

**BRANDING UZBEKISTAN AND PROMOTING ITS SOFT POWER**

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**Annotation:** *This research explores the concept of soft power, its mechanisms, and its influence on international relations. It begins by defining power as the ability to influence decisions and actions, distinguishing between hard power and soft power. The study emphasizes Joseph Nye's concept of soft power, which operates through attraction rather than coercion, and its significance in the globalized era. It further discusses the role of culture, ideology, and foreign policy in soft power, citing historical examples such as the cultural influence of Ancient Greece and the Soviet Union's ideological leadership. The research highlights how soft power manifests in today's world, from media and education to cultural diplomacy and international relations. A specific focus is placed on Uzbekistan's cultural diplomacy as a tool for enhancing its soft power, with examples of prominent figures like Kato Kyudzo and Ikuo Hirayama, who contributed to Uzbek-Japanese relations. The paper concludes by discussing the strategic use of soft power for Uzbekistan, considering its cultural, historical, and religious assets, and the potential benefits of enhancing its international image through cultural exchanges, educational initiatives, and diplomatic efforts.*

**Keywords:** *Soft power, international relations, cultural diplomacy, Joseph Nye, ideology, global influence, Uzbekistan, cultural heritage, foreign policy, globalization, ideological hegemony, diplomatic relations, cultural exchange, education, Uzbekistan's soft power strategies, cross-cultural cooperation.*

**Understanding the concept of Soft Power: how it works and its impact on international relations.**



The lexical meaning of the term power is quite broad, and in most cases it is understood as the ability to influence the behavior and actions of a process or person, and in any case, to change the decisions of the party to whom the power or influence is directed in the interests of other party which is using the technics of power. However, there are different manifestations of the power, and it is possible to coerce through threats, to make the parties dependent through the promise of material compensation, or to arouse the desire for the intended goal in them by attracting the parties to the ideas of the party using the power of influence. Of course, these methods are equally effective in terms of achieving the intended goal, but they differ sharply in terms of the mechanism of operation and the consequences they can cause. Taking all this into account, Joseph Nye emphasizes that great achievements can be achieved by implementing significant but subtle methods of using force, and that even if the intended goals are not achieved, such methods will not have harmful consequences. Just as it is very important to be able to persuade others to do something within the framework of your goals with the help of force, it is also important to have the attractiveness of this process, that is, to appear as the right way in the eyes of outside observers. Absolute power is often evaluated not by its impact and results, but by how it is later judged.

Scholars such as Joseph Nye, Robert Keohane, and Neil Rosendorf, considering the importance of soft power in determining the power and position of a country, see its main function in the field of international relations and foreign policy. Although each of them has different views on the specific direction in which soft power should be manifested, they also put forward some common ideas. For example, all scholars unanimously agree that in today's era of globalization and strong global integration, it is important to conduct a multi-vector foreign policy and that this priority task is impossible without the participation of soft power.



Based on the doctrine put forward by Joseph Nye, the soft power of a particular state mainly relies on three sources: its culture, which is attractive to others, its political values, which can serve as an example both at home and abroad, and its foreign policy, which is manifested as legal and moral strength<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, the most important direction in which soft power can find its expression is culture and values. Historically, we can witness that the greatest country of any era is based on its cultural superiority. If we look at the early periods of human civilization, in Ancient Egypt, in the state of Alexander the Great, and in the Roman Empire, although large territories were conquered by hard force, the importance of culture was very great in maintaining those conquered territories and establishing relations with powerful states. The Hellenic culture of the ancient Greeks was distinguished by its unique height and for a long time was able to influence the science and methods of politics of the Arab-Islamic world, the modern European world. Later, as a result of the emergence of Islamic civilization, we can see the emergence of another powerful culture and its influence on the system of international relations. There is one thing in common in all historical processes - any new and powerful culture has become an integral part of soft power, and the state that is the leading guardian of this culture has the right to use culture as power.

Along with culture, ideology cannot be imagined without soft power. The great English realist E.H. Carr in 1939 divided international power into three categories: military, economic and ideological control<sup>2</sup>. In his opinion, in modern society, people, unlike in ancient times, unite not around national traditions or different cultures, but on the basis of a common idea. Therefore, it is emphasized that in order to have influence, it is important, first of all, to occupy an ideologically dominant position. The famous Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci, based on class theory, also puts forward the concept of using ideology as soft power in its

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<sup>1</sup> Nye, J. S. (1990). Soft Power. *Foreign Policy*, 80, 153–171. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1148580>

<sup>2</sup> E.H.Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* – New York: Harper & Row, 1964. p.108.



essence, which is called “ideological hegemony”<sup>3</sup>. The world wars that took place in the last century, the processes of formation and disintegration of the bipolar world, clearly demonstrated what a powerful weapon ideology can become. Initially, the use of ideology as soft power was masterfully carried out by the Soviet Union. The USSR became the leading country of the socialist camp by supporting the proletarian revolution all over the world. Thanks to the ideological support it provided in the formation of communist states such as the People's Republic of China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Cuba, and Vietnam, the influence of the Soviet Union in these countries increased to an unprecedented extent. After the collapse of the USSR, the prestige of China, the most economically powerful country in the communist world, began to grow in North Korea, Cuba, and Vietnam, and the main reason for this is ideological leadership.

In the democratic Western world, the soft power of the United States is also considered in its ideology. The United States, as the guardian of human rights and democracy, is interested in the spread and strengthening of these ideas, because every country aspiring to democracy, of course, tries to be based on the US model and principles. For the American foreign policy course, its democratic soft power is more beneficial than the 1.3 million-strong army created at the expense of the \$ 850 billion defense budget<sup>4</sup>. The presence of a powerful army does not give the opportunity to use it at any time and in any situation, but there are no restrictions on the use of soft power. The soft power tools used in the reconstruction of Japan after World War II, rather than American intervention in the Middle East, brought great benefits and prestige: experience exchange programs of American specialists, the creation of modern Japanese legislation by American lawyers, the involvement of various non-governmental and non-profit organizations. In the same vein, the

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<sup>3</sup> Грамши А. Тюремные тетради. Часть первая. Москва: Издательство политической литературы, 1991

<sup>4</sup> Swagel, P. L. (2024, November). *Long-Term implications of the 2025 future years defense program*. Congressional Budget Office. <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/61017>



Marshall Plan, which was used to rebuild Europe after World War II, is arguably the most ambitious and successful example of soft power policy.

In today's information age, the range of objects that can be considered soft power has expanded to such an extent that now every popular, everyday thing can be seen as a tool of soft power. Cinema, music, language, education, tourism, cultural objects – it is not difficult to imagine that each of these plays an important role as a component of soft power. Although Joseph Nye believes that it is very wrong to reduce the level of soft power to simple objects, in fact, even the smallest units can be of great importance. J. Nye emphasizes in his work: “The fact that North Korean dictator Kim Jong-il loves pizza and American movies does not affect his nuclear programs.”<sup>5</sup> But the fact that North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, during the 2019 talks in Hanoi, requested that professional basketball players visit North Korea for regular exchange visits in exchange for a denuclearization agreement<sup>6</sup> proves that soft power can sometimes be found in the simplest of things. So soft power can manifest itself not only in important and extremely high-level manifestations, but also in the simplest and most surprising forms.

**The main points of promoting Uzbekistan's Soft Power: real examples and potential strategies.**

Given the rich religious, historical and cultural heritage of Uzbekistan, the use of cultural diplomacy as an instrument of “soft power” in international relations is of great importance. It is appropriate to consider this on the example of the Japanese scientist Kyudzo Kato. Kato Kyudzo, who considers Uzbekistan his second homeland, is the author of many scientific works about our country, a famous Japanese professor, who first came to Uzbekistan in the 60s of the last century. He loved the rich history of our country. He devoted about 40 years of his life to

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<sup>5</sup> Nye, J. S. (1990). Soft Power. *Foreign Policy*, 80, 153–171. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1148580>

<sup>6</sup> Palmeri, T. (2019, May 9). Kim Jong Un wanted “famous” US basketball players as part of denuclearization deal: Sources. *ABC News*. <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/kim-jong-wanted-famous-us-basketball-players-part/story?id=62920773>



participating in various projects in cooperation with the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan and scientific institutes. He conducted archaeological excavations at ancient monuments such as Dalvarzintepa, Koratepa, Kholchayon, Fayoztepa in the Surkhandarya region. He led the research of the international Uzbek-Japanese archaeological expedition studying Buddhist monuments.

Kato Kyuzo was a professor at Soka University, an honorary professor at the National Museum of Ethnology in Japan, a historian, ethnographer-archaeologist, translator, author of numerous scientific studies and articles, an honorary citizen of Termez, an honorary doctor of the Institute of Art Studies of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. He was awarded the “Golden Light Sacred Treasure” of Japan and the “Friendship” orders of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The devoted Japanese scientist created many scientific works on the history and culture of Central Asia, including Uzbekistan. His books “At the Crossroads of the Silk Road”, “Journey through Eurasian Civilization”, “Great Persons of Central Asia”, “The City of Dalvarzintepa”, and the monograph “Oykhonum” are vivid examples of this. He translated into Japanese several books by Amir Temur, Mirzo Ulugbek, Mirzo Babur and other great thinkers of Central Asia, as well as foreign scholars, dedicated to our rich history and culture. A number of works such as "Ancient Panjikent", "Ancient Khorezm" are also known to Japanese readers through the translation of Kato Kyuzo.

In addition to his native language, the honored scholar freely read books in Uzbek, Russian, English, French, and Turkish. He also recommended his students to learn the Uzbek language perfectly, saying, "Knowing the Uzbek language is like finding the key to all languages, and knowing the Turkic languages is like opening the door to the Great Silk Road." Although the Japanese scholar, who had a special love for Uzbekistan and the Uzbek language, died in the city of Termez



in 2016, the works he left behind continue to strengthen cooperation between our countries and bring our peoples closer together.<sup>7</sup>

Another example is the Japanese artist Ikuo Hirayama. The most famous artist of the second half of the 20th century, an honorary citizen of Kamakura and Tashkent, Hiroshima Prefecture, a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, and a recipient of one of Japan's highest awards - the Order of Merit for Culture - Hirayama Ikuo (1930-2009) was also one of the famous figures who loved Uzbekistan as a lover of its rich cultural history.

Interest in the origins of Buddhism prompted Hirayama to visit the countries of the Great Silk Road. In 1968 his dream of coming to Samarkand and Bukhara comes true, where he creates a series of sketches. They were displayed at his exhibition held in Tashkent In 1998 he arrives to Uzbekistan again. In total, the artist visited Uzbekistan six times, his last visit was in 2002.

Throughout his life, Hirayama makes paintings dedicated to the Great Silk Road, with landscapes of Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Uzbekistan. However, his work was not limited to painting. He spent a lot of money and energy for the restoration of cultural property. Hirayama's efforts in preservation of cultural monuments of Central Asia is also of great importance. In particular, he organized the Fund for the Preservation of Cultural and Historical Monuments, which temporarily stores cultural objects from Afghanistan in Japan, until there will be peace and stability in that country.

In 2002, the artist opens the Caravanserai of Culture in Tashkent (since 2004, the International Caravanserai of Culture) as a center for organizing expeditions, exhibitions, restoration work (laboratories were established there), exchanging opinions and discussing the achievements between Uzbek and Japanese scientists

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<sup>7</sup> Mamatrayimov, X. (2022, January 6). *O'zbekiston va o'zbek tiliga o'zgacha mehr qo'ygan yapon olimi*. Uza.Uz. [https://uza.uz/oz/posts/ozbekiston-va-ozbek-tiliga-ozgacha-mehr-qoygan-yapon-olimi\\_335000](https://uza.uz/oz/posts/ozbekiston-va-ozbek-tiliga-ozgacha-mehr-qoygan-yapon-olimi_335000)



and cultural figures. The main sponsor of the project is the oilfield services company Eriell-Group.<sup>8</sup>

For Uzbekistan, the use of cultural diplomacy in relation to the developed countries of the world - the USA, Germany, France, Great Britain, Japan and Korea - can be especially effective in several ways: For example, organizing exhibitions of the rich cultural heritage, historical finds and objects, various works of art in Uzbekistan in the most famous and largest museums and art galleries in the United States of America, such as New York, Boston, Detroit, Chicago, or the Louvre in Paris, France, and the British Museum in London, Great Britain, as well as establishing permanent or seasonal activities of Uzbekistan exhibition corners. It is also necessary to establish permanent dialogues on academic cooperation with leading experts from these countries in this field. In particular, it is necessary to develop a roadmap for a certain number of young people, young specialists, and prominent scientists interested in Uzbekistan to come to Uzbekistan every year on the basis of a special program and enjoy this country for a certain period of time. The Uzbek government's funding of this project and related non-governmental organizations and various foundations plays a huge role in this. Other aspects of cultural exchange, including music performances, film festivals, and culinary events, can showcase Uzbek culture, traditions, and heritage to American audiences. This not only promotes culture, but also creates opportunities for people-to-people contacts and cooperation. Especially today, as a result of the growing Uzbek population in major cities in the United States, Uzbek music, dance, and cuisine are gaining popularity. If this popularity and interest are used wisely, it is possible to make Uzbekistan famous by establishing a network of Uzbek restaurants, as well as by organizing Uzbek music nights to raise awareness of Uzbek culture among foreigners. Also, by increasing Uzbekistan's participation in

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<sup>8</sup> WOSCU. (2023, September 12). *Why did the Japanese artist Ikuo Hirayama come to Uzbekistan and why he opened the Caravanserai of Culture in Tashkent?* The World Society for the Study, Preservation and Popularization of the Cultural Legacy of Uzbekistan . <https://society.uz/news/detail/news/552>





the annual film festivals held in Cannes (France) and cooperating with France in the film industry in general, we can not only strengthen ties between the two countries, but also prove to the whole world that soft power can have an impact when reflected in cinema.

Educational exchanges between Uzbekistan and top universities in developed countries of the world are also an important factor of soft power, which is important for both countries. This can include student exchange programs, joint research projects, and cooperation of professors and teachers in various areas of education. Currently, the rapid reforms being carried out in the higher education sector in Uzbekistan are paying more attention than ever to improving the external image of Uzbek universities and their place in international rankings. If this process is further accelerated, firstly, the interest of foreign students in studying in Uzbekistan will grow significantly. Secondly, it will create an opportunity for the university to attract more foreign specialists and scientists to its academic activities. All this will increase the reputation of Uzbekistan, its investment attractiveness, scientific and cultural potential.

The next important issue is to increase the number and quality of diplomatic events and official visits between Uzbekistan and leading countries of the world, and to pay great attention to the integration of cultural elements in such processes. It is no secret that diplomatic ceremonies improve bilateral relations, as well as create unforgettable experiences for diplomats and officials. This may include the presentation of traditional music, dance and cuisine at state receptions and cultural exhibitions. In particular, it is necessary to increase the activity of our ambassadors and diplomats in informal relations between our countries and peoples, as well as in social life.

The existence of cooperation between youth can also be interpreted as an effective front of soft power. The main goal of this direction is to increase the interest of foreign youth in Uzbekistan. It is necessary to organize exchange



programs and camps for them in Uzbekistan. We know that today, it is customary for young people to demonstrate the attractiveness of their culture and country through summer schools, educational exchange programs, and participation in various summits and conferences. In this case, young people, in addition to enjoying the nature, conditions, and cultural situation of the countries they travel to and study, are directly influenced by the soft power of that country. This will affect their future thinking only positively about that country and, if the opportunity arises to make a decision to cooperate with that country, they will definitely become positive recipients of it. In general, by strategically implementing cultural diplomacy initiatives, Uzbekistan can effectively increase its “soft power” and stimulate positive perceptions of its culture, values, and identity in the world’s powerful countries, which will ultimately strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries. This requires the government of Uzbekistan to pay attention to this issue and allocate as much money as possible, because in the future this money will return many times over and will ensure the Uzbekistan's strong position on the world stage.

### **Conclusion.**

“Soft power” is a very important phenomenon in its own right, reflecting the practical application of the most legitimate forms of establishing relations between countries and influencing any process in foreign policy.

Concluding from the above, it can be said that soft power and hard power, interacting with each other, can create smart power, which creates the basis for achieving the desired results and the intended goals. However, when there is a possibility of solving everything with soft power alone, the use of hard power should be strictly limited. Because it is natural that hard power, even once used, will arouse suspicion and distrust of any means that may be used later. Hard power can be accepted as an obligation that can be implemented only in desperate situations, rather than a rational decision. Especially for countries like Uzbekistan,



which are on the path of rapid development today, soft power is not a choice, but a necessity. Especially for Uzbekistan, which is not rich in natural and material resources, but has a huge historical, religious and cultural influence, soft power policy is quite effective and successful.

The concept of soft power has always had its own significance, means of influence, sources and is an important strategy for every powerful political actor. Of course, it is not always easy to foresee soft power and analyze how wide the range of results expected from it will be. However, it is distinguished by the fact that it is based on universal democratic principles, convenient, attractive and universal in comparison with any other means. As the Chinese philosopher Lao-Tzu, who lived in the 7th century BC, said: “There is no substance in the world softer and weaker than water, but it can break even the hardest substance by absorption”<sup>9</sup>. Soft power is like water, its existence is invisible and unknown, it does not accumulate a huge resource, but by using it, it is possible to influence and change any visible reality.

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