



CULTURE AS A SOURCE OF SOFT POWER

The term "soft power" was coined by Joseph Nye in 1990 as a strategy for the development of American geopolitics in the context of the ended Cold War. The efforts of experts were aimed at creating a positive image of the country that would evoke sympathy among the nations.

The desire to shape the agenda in world politics is still there, but as a military power and political pressure on a global scale quickly lost their attractiveness the methods of such influence had to be renewed. The essence of the concept of "soft power" was that states began to use methods of positive attraction and persuasion to achieve goals in foreign policy. By "soft power" Nye meant the ability to "influence the behavior of others to get the outcome one wants" and, he believed, this process "co-opts people rather than forces them".

Over the decades after the end of the Cold War, the world has become much more united and whole, largely under the influence of globalization, and more democratic under the influence of the ideas of liberalism. Coercion and threats are more likely to cause a rejection effect. Increasing economic cooperation has led to the significant growth of civil society, as well as the value of sustainable security and development in all regions of the world without exception with the assistance and support of the United Nations (UN). Soft power began to seem like a much more viable option than hard power.

In the context of soft power, culture is defined as "a set of practices that create meaning for society." This includes high culture such as literature, art, as well as television, film, and music, targeted at mass entertainment markets. The idea that under the influence of soft power the world has become more humane, positive, and free from violence looks extremely attractive. But is it true? By fostering mutual understanding between countries and peoples, art, for example, can build bridges and foster mutual understanding, it helps to overcome divisions and create respect, and change the way people think and behave. However, representatives of various communities have an alarming question. Does the actively promoted art leave space for other, local forms of art, or does it suppress with all the power of a professionally created perfect appeal? Another issue for discussion is the possibility of measuring the effectiveness of soft power. Efficiency, as well as the resources of hard power usually looked more visible and therefore more effective than social and hu-

manitarian parameters such as political values, culture and foreign policy, which J. Nye singled out as the three main elements of soft power. To test the effectiveness of this strategy within the framework of the "Softpower30" project, an index was developed using more than 75 indicators for six sub-indices based on data from international surveys. The research project aimed to analyze the possibilities for measuring and comparing the soft power resources of the leading countries of the world.

The following were chosen as indicators of cultural attractiveness: the total number of tourists arriving, the average spending per tourist, the number of films shown at major film festivals, the number of foreign correspondents in the country, the number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, the annual attendance of the world's top 100 museums, the size of the music market, the number of top 10 albums in foreign countries, Olympic medals, FIFA International Olympic Committee rating (men), the quality of the national air carrier, Michelin star restaurants and the Power Language Index (a systematic way of evaluating the influence and reach of languages using 20 indicators to measure five basic opportunities). All this information is collected from the UN World Tourism Organization, the World Bank, the UNESCO Statistics and other international sources. The international survey on the index is conducted in all regions of the world; samples in each country are represented by age, gender, and region.

According to the latest 2019 survey, the top five countries in terms of cultural attractiveness include France, Great Britain, Germany, Sweden and the USA. Based on the data for several years of project implementation, analysts also note the trends accompanying the spread of soft power, namely, the gradual shift of the center of power from West to East and from state actors to non-state ones. Besides, the extraordinary speed of spread, availability and growing influence of international networks are becoming an increasingly visible phenomenon of global relations.

Nevertheless, in the context of an unstable structure of the world order, experts warn against the full acceptance of soft power as the best alternative to the strategic development of the world. In recent years, there has been a growing opinion about the need to establish a "golden mean" between soft and hard power, or "smart power", if countries want to realize their full potential in terms of influence.

If Kazakhstan politicians want to influence the outside world, they need to search for resources or assets of soft power in Kazakhstan to develop their strategies based on objective factors. Design, planning, good governance, public diplomacy, financial instruments, the availability of tangible and intangible assets and artifacts, all these resources can be used to build their space and relationships in the system of international contacts and foreign policy. If we consider the indicators specified in the project, then the first is the total number of tourists in the country. Nowadays we have the following circumstances: Kazakhstan ranked 20th in the list of the fastest growing tourist destinations in the world, "The Independent" reports with reference to the UN World Tourism Organization. According to UNWTO, in 2019, the number of tourists in Kazakhstan increased by 10% and amounted to 979,781 people. The main source of visitors is traditionally the ex-soviet countries, accounting for 91.7% of arrivals and 70.6% of spending. Visitors from other countries made up 8.3% of the total visitors but 29.4% of spending. Domestic tourism is also on the rise.

The UNESCO list includes two cultural, one natural, and eight historical sites, and 13 more cultural and historical sites are included in UNESCO Tentative List (located on the route of the Syrdarya section of the Great Silk Road). In 2019, the Kazakhfilm studio produced 25 films. 43 films have taken part in 124 international film festivals. 43 prizes were won (three Grand Prix, of which one is the Grand Prix of the Class A festival).

FIFA gives Kazakhstan 122nd position with a rating of 1142, and the Olympic results of 2018 look more than modest - 1 bronze medal in Pyeongchang. The national air carrier Air Astana has been featured in World Airlines for the last eight years in the category "Best Airline in Central Asia and India". There is no data on the music market and none of the museums in Kazakhstan has entered the top 100 world museums list. Moreover there are no Michelin-starred restaurants.

So, if we evaluate the resources of Kazakhstan according to the parameters of cultural influence, then it is obvious that even with the noticeable successes of musical youth breaking through into the international music space (Dimash Qudaibergen, Danelia Tuleshova, and others), not all cultural assets can allow us to become actors of soft and smart power in the international arena in the next few years.

Politics, Foreign Affairs, and Security

- The President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, held phone talks with the presidents of Russia, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. In a conversation with Vladimir Putin, the presidents noted positive dynamics of bilateral relations in the spirit of strategic partnership and alliance. During the talks with Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Emomali Rahmon, the parties expressed satisfaction for the progressive deepening of the Kazakh-Uzbek strategic partnership and positive development of relations with Tajikistan. President Tokayev exchanged New Year's greetings and good wishes with all presidents (KazTAG, 31.12.2020).
- The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan Ruslan Kazakbaev had a phone talk with his Azerbaijani counterpart Jeyhun Bayramov. During the conversation, Bayramov informed about the current development of the situation around Nagorno-Karabakh, while Kazakbaev talked about the early presidential elections and a referendum in Kyrgyzstan. The parties noted the importance of holding the planned official visit of the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev to Kyrgyzstan and discussed the construction of the Kyrgyzstan-Azerbaijan Friendship Park and the Aliyev secondary school in Bishkek (Kabar, 29.12.2020).
- The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Sergey Lavrov, had a meeting with his Turkish counterpart, Mevlut Cavusoglu. Following the meeting, Lavrov stated that Western sanctions had no impact on Russia-Turkey relations. He also added that bilateral relations between the countries had gained strategic importance long before the West began to implement unilateral sanctions. However, both countries pursue independent foreign policies and coordinate their efforts to promote the two countries' interests (TASS, 29.12.2020).
- According to a survey conducted by Sayasat.kg, news agency 67.3% of the residents of Kyrgyzstan support a presidential form of government in Kyrgyzstan and only 18.9% would like Kyrgyzstan to be a parliamentary republic. Among the survey participants, 80.5% of them expressed willingness to participate in the presidential elections and the referendum scheduled for January 10, 2021, while only 4.6% of the respondents said they would not vote in the election (Kabar.kg, 29.12.2020).
- The First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan, Khusrav Noziri held an online meeting with the Special Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China for External Security Affairs, Cheng Guoping. The sides discussed current issues of cooperation between the two countries in the field of security. The parties exchanged views on regional security issues and stressed the need to intensify trade and economic interaction between Tajikistan and China (Avesta.tj, 29.12.2020).
- The President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, held a telephone conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Summing up the year 2020, the leaders expressed their satisfaction with the current state of bilateral cooperation and praised the chairmanship of Uzbekistan in the CIS in 2020 and its recently obtained observer status in the Eurasian Economic Union. The sides reaffirmed their desire to further strengthen cooperation and strategic partnership between Russia and Uzbekistan (Vz.ru, 30.12.2020).

Economy, Finance, and Energy

- According to experts from the Eurasian Development Bank, recovery of Kazakhstan's economy to the pre-crisis level will require several years. However, the country's GDP will grow by 4.4% next year, which is higher than in other countries of the Eurasian Economic Union. Kazakhstan's anti-crisis measures amounted to \$14.2 billion, which was about 9% of its GDP. At the same time, Kazakhstan increased borrowings. One of the largest loans taken from the Asian Development Bank equaled \$1 billion (Qazaq TV, 30.12.2020).
- The pandemic negatively affected production and export of Russia's energy sector. The OPEC+ agreement on stabilization of the global oil market also influenced the production indicators. According to recent data, in 2020 the country's production of oil and gas condensate declined by 8.6% to 512.7 million tons. In the same year, Russia's oil exports and domestic oil supply dropped by 12.7% and by 5.2%, respectively. Decrease in gasoline production was lower and amounted to 4.5% (TASS, 02.01.2021).
- During 11 months of 2020, Belarus increased its borrowings, which resulted in higher external debt. By December, the debt volumes amounted to \$18.2 billion and increased by 5.9% or by \$1 billion since the beginning of the year. During the reported period, Belarus attracted \$2.6 billion in loans. Russia remains the country's main creditor. Its government and banks allocated \$541 million to Belarus, another \$500 million was provided through the Eurasian Fund for Stabilization and Development (BelTA, 31.12.2020).
- According to the Deputy Prime Minister of Uzbekistan Jamshid Kuchkarov, the government of Uzbekistan plans to sell its share in Coca-Cola Bottlers Uzbekistan, Ltd. The state share in the charter capital of the company equals 57.11%. After the plan was announced, the government received 3 proposals, collected by the Rothschild company. The sale will be conducted through auction. The government of Uzbekistan plans to reduce its share in the economy by privatization of 83 large enterprises in 2021 (KUN.UZ, 31.12.2020).
- During 11 months of 2020, Azerbaijan produced more than 1.1 million tons of fruits and berries. The volume of production increased by 4.2% compared to the same period last year. At the same time, during 10 months of 2020, Azerbaijan imported 242.4 million tons of fresh fruits, which was by 6.4% lower than in the corresponding period of 2019. The import of fresh vegetables increased by 4.1% and amounted to almost 188 thousand tons (AzerNews, 03.01.2021).
- According to the Deputy Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Agriculture of Ukraine Taras Kachka, the country's two free trade agreements with the United Kingdom and Israel will take effect from January 1, 2021. The agreement with the UK will help Ukraine to improve the balance and structure of bilateral trade, which exceeded \$1 billion during the first 9 months of 2020. Israel, in turn, will abolish 80% and 9% of import duties on Ukrainian manufactured and agricultural products, respectively (Ukrinform, 30.12.2020).

Society and Culture

- The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, Mukhtar Tleuberdi met with the President of the International Turkic Academy Darkhan Kydyrali to discuss the future of bilateral cooperation between Kazakhstan and the Turkic Academy. The Head of the Turkic Academy noted the significant role played by the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the institutionalization of the organization. Minister Tleuberdi also thanked the President of the Academy for his efforts in establishing bilateral cooperation and officially awarded Darkhan Kydyrali diplomatic rank of the First Class Counselor (Twesco.org, 29.12.2020).
- The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Mevlut Cavusoglu received the Head of the Turkic Council, Baghdad Amreyev and the Deputy Head of the organization, Omer Kocaman in Ankara. The sides discussed the implementation of the "Turkic World Vision 2040" and "Turkic Council Strategy for 2020-2025". During the meeting, Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu pointed out that Turkey will continue to support the Turkic Council (Twesco.org, 30.12.2020).
- The Ministry of Digital Development, Innovation and Aerospace Industry of Kazakhstan signed a Statement of Intent to cooperate in areas of digitalization, public service delivery and innovation with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The UNDP plans to allocate \$200,000 of grant for the Reengineering and Digital Transformation Center, which will accelerate the digital transformation in Kazakhstan specified in the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda-2030. Supporting digital transformation is one of the key instruments of the UNDP's recovery offer in helping countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (Kabar.kg, 29.12.2020).
- A roundtable was held at the Institute of International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan with participation of members of the Central Council of the Women's Union of Turkmenistan and special representative of UN the General Assembly, the chief of Regional center on preventive diplomacy for Central Asia, Natalya German. The participants discussed issues of extension of economic, social and cultural rights of the women in consolidation of democracy in Central Asia. The necessity of further strengthening of the fruitful contacts with international organizations and policies ensuring gender equality was noted at the meeting (Turkmenportal.com, 28.12.2020).
- According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey, the number of tourists that visited Turkey in the first 11 months of 2020 reached 14.4 million people. This number is 71.95% less compared to January-November of 2019. The largest number of tourists visiting Turkey come from Russia (16.94%), followed by Bulgaria (9.48%) and Germany (8.91%). Istanbul continued to be the most popular tourist destination attracting nearly 38.2% of foreign visitors or around 4.6 million people (ftnnews.com, 28.12.2020).
- Ukraine decided to purchase around two million doses of China's CoronaVac vaccine against the COVID-19. In total, 1,913,316 doses of the vaccine will be purchased at 504 hryvnia (\$18) per dose. The first batch of 700,000 doses of the vaccine will be delivered to Ukraine as soon as it gets registered either in China or elsewhere. The vaccination will be held free of charge starting with healthcare workers (Ndtv.com, 31.12.2020).