hostile toward foreign military deployments, leading politicians to examine soft and bright power alternatives. The political regime started a search for alternative approaches beyond traditional military methods when dealing with foreign policy matters.

At both theoretical and practical levels, researchers do not agree enough about what constitutes "soft power." Joseph Nye faces frequent criticism because he fails to provide a precise definition of "soft power." Across his publications, Nye outlines multiple definitions of "soft power" that sometimes converge but sometimes diverge. According to Nye, the concept continues to transform, while critics have misinterpreted it.

Researchers face a fundamental challenge because of uncertainties regarding the concept of power.[4]

International relations scholarship frequently examines power, but it lacks a universally recognized definition of this concept. Hans Morgenthau, who established the political realism school, explained how political power represents the most complex yet contradictory matter within political scientific study.[5] Based on his international and realist perspective Robert Gilpin designates this category among the most challenging concepts for both international relations scholarship and political science research.[6]

Scholars, beginning with ancient philosophers, have discussed "power" and its related terms "strength" and "influence" throughout human history. The Greek historian Thucydides wrote about power as the fundamental aspect shaping international relations during a period that began in the 5th century BC.[7]

In the 16th century, the Florentine thinker Niccolò Machiavelli, in his work "The Prince", wrote about methods of acquiring and maintaining power, asserting that a ruler's power should be based on a strong foundation: a good army and good laws.[8] English philosopher Thomas Hobbes examined "man's power" within his work when he explained, "Future visible good requires essential supporting elements."[9]

Research into power and authority concepts spanned the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through work from sociologists and political scientists Max Weber and Michel Foucault, Talcott Parsons and Anthony Giddens, Hannah Arendt

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[4] Nye J. Think again: soft power. // Foreign policy 23.02.2006. Available at: http://foreignpolicy.com/2006/02/23/think-again-soft-power.

[5] Morgentau H.J. Politics Among Nations. The Struggle for Power and Peace. – New York: Knopf, 1985. – P. 31

[6] Gilpin R. War and Change in World Politics. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. – P. 13

[7] Fukidid. Tarix. - M: akademik loyiha, 2012 yil. - 557 s

[8] Machiavelli, N. *Selected Works* – Moscow: Badiiy Adabiyot, 1982.

[9] Hobbes, T. *Leviathan, or the Matter, Form, and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil* – Moscow: Fikr, 2001.

and Pierre Bourdieu, scholars from the Chicago School of Political Science, and more. American political scientist Robert Dahl describes how, while ancients studied power's origins, the twentieth century presented the most comprehensive power-related inquiry in human history.[10]

In international relations theory, the definition of power usually falls under the perspective of political realism. From realist perspectives, states remain the main entities shaping international relations, while power functions as both the key determinant and essential foundation of state interactions. From the perspective of this school power represents a state's potential to achieve objectives that exceed its present status through its available material assets.[11]

To his school of political realism, Hans Morgenthau dedicated energy to defining state power while simultaneously exploring national resources. Morgenthau unveils seven fundamental national power components, including geographic position and natural resources, together with industrial might, military gear, human numbers, and national ethos, whereas diplomatic quality stands among the vital elements. According to Morgenthau's discussion about imperialism, he identifies "cultural imperialism" alongside military and economic subtypes while noting its ability to reign over both physical lands and mental states.

His beliefs shared similar thoughts to those of other writers. British scholar Edward Carr published his vital work about international relations before Morgenthau's famous 1939 work, significantly influencing this academic field. Carr's ideas about power and authority were substantially formed through his study of the period between the world wars, when fascists emerged to succeed in governing Germany. In his views on

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[10] Dahl R. Stinebrickner B. Modern Political Analysis. – Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2003. – 184 p.

[11] Carr E.H. Propaganda in International Politics. – Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939; Carr, E.H. The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations. – London: Macmillan, 1946.

national power in international relations, Car identifies three types: The three fundamental forms of national power are economic and military power alongside "control over thought." That specific type played a significant role during the studied period.

Most of Europe's past states maintained military strength as their dominant form of authority until the twentieth century, when there was a growing emphasis on non-military capacities, including economic might, cultural influence, and informational control. A number of years after Joseph Nye's original proposal, "soft power," both concepts proved similar.

According to Princeton University researcher David Baldwin, the understanding of power among realists and neorealists like Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer is that power serves as either potential capacity or internal origin, whose primary focus is on essential state characteristics. Speakers representing these institutions argue that supplementing core national assets produces dominance capabilities, while their "balance of power" theory distributes power between central states. Robert Gilpin defines power as "states' military, economic, and technological capabilities."[12]

In the second half of the 20th century, a new perspective on power emerged: as a relationship or a form of dependency between subjects. Writers from diverse academic backgrounds, including philosophy, sociology, psychology, and political science, strived to comprehend power while discussing its effect on participant actions in these dependencies and relationships. Political scientist Robert Dahl states power functions as "A's capability to execute objectives which B would refrain from pursuing independently of A's involvement." International relations power manifests as state authority because it emerges exclusively when unbalanced relationships

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[12] Gilpin R. War and Change in World Politics. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. – P. 13.

exist between participants. From this definition, power is not absolute, but a relative category: A subject's resource base defines its power capabilities, resulting in measurable resources.[13]

David Baldwin states that this transition from absolutist power modeling into relative power theory represents a significant shift within his study. Studying power through subject-to-subject relationships necessitates establishing what power specifically controls or could control, because general power descriptions become impossible. Besides weight, cost, and power-related instruments, the fundamental requirements for defining and shaping power dynamics include application constraints and the reach of its effects. A sufficient basis for power description exists in understanding subject A's ability to obtain actions from subject B that require A's influence for completion. To define power scientifically, the significant elements demand clarity. The relationship confers upon A one kind of power that transcends abstract measures but specifically enables A to execute selected actions rather than limitless options.

Understanding power in foreign relations remains important because scholars must determine whether power functions as an internal element or manifests as actor-to-actor relationships. N.V.Yudin presents source-based (attributive) and context-directed (behavioral) approaches in his work, which reveal new methods of understanding "soft power" and highlight both perspectives' essential nature. The context-directed analytical method provides deeper insights into power dynamics in international relations. It shows how actors gain influence based on situational dynamics and their operational capabilities shift across different relational contexts.[14]

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[13] Dahl R. The Concept of Power // Behavioral Science. – 1957. – No 2. – P. 201–215.

[14] *Power Phenomenon"*, published in *"International Processes"* in 2015 (Vol. 13, Issue 2, pages 96-105). This work seems to explore the concept of soft power in a systematic way.

According to Joseph Nye's "soft power" framework, power functions as an instrument for transforming existing relationships between entities. Attractiveness combined with resources derived from national culture and foreign policy shapes essential mechanisms that influence a country's foreign policies and create new collaborative global relations approaches. The creation of fresh state partnerships depends heavily on the implementation power of "soft power" in international relations.

According to E. Locke, Nye's research lacks a sufficient analysis of how agents employing soft power methods directly affect their interaction partners. Nye analyzes power as a preexisting resource while studying "attractiveness," but he fails to address its effects on the second participant. He argues that these definitions maintain specific limits even though Nye acknowledges such methods have their interpretive restrictions.[15]

According to numerous definitions, power represents actors' capabilities to undertake choice goals. The ability to forecast whether existing power resources will produce successful outcomes remains almost impossible to determine. Although we focus solely on military power, we cannot accurately predict the results through measurements that include army numbers or weapon sophistication. Multiple losses of armies with big equipment have demonstrated the enemy's superiority despite their size and equipment resources. Heavy institutions and considerable powers came to a halt due to pressure from competing forces. From an outcome perspective, the state's theoretical resources and potential force cannot be recognized as power.

Outside power gives subjects credible threat abilities and represents actual control of actions and decision paths. From

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[15] Lock, E. Soft Power and Strategy: Developing a Strategic Concept of Power. / Soft Power and US Foreign Policy Theoretical, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives. – London: Routledge, 2010. – P. 32-50.

this first perspective, power exists as a capability that states with greater strength obtain and can develop over time. The second scenario illustrates power as it emerges into a concrete outcome that both parties are currently experiencing. States treat power as a future-oriented tool they intend to deploy across multiple circumstances. Power manifests through distinct circumstances in the second scenario.

Both supporters and critics of "soft power" evaluate how its implementation results play out. Several rankings for "soft power" have appeared. These rankings quantify and rank country strengths regarding "soft power" while identifying the most potent nation in this domain.

The "soft power" theory developed by J. Nye relies primarily on multiple scholarly discoveries throughout the human sciences, including power and authority research with a concentration on international authority produced by philosophers, sociologists, political scientists, and International Relations researchers. When Nye's theories are applied, they become visible through national strategic actions designed to enhance soft power capabilities. Through their research method, they examine subject matter created by marketing, advertising, and public relations specialists.

During the 1990s through early 2000s, government agencies and international relations specialists demonstrated growing interest in regional marketing and national branding research. These concepts were also directed towards practical application: Aside from commercial aspects, "country image" researchers analyzed the value enhancements originating from goods and services developed by countries developing a powerful national brand identity.

The authors highlighted the built aspects of national image development and the possibilities of simultaneously shaping and optimizing a country's brand content. The concepts of managing national branding produced new global opportunities, which allowed consulting firms and the country's

government agencies to develop offerings specifically for national brand management. For brand strengthening efforts, authors understand the importance of using predicted world perceptions about the nation and the reciprocal relationship between brand elements and state characteristics.

Today, the concepts of place marketing (including country marketing) and "national branding" are in demand, and it can be said that they have a certain closeness with the concept of "soft power." Every year, international rankings describing the "soft power" of countries and the attractiveness of their brands are published, and many of the indicators used to create such rankings align with each other. Governments worldwide are working to enhance the country's international reputation, increase "soft power," and strengthen the "national brand." In particular, various events, such as sports events (for example, the Olympic Games), international conferences, and forums, can be seen as activities that enhance a country's "soft power" and help strengthen its national brand.

Studying "soft power" as one of the methods for building and expanding transnational political spaces allows us to reconsider the ongoing changes in the global order. In the past, states expanded their physical territories through military means, conquering and subjugating other countries, but such an approach is considered unacceptable or, at the very least, insufficient in the modern world. At the same time, achieving leadership and influence through non-coercive means—such as common political spaces with new collective actors, participants who share common basic principles and relationships, similar interests, or adhere to established rules and norms—fits more with the nature of modern international relations. This approach allows for reliance on information, cultural, and educational opportunities, which are becoming increasingly important, rather than solely military power. This doesn't mean that violent conflicts related to territorial disputes are a thing of the past. However, with the development of society, territory

becomes one of the factors of life, and its importance is determined by the presence and development level of other factors (the entire economy and its sectors, science and culture, tourism, infrastructure, communications, and more).

Research on political space primarily draws from the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, particularly his studies on social space. Concerning "soft power," Bourdieu's works on power (French *pouvoir*—similar to the English concept of power) are particularly noteworthy. In his 1977 article on symbolic power (*pouvoir symbolique*), he writes: "Symbolic power is the power to establish, see, and believe in something by words, the power to confirm or change a worldview, thus influencing the world, and therefore the world itself becomes a magical force, allowing the possibility of obtaining the equivalent of something achieved through force (physical or economic) simply by recognizing this power, that is, without accepting it as arbitrary."

With this postmodern perspective on power, the author contrasts physical and economic power with power over thought, which enables the confirmation and transformation of worldviews. The French sociologist also speaks of various types of capital (cultural, economic, and symbolic capital), each corresponding to a particular "small area" of social space and defining its position.

From these postmodern (or non-classical) positions, we can consider the concept of "soft power," observing that Joseph Nye himself, along with Western experts and analysts, participates in the "naming" and shaping of political space on national, transnational, and global scales.

In conclusion, by describing the leadership of the US and the West at the end of the 20th century, Nye would not exaggerate if we said that he simultaneously shaped an agenda for his own country and a coordinate system for other participants in international relations.

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