

Russian „Soft Power”: Georgia Against Russian Soft Power and Propaganda

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Abstract.

The use of Russian „Soft Power” and propaganda for the purpose of realizing foreign policy objectives has become increasingly noticeable in different parts of the world. Russian „Soft Power” in line with state-developed and controlled propaganda is commonly used to create and distribute narratives supporting the current regime in the Kremlin.

By the spread of disinformation, biased interpretation of historical facts, and aggressive manipulation of value systems, Moscow is attempting to legitimize its external actions and justify its geopolitical interests. Russian „soft power” significantly differs from Western „soft power”.

In exchange for mutually beneficial economic and political cooperation, Russia is offering the format of collaboration which could be only beneficial for Russia in the political context. Therefore, the lack of attractive elements leads Russia to the formation of unusual „soft power” instruments which are mainly based on the creation of unconventional narratives and the spread of anti-Western propaganda. Russian propaganda is especially influential to the most vulnerable parts of the society, in which both a general awareness about the benefits provided through Georgia’s Euro-Atlantic cooperation and the potential for direct use of the aforementioned benefits are relatively low. Due to Russian propaganda, the narrative under which Georgia’s Euro-Atlantic integration is associated with the loss of national and cultural identity has become particularly strong in Georgian society.

The Russian Federation has been ramping up its use of propaganda as an effective weapon for achieving its political goals in foreign countries. Georgia is no exception. Even though Kremlin has a long history of employing propaganda to secure its interests, its sophistication and scale have substantially increased in recent years. As western countries are already working on countermeasures, the Georgian government must also recognize this growing problem and develop its own policy.

Keywords: Russian „Soft Power”, Propaganda, Unconventional Narratives.

1. Introduction

Russian propaganda and information warfare remain a pressing issue both in Georgia and in international relations. There has been an active debate over the activation of Russian „force of war” and state propaganda in Georgia for many years, with a number of state structures, as well as various public groups, trying to counter the threat of Russian propaganda.

The purpose of the paper is to highlight key aspects of the foreign policy of Georgia's northern neighbor, the Russian Federation, including paying particular attention to the „soft power” elements of its foreign policy so that the state can more carefully and coldly analyze threats and challenges coming from the north. In parallel to the „strength of the race” and its impact, the „hard power” policy is aimed at maintaining a sense of fear and tension in the Georgian population.

„Illegal crossing of the border” („borderisation”) as well as constant „military exercises” in the Russian occupied territories, we think, is a clear message to Georgian citizens that the neighboring country is ready to use „hard power” when needed.

The cooperation agreements with the separatist governments underscore the fact that the Russian Federation continues to fully disregard the principles of international law and seeks to prove it's „might” by this approach. The Russian Federation is increasingly using propaganda as a weapon to pursue its interests in various countries. Georgia is no exception.

Public confidence in the government and political institutions, stirring up ethnic and religious hatred, fosters xenophobia and hatred. Since the Kremlin's propaganda in Georgia, support for Western institutions has steadily declined.

The fact that Georgia has officially recognized Russia's „soft power” as a serious threat to its security makes us think that Tbilisi sees signs of potential rift in the local community that the Russian Federation can use for its own interests. Increasing the importance of „soft power” in the balance of power of each country is a tendency for the modern development of civilizations.

Implementation of „soft power” policy has become so relevant in the modern world that even the largest and most developed nations, in solving domestic and international problems, often refuse to use „hard power” and try their best to pursue „soft policy”. One of the main reasons for this is interdependent economic cohesion. Modern Russian propaganda is becoming more and more difficult to neutralize today. The Kremlin's disinformation cycle is not only a challenge to any particular geographic area or regional alliance, but also to democratic regimes in general.

As Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration deepens, Russian „soft power” is increasingly active in the country, trying to influence the mood of the population, which, along with ideological propaganda, increases the financial costs of influencing various actors and, at the same time, fosters anti-Western myths and stereotypes.

1.1 Kremlin's Policy in Georgia

Observing the Kremlin's information policy clearly demonstrates that Russian President Vladimir Putin has promoted information propaganda in the context of national security, thus trying to influence the views and sentiments of both the domestic and international community.

Political myths are one of the important tools of Russian propaganda in Georgia. Russian propaganda is often based on strong emotional messages that seek to create and reinforce stereotypes against ethnic, religious and sexual minorities.

Also, to discredit the Western political and cultural space and promote the dissemination of homophobic and xenophobic beliefs in society. By cultivating the aforementioned myths, the Russian Federation seeks to become Georgia's only ally with a common identity, creed, history and cultural space. All of the aforementioned values pose a threat to the West.

Over the past ten years, the „soft power” of political literature in active development gained and the reason for this are very numerous: Afghanistan and Iraq, the ongoing processes of traditional power failure, the socio-economic relations in a comprehensive resolution, including the industry and the Western companies in developing countries to the global and regional m Gaming foreign policy approaches to change, as well as the democratic revolutions and color sequence. In today's situation, all countries with global and regional ambitions have developed the concept of „soft power” and invested financial and intellectual resources in its development.

Europe's leading countries, the European Union itself, as a geopolitical player, the US, China, Russia, India, Brazil, Turkey and Australia have begun expanding „soft power” policies both in the neighborhoods and more or less successfully throughout the world community. In the process of globalization, it is becoming clearer to replace the traditional „firm force” for political interests, including military-political and economic coercion, with „soft power”.

The Russian Federation has used all economic and political leverage at its disposal against Georgia. Prior to the Russian-Georgian war of 2008, the Russian market for Georgian-made products was closed, Georgia's natural gas supply was cut, labor migration and remittances were restricted, Georgian citizens were deported, and visa requirements were imposed. These actions significantly damaged the Georgian economy, but did not cause its collapse.

Today, Georgia has a more diversified economy, a higher degree of independence and greater ability to protect itself from economic shocks. An analysis of economic relations with the Russian Federation shows that Georgia's trade relationship with its neighboring state to the north does not pose a serious threat at this stage. It is noteworthy that the high concentration of certain products (alcoholic and mineral drinks) is observed in the Russian Federation market.

As far as short-term as well as the medium term, the Russian market is a high probability of risk to the market, it is necessary to develop measures, which are the strategic directions, at least, soften the market of export-import dependence, especially the products of the manufacturing process of a wide variety of social groups are involved. Foreign direct investment by the Russian Federation in recent years is up to 5%. It should be noted that the Russian Federation has always had a particular interest in strategically important infrastructure facilities.

First of all, it is the natural gas pipeline, as well as the Georgian Railway. Given that the energy sector has become an important instrument of Russian foreign policy realization for the Russian Federation, it is inadmissible to hand over any form of infrastructure of strategic importance to the Russian Federation, as well as to increase dependence on Russian energy resources.

Analysis of Russian foreign policy clearly indicates that, along with the activation of the „soft power”, the Russian Federation is extensively using its armed forces and special services to achieve its goals.

From the budget planning priorities of the Russian Federation, it is clear that at the expense of significant cuts in other areas, only defense spending remains invariably large, which may be a clear indicator when assessing the foreign policy plans of the Russian Federation. To address socio-economic problems within the country, the Russian Federation is resorting to hybrid wars outside the country.

During the recent period the Russian Federation has significantly increased both armament and manpower in the occupied territories of Georgia, which is a significant threat to the statehood of Georgia.

1.1.1 Situation in the Georgian Occupied Territories

Analysis of the situation in the occupied regions of Georgia shows that the socio-economic situation is worsening amid the economic problems and militarization in the Russian Federation. Analysis of the political and security documents of the Russian Federation shows that Moscow will do its best to maintain influence in its neighborhood and to impede the sustainable, democratic development of these countries.

The Russian armed forces are stationed in the neighboring Armenian Republic of Georgia and Moscow plays a negative role in the entire security system of the South Caucasus. Tensions persist in the highly militarized North Caucasus too. By maintaining instability in the region, the Russian Federation is trying to prevent the EU and NATO from becoming active, which may promote the development of statehood in the region and integration with the West. This development is perceived by the Kremlin as a threat.

With „soft power” and increasingly „soft power” and tangible economic motivation, the Kremlin will do everything in its power to persuade the Georgian side to move from a multilateral format to a bilateral one, thus easing international pressure on Moscow.

We believe that it is desirable to develop a complex political document on future threats from the Russian Federation, reflecting the systematic view of the state on these problems and facilitating the coordinated action of various institutions. It is also important to involve civil society in this process, including in the area of security, in the development of strategic and policy documents.

Given the new international and regional realities, it is important to conduct broad public discussions on the military and political goals of the country's defense and to achieve political consensus around these goals.

A significant increase in defense spending is needed to increase troop readiness and combat capability. Georgia should join the EU's Energy Charter, which will increase Georgia's energy independence on the one hand and increase transparency in the energy sector.

Together with Georgia's partners, the DCFTA should open up opportunities for economic entities operating in the occupied territories, weakening them and the overall public reliance on the Russian Federation. The Kremlin-led information war and propaganda is a threat to Georgia's security and democratic development.

by the Russian Federation in Georgia produced propaganda damage and prevents NATO and the European Union on the integration process, the community of Western values, institutions and partner states to discredit, undermine the Russian Federation „soft power” in Georgia is essentially the same as in any other country, Agra has to operate under very different conditions.

2. Conclusion

Russian Federation in Georgia by the military occupation and anti-Russian sentiment is widely spread in Moscow in the only small-scale operations for a venue for the remainder, respectively, in their hearts and minds in order to access to the Russian Federation in connection with the political and social levels, in favor of the pragmatic. No one denies that the Kremlin has achieved some success

from the above point of view. However, it is doubtful that Russia's „soft power” in Georgia has an uncertain future.

Due to the aging of its main target group, the increase in Russian influence is only expected in the medium and short term, but in the long run, with the emergence of a new generation and elites, its influence will be even more limited.

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