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**Mohira SAIDAZIMKHUJAEVA,**  
Doctoral student at UWED  
E-mail: [m.zaynitdinova@gmail.com](mailto:m.zaynitdinova@gmail.com)

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### “SOFT POWER” IN FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY

Annotation

The concept of “soft power” has been widely used since it was first formulated by Joseph Nye in the 1990s. Since then, scholars and policymakers have turned to this “new” approach to power, with states shaping their strategies around this concept. The main purpose of the article is to analyze the essence of “soft power” and the priority areas and mechanisms of “soft power” in the foreign policy of France, a country that has achieved great success in implementing its “soft influence” in the international arena and continues to strengthen work in this strategic area.

**Key words:** soft power, J. Nye, France, country image, culture and heritage, media and communications

### «МЯГКАЯ СИЛА» ВО ВНЕШНЕЙ ПОЛИТИКЕ ФРАНЦИИ

Аннотация

Концепция «мягкой силы» широко используется с тех пор, как она была впервые сформулирована Джозефом Наем в 1990-х годах. С тех пор ученые и политики обращаются к этому «новому» подходу к власти, а государства формируют свои стратегии вокруг этой концепции. Основная цель статьи заключается в том, чтобы проанализировать сущность «мягкой силы», а также приоритетные направления и механизмы «мягкой силы» во внешней политике Франции – страны, добившейся больших успехов в реализации своего «мягкого влияния» в международной арене, и продолжает укреплять работу в этом стратегическом направлении.

**Ключевые слова:** мягкая сила, Дж. Най, Франция, имидж страны, культура и наследие, медиа и коммуникации

### FRANSIYA TASHQI SIYOSATIDA “YUMSHOQ KUCH”

Annotatsiya

Yumshoq kuch tushunchasi ilk marotaba 1990-yillarda Jozef Nay tomonidan ishlab chiqilganidan beri keng qo'llanila boshlandi. Natijada olimlar va siyosatchilar hokimiyatni tadqiq qilishda ushbu "yangi" yondashuvga murojaat qilishmoqda, davlatlar esa o'z strategiyalarini shu kontseptsiyaga moslashgan holda shakllantirmoqdalar. Maqolaning asosiy maqsadi “yumshoq kuch”ning mohiyatini, shuningdek, ushbu strategik sohani amalga oshirishda katta muvaffaqiyatlarga erishgan Fransiya tashqi siyosatidagi “yumshoq kuch”ning ustuvor yo'nalishlari va mexanizmlarini tahlil qilishdan iborat.

**Kalit so'zlar:** yumshoq kuch, J. Nay, Fransiya, mamlakat imidji, madaniyat va meros, ommaviy axborot vositalari va kommunikatsiyalar

**Introduction.** Politics has always been a sphere of struggle for power, influence and interests. However, the forms of this struggle are determined by specific historical conditions. Changes in these forms are, in turn, reflected in the development of political theory. One of the relatively recent, but that has already managed to prove its scientific and practical significance, current theoretical innovations is the concept of “soft power”. Joseph Nye defined soft power as power that occurs “when one country gets other countries to want what it wants”, so it is the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment [1]. In other words, “soft power” can be understood as the ability of socially organized actors in the public political space to achieve their goals by persuasion and winning sympathy from participants in political processes interacting with them.

Nowadays, the increasingly active use of “soft power” by states requires further understanding of this concept and a detailed analysis of the practical experience of its application. France, according to various international rating studies, is one of the leaders in the effective use of “soft power” due to its unique historical experience and effective foreign policy. In this regard, the study of theoretical and applied aspects of the use of French “soft power” seems very relevant. This is explained, firstly, by the lack of knowledge of this issue in domestic scientific circles; secondly, by the fact that the experience of the French Republic can be partially implemented to solve the functional problems of the foreign policy of Uzbekistan.

**Literature review.** The topic of “soft power” attracts a lot of attention from foreign, Russian and domestic scientists; a large number of scientific works have been published on this issue. Many authors, first of all, the creator of the neologism “soft power”, American political scientist J. Nye, defined it as “the ability to achieve desired results through one’s attractiveness, and not through coercion or bribery” [2]. His works pay great attention to the US soft power policy.

A significant contribution to understanding the transformations that have occurred with the phenomenon of “power” in international relations was made by the studies of such foreign scientists as R. Dahl [3], G. Morgenthau [4], D. Baldwin [5] and many others. An analysis of their works allows us to trace the gradual evolution of views on the problem of the use of “power” in international relations. In earlier works, “power” was seen as the main means of influence in international relations. Subsequently, researchers made a significant contribution to understanding the transformations that occurred with the phenomenon of “power” in international relations with the advent of the era of globalization.

Russian scientists, such as E.M. Kharitonova [6], M.M. Lebedeva [7], I.A. Yudin [8] and others are also actively engaged in this topic. Their works examine the theoretical and applied aspects of “power” and “soft power”, provide a comparative analysis of them, propose prospects for adapting Western theories to Russian political discourse, and explore trends in the use of

“soft power” by Western states for propaganda, ideological and subversive activities.

In domestic science, there is an authoritative circle of scientists in Uzbekistan who make a significant contribution to the analysis and assessment of this phenomenon. For example, Sh. Tadjiev [9], in his works, presented a strategic analysis of world political processes and events taking place in Central Asia based on the development of theoretical aspects related to the category of power in international relations. He paid special attention to the potential and prospects for using Uzbekistan’s “soft power” at the present stage. A. Faizullaev [10], in turn, considers “soft power” as state branding and talks about the importance of purposefully creating a favorable image abroad.

There are not so many studies on the “soft power” of France. Among Russian researchers, we can highlight the works of D.A. Khachatryan [11] and V.A. Nagornov [12], who note the key role of “soft power” in maintaining France’s priorities in the system of international relations, since pursuing a policy of “soft power” allows France, to a certain extent, to defend its national identity, authority and influence. Among foreign scientists, in particular, this issue is dealt with by A. Houguet [13], whose works are aimed at studying French and German soft influence in the Russian Federation, highlights the features of cultural diplomacy as one of the most powerful tools of “soft power”. E. Eren [14], in turn, in his research studies the educational policy of cultural institutions that operate abroad and analyzes the educational policy of the Alliance Française in the context of “soft power”.

**Analysis and results.** Taking into account the diversity and interdependence of the “soft power” tools, which cover a wide range of internal and external sources, we consider it advisable to dwell only on the most significant areas in which France especially clearly demonstrates its potential.

As a developed country, France has achieved great success in implementing its “soft power” in the international arena, and continues to strengthen its work in this strategic area. International ratings testify to French potential in terms of soft power. According to Brand Finance’s annual study of national brand perceptions, the Global Soft Power Index [15], France is among the top 10 countries in 2024, ranking 6th behind countries such as the US, UK, China, Japan and Germany. And according to the Anholt Nation Brands Index for 2023, France is in 8th place, although a year earlier it was in 5th position [16]. It should be noted that according to the indicators of the category “Culture and Heritage” (there are also categories “Familiarity”, “Influence”, “Reputation”, “Business and Trade”, “Management”, “International Relations”, “Media and Communications”, “Education and Science”, “People and Values” and “Sustainable Future”), France has the best results along with the USA and Italy. France also clearly demonstrates its soft influence in the areas of “Familiarity” and “Media / Communications”.

Speaking about the “familiarity” (recognizability) of a particular state, it is important to emphasize that in the modern realities of growing international competition, increasing the attractiveness of a state in the form of the country’s image is a special resource. The positive image component determines the level of success, attractiveness, competitiveness and influence of the state in the international arena. Let’s look at several areas through which the image of France is especially clearly illustrated in the modern world. Thus, the French presence in international organizations, and, in particular, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, is one of the important vectors of French influence in the world. France is a member of more than 150 international organizations, and also hosts the second largest assembly of diplomatic missions in the world and the headquarters of international organizations, including the OECD, UNESCO, Interpol, etc.

France has a great influence on the solution of many pressing international problems, which has a very positive effect on the favorable image of the country. This issue can be considered using environmental problems as an example. France is fully participating in the efforts of the international community

and developing inclusive diplomacy to respond to the urgent challenges posed by the climate and environmental crisis. Responses to crises affecting global public goods are largely multilateral, and 2015 marked a turning point with the adoption of the Paris Agreement and the Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030 [17]. Significant efforts are also being made in the field of renewable energy, with the goal of bringing its share of electricity generation to 40% by 2030, along with nuclear energy, which is also low-carbon. Biodiversity protection measures are already in place across 30% of France, and an ambitious national biodiversity strategy has been launched to 2030.

In the academic sphere, the development of exchanges, the attraction of the best students and the popularization of French higher education significantly increase the level of “recognition” of the country. Working in close cooperation with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs coordinates the implementation of the strategy to make France attractive at an interdepartmental level. Positive results in this direction can be seen in international thematic rankings, such as the World University Rankings of the Times Higher Education publication (includes 1906 universities across 108 countries) and Quacquarelli Symonds (includes 1500 institutions across 104 locations), in which, according to the results for 2024, universities in France included in the list of the 50 best universities in the world [18].

It cannot be disputed that in the minds of representatives of other countries, the image of the head of state is largely connected with the state image. As the youngest French head of state since Napoleon I, incumbent President E. Macron entered the country’s political life in 2016. According to a survey by the French Institute of Public Opinion (Institut français d’opinion publique, IFOP) conducted by Le Journal du Dimanche, Macron began his first five-year term with a 62 percent approval rating [19]. This was higher than F. Hollande’s popularity at the start of his first term (61%) but lower than Sarkozy’s (65%) [20]. His popularity fell sharply in 2018, reaching around 25% by the end of November, with dissatisfaction with his presidency expressed by protesters in the “yellow vests” [21] movement. And today, according to an Ipsos poll on the eve of the upcoming elections to the European Parliament, the most popular leader in the European Union is the President of France, although 62% of his compatriots have a negative opinion of him. Thus, 41% of Europeans have a positive opinion about him, his popularity is a majority sentiment in Romania (57%), Greece (55%), Germany (53%), Denmark (52%) and the Netherlands (50%), but this figure drops to 28% in his own country [22].

France has a rich cultural heritage with strong performances in the arts, cinema, food, sports and tourism. France is also home to cultural icons, including the Eiffel Tower and the Louvre, as well as many museums, galleries and UNESCO World Heritage sites. The global response and outpouring of support from both French citizens and the international community during the April 2019 fire at Notre Dame Cathedral served as a powerful reminder of France’s unique position, demonstrating the enormity of its global cultural heritage. The international appeal of French culture is also confirmed by events such as the Cannes Film Festival, Tour de France and Bastille Day, etc., which are followed by people around the world.

The Louvre remains the most visited museum in the world, according to the famous international magazine The Art Newspaper, it occupies a leading position with almost 8 million visitors per year [23]. It is not for nothing that tourism is one of the most important sectors of the French economy. According to the latest official government data, its share in the country’s GDP is 8%. It should also be noted that according to the latest International Travel and Tourism Development Index report published by the World Economic Forum France is among the top 5 countries with the best performance, it ranks 4th after Japan, USA and Spain [24].

The positioning of France as a country with a rich cultural heritage seems fair and justified, since the French government is implementing various projects to stimulate interest in French

culture among both domestic and foreign audiences. France has the most extensive network of cultural institutions in the world. It includes 137 departments for cooperation and cultural work of embassies, which in their activities can rely on 96 Institut Français and their 135 branches, 6 binational cultural centers and 832 Alliance Françaises around the world [25].

Today, the number of French speakers is more than 300 million people on five continents of the world. French is the fifth most spoken language in the world after Chinese, English, Spanish and Arabic. In addition, French is one of the official languages in international organizations such as the UN and UNESCO, as well as a working language in the World Trade Organization, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, etc. In fact, it is an official language (in 32 governments and in most international organizations), language of instruction (more than 80 million people, in 36 countries and territories), foreign language (learned by more than 50 million people in 115 countries), language of international media (TV5MONDE, RFI or France 24, as well as Euronews, BBC News, Chinese CGTN or Russian RT) and the language of the Internet (where it ranks 4th) [26].

As noted earlier, "media and communications" represent the next most important area in the formation of French "soft power". The development of the presence of French audiovisual media in the world and cooperation in the media sector reflect the priorities of the policy of influence, since it coincides in many respects with the goals of cultural diplomacy: 1) popularization of Francophonie and multilingualism; 2) development of digital innovations; 3) ensuring a global presence while simultaneously implementing a regional strategy.

It is important to note that France Médias Monde (TV channel France 24, radio stations Radio France internationale) and its subsidiary Canal France International (CFI) play a central role

in this area. These media are a driving force in promoting democratic values, combating disinformation, ensuring pluralism and freedom of the press. In this regard, they are essential components of France's comprehensive diplomacy. For example, CFI projects aligned with French official development assistance focus on youth, digital technology, gender equality, sustainable development, Francophonie, combating disinformation and strengthening democracy. The agency's activities are mainly carried out in regions of priority importance in French foreign policy: mainly in sub-Saharan Africa, the Maghreb and the Middle East. This kind of media broadcasting is carried out not only to strengthen interest in the French language, but also to attract attention to the dissemination of the French vision of world order.

**Conclusion.** Based on the results of the analysis of the activities of the French government in implementing the policy of "soft power" in the international arena the following relevant conclusions can be drawn: firstly, analysis of the experience of France allows us to consider the policy of "soft power" of this country as a way of forming and expanding transnational political spaces united by the French language, culture, education, international development programs and other components of French "soft power"; secondly, today the policy of French "soft power" is carried out in such fundamental areas as: 1) the targeted formation of a positive image of the country to ensure proper "recognizability" of the state abroad; 2) implementation of cultural diplomacy through promotion of national language, traditions and values with the help of non-profit organizations and the academic community; 3) developing the presence of French media platforms in the world and cooperation in the media sphere to implement the priorities of the policy of influence, which in turn coincides with the goals of cultural diplomacy.

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