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Putin's foreign policy: a continuation of the past or the beginning of a new era?

VOLUME 1

Master's Dissertation in International Relations – Peace Studies, Security and Development supervised by Professor Sarah Carreira da Mota, presented to the Faculty of Economics of the University of Coimbra to obtain the Master's Degree

February 2023

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Resumo

O soft power surgiu inicialmente nos anos 90, como um conceito liberal utilizado dentro dos Estados democráticos para alcançar os seus objetivos no sistema internacional, sendo utilizado pela primeira vez pelo académico Joseph Nye em 1980. Enquanto conceptualização alternativa ao tradicional hard power, o soft power implica a capacidade de uma nação de influenciar outra através da atração e persuasão. Este surge a partir de três pilares fundamentais, sendo eles: a atratividade cultural de um estado, os seus ideais políticos e as suas políticas, tanto internas como externas. Ao longo dos anos, tanto Estados liberais e democráticos, como Estados não democráticos adotaram nas suas políticas externas esta conceção de poder, por ele ajudar a expandir e fortalecer a política externa de um Estado. Assim, a noção de soft power desencadeou diferentes interpretações e variações dependendo de quem o utilizava, dando origem ao que vários académicos chamam um tipo negativo de soft power, utilizado para controlar e coagir em vez de atrair e persuadir. Esta dissertação aborda o uso do soft power nos discursos de política externa da Rússia enquanto estudo de case de Estado não-democrático, questionando em que medida é possível observar uma mudança no tipo de poder utilizado na política externa russa, entre 2000 e 2008, em relação às antigas repúblicas soviéticas e, em caso afirmativo, qual é o objetivo por detrás dessa mudança. O conceito de soft power foi introduzido na política externa russa nos primeiros dois mandatos de Vladimir Putin como Presidente da Federação Russa. É, portanto, entre 2000 e 2008 que começam a surgir os primeiros sinais de um desenvolvimento de soft power na Rússia.

Com base em preceitos construtivistas e na Análise Crítica do Discurso, esta dissertação defende que o uso de soft power e do poder discursivo (ou seja, ideias, cultura, linguagem, ideologia e conhecimento) por parte do Presidente Vladimir Putin, estão interligados e são usados com o intuito de manipular e coagir, recorrendo ao uso de atos de fala para atingir os seus objetivos no sistema internacional. Dito isto, é possível concluir que o tipo de poder utilizado no âmbito da política externa russa não mudou. Quase três décadas após o colapso da União Soviética, a Rússia parece continuar a procurar o seu lugar no sistema internacional, tentando recuperar a influência perdida e, consequentemente, voltar ao seu antigo estatuto de grande potência.

Palavras-Chave: Soft Power; Política Externa; Rússia; Vladimir Putin

Abstract

Soft power initially emerged in the 1990s as a liberal concept used within democratic states to achieve their goals in the international system and was first used by scholar Joseph Nye in 1980. As an alternative conceptualization to traditional hard power, soft power implies the ability of one nation to influence another through attraction and persuasion. This arises from three fundamental pillars, namely the cultural attractiveness of a state, its political ideals, and its policies, both internal and external. Over the years, both liberal and democratic states and non-democratic states have adopted this concept of power in their foreign policies, as it helps to expand and strengthen a state's foreign policy. Thus, the notion of soft power has triggered different interpretations and variations depending on who was using it, giving rise to what several scholars call a negative type of soft power, used to control and coerce rather than attract and persuade. This dissertation addresses the use of soft power in Russia's foreign policy discourses as a case study of a non-democratic state, questioning to what extent it is possible to observe a change in the type of power used in Russian foreign policy between 2000 and 2008 in relation to the former Soviet republics and, if so, what is the purpose behind this change. The concept of soft power was introduced into Russian foreign policy in Vladimir Putin's first two terms as President of the Russian Federation. It is therefore between 2000 and 2008 that the first signs of a soft power development in Russia begin to appear.

Drawing on constructivist precepts and Critical Discourse Analysis, this dissertation argues that the use of soft power and discursive power (i.e. ideas, culture, language, ideology and knowledge) by President Vladimir Putin are intertwined and are used for the purpose of manipulation and coercion, resorting to the use of speech acts to achieve his goals in the international system. That being said, it is possible to conclude that the type of power used within Russian foreign policy has not changed. Almost three decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia seems to continue to search for its place in the international system, trying to regain its lost influence and, consequently, return to its former status as a great power.

Keywords: Soft Power; Foreign Policy; Russia; Vladimir Putin

List of Acronyms

BRIC – Brazil, Russia, India and China
CIS – Commonwealth of Independent States
EEC – European Economic Community
EU – European Union
FPA – Foreign Policy Analysis
FSB – Federal Security Service
GOC – Georgian Orthodox Church
IR – International Relations
KGB – State Security Committee
NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NPT – New Political Thinking
NGO - Non-governmental Organizations
NIS – Newly Independent States
ROC – Russian Orthodox Church
UN – United Nations
US – United States
USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Table

Introduction

> Power is the production, in and through social relations, of effects on actors that shape their capacity to control their fate. This concept has two dimensions at its core: (1) the kinds of social relations through which actors' capacities are affected (and affected); and, (2) the specificity of those social relations. Conventionally for social theorists, social relations can be viewed as being broadly of two kinds: relations of interaction among previously constituted social actors; or relations of constitution of actors as particular kinds of social beings (Barnett & Duvall, 2005: 45).

The concept of power is not new in International Relations (IR), nevertheless it continues to play a major role in the field. Although it is a central concept in theories within the field of IR, it remains contested, far too complex in its sources, results and productions. It is fundamental to key concepts such as the 'balance of power' and plays an important role when understanding conflicts. In other words, it explains states behavior and the outcomes of their interactions. Power is usually conceptualized through the lens of relative material capabilities. However, power can be expressed and understood in several different ways.

The quote above approaches two different dimensions that are at the core of power. The first dimension is strictly connected with whether power works in interactions or social constitution. Power, in this dimension works through behavioral relations or interactions which consequently affect the ability of others to control the circumstances of their existence. As a result, power almost becomes an attribute that actors use as a resource to shape the actions and conditions of others. The second dimension consists of power as a social relation of constitutions. In other words, power works through social relations that constitute actors as social beings with their own capabilities and interests. Constitutive arguments consider how specific social relations are responsible for producing particular kinds of actors (Barnett & Duvall, 2005: 45). The first dimension if often compared to concepts of power related with the exercise of control over others, more precisely "*power over*" concepts. Power over relations is often related to a traditional dominance model, in which decision making is defined by control,

instrumentalism and self-interest and thus based on hard power. Whereas the second dimension focuses on how social relations define who the actors are and what capacities and practices they are socially empowered to carry out, being connected to "*power to*" and "*power with*" concepts. *Power with* relations usually reflect an empowerment model, in which dialogue, inclusion and shared power accompanies decision making and as a result is based on a more soft type of power (Berger, 2005: 6).

The present research arises from a fundamental concern over how non-democratic states, over the years, began to introduce within their foreign policy the second dimension of power, more precisely the concept of soft power. Soft power appeared as a liberal notion, used within democratic states in order to achieve their goals in the international system, through attraction and persuasion. Nevertheless, and throughout the years, it began to acquire different interpretations depending on who was using it, giving rise to what several academics have called a negative type of soft power, used to control, and coerce instead of attracting and persuade. That being said, this research aims at uncovering the use of soft power within non-democratic states, more precisely Russia. The objective is to discover whether non-democratic are using soft power in their foreign policy discourses and what is the aim behind that use. Does the use of soft power in non-democratic states means a change in the type of power or is it just another tool playing a role in a much bigger hard power game? This is extremely important and relevant within the field of IR, since it allows us to understand how non-democratic state are adapting to the changes in the international system in order to legitimize their actions.

Soft power is a state's foreign policy tool that, contrary to hard power, uses attraction and persuasion for one to obtain the desired outcomes in the international system. It relies on three pillars, namely political ideals, culture and policies (Nye, 2004a: 11-15). Nevertheless, soft power only works if these three pillars are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others. In other words, soft power in a state's foreign policy will only have the desired outcomes if what the state is trying to projects is seen as attractive to other states. Soft power appeared as a more adequate type of power for the current international system and as a consequence it has become increasingly important within politics over the years. The importance of soft power within foreign policy was understood not only by democratic states, but also by non-democratic states that saw an opportunity to

legitimize their actions and expand their influence without having to resort to coercion or military interventions.

Although soft power appears as a great alternative to violent means, the notion has come to acquire a broader meaning, giving rise to different interpretations depending on whom uses it. In the recent years, scholars have noticed that soft power variations could also present a negative connotation and could be used to control and coerce. The meteoric rise of soft power made it an appealing concept for several leaders, as it can be seen with the case of Russia (Rutland & Kazantsev, 2016). Russian leaders were determined to master the art of soft power, investing in soft power projects, and highlighting the role that cultural promotion should play within Russian foreign policy. Even during the Soviet period, the Soviet Union was a major source of soft power in the region, taking advantage of its extensive network propaganda agencies to advance what we now call the soft power of URRS. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the concept began to appear again within Russian foreign policy discourses within Putin's first two terms in power. Russia was initially ranked by the Freedom House organization as a "partly free country" in 2004, nevertheless just a year later its status changed to "not free country" (FreedomHouse, 2022). Russia's authoritarian political system concentrates power in the hands of President Putin, ensured with loyalist security forces, a controlled media environment, a subservient judiciary and a legislature consisting of a ruling party and a ductile opposition faction (FreedomHouse, 2022: l.16-20).

Under Putin, the state openly consolidated its control of media, started targeting National television stations first and then print media in 2006, presenting a similar control to the one done in the former Soviet Union, including the use of propaganda techniques similar to those employed during communism (Rosefielde & Hlouskova, 2007: 216-217). Russia is a one-party state, "with subservient parliament and judiciary. The FSB is answerable only to the president, and former military and KGB officers dominate the state bureaucracy" (id: 222-223). Moreover, it also relies in widespread corruption, the constant disrespect for freedom of expression and human rights, feeble enforcement of property rights and oppression in order to achieve its domestic and foreign goals (Brudny & Finkel, 2011: 814). As a consequence, Russia's power has been characterized by the recurrent use of hard power within both domestic and foreign policy, yet the entrance of a liberal concept within the Russian foreign policy discourses might represent a change

in the type of Russian power. That being said, to what extent is it possible to observe in Russian foreign policy, between 2000 and 2008, a change in the type of power used towards the former Soviet republics? And if so, what is the aim behind that change?

As said above, soft power is a foreign policy tool used by states to expand their influence in the international system. Through foreign policy, states attempt to achieve their goals and expand their influence within foreign governments, and, hence, shape international preferences to better suit states' needs (Hudson, 2014). Each tool is extremely important to the external affairs of the State, nevertheless soft power and consequently public diplomacy are the ones to be focused on. These two particular tools play a substantial role in the acceptance and support of other nations and thus are extremely important to expand the State's influence within foreign governments (Rahman, 2019). However, when a state's policies are seen as illegitimate and lose credibility in the eyes of others, a loss of support is expected on the part of foreign states (Nye, 1990a, 2004a).

Whereas hard power is strictly connected with coercion and military interventions, soft power uses attraction and persuasion to obtain the desired outcomes. However, it only works if what the State is trying to project is appealing and attractive to other States. This type of power falls into the second main view of power, namely *power with.* This type of power works by finding common ground among different interests and building a collective strength and it is usually connected with public diplomacy (Partzsch & Fuchs, 2012: 359-360). Public diplomacy is the "communication between nations, peoples, and cultures" (Rasmussen, 2014: 2-3) and normally works in tandem with soft power in order to achieve the desired outcomes (Nye, 2008). The resources that produce soft power arise from the values that a country expresses in its culture and policies and what public diplomacy does, is to mobilize these resources to attract the people and the government from other countries (*ibid*).

Therefore, soft power can be explained as a nation's capacity to influence through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion. The soft power of a country arises from three basic pillars, that is: the attractiveness of a country's culture, its political ideal and its policies (Nye, 2004a: x). The first pillar – culture – is seen as a set of values, beliefs and practices that establish the meaning for and within a society. If a country's culture

advocate universal values and policies shares by others, the probability of achieving the desired outcomes increases since it creates a relation of attraction (Nye, 2004a: 11). The second and third pillar – political ideals and policies – can either reinforce or destroy a country's soft power. If a country's policies appear to be reluctant, aggressive, outdated and indifferent to the opinion of others, the soft power of a country might be eroded and the capacity to change and affect others can be damaged (Nye, 2004a: 14). When these three pillars are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others, the soft power of a country is enhanced, and the State is able to make others do something without resorting to threats or inducements.

Notwithstanding, soft power also presents some limitations regarding the application and the concept itself. Araştırma Makalesi (2017) highlighted three issues regarding the concept of soft power, namely originality, measurability and the ambiguity about the agent or structure. Regarding the problem of originality, soft power appears to be very similar to many other approaches in IR particularly to Steven Luke's aproach regarding three-dimensional power, E.H.Carr's division of power into three categories and Antonio Gramsci's conceptualization of hegemony (Lukes, 2005; Cox & Parmar, 2010; Makalesi, 2017). The second problem is related to the impossibility of measueing the effectiveness of soft power. The ability to control others if often associated to a State's military and economic capabilities and thus political leadres often define power as the possession of resources. Contrary to this, soft power is about improving a country's image among other others on the assumption that the more attractive a state's image is transmited to the world, the more allies and support that country will receive (Nye, 1990b: 178; Nye, 2004b: 1). Finally, the third problem is a consequence of Nye's focus on either agency of actors or the structure. In addition to focus almost exclusively on the agent rather than the strucutre, Nye also fails to consider the relational or structural forms of power, that conflate with each other. These two conditions are used mainly individually and not combined, ultimately creating ambiguity in the nature of soft power (Lock, 2010; Kearn 2011; Malakesi, 2017). Despite these limitations, soft power is a fundamental tool for Sates to expand their power and sovereignty in a very subtle but effective way. Every nation that aims to strenghten its position whitin the international system and create conditions for its socio-economic develpment must take soft power into account (Nye, 2019). As a result, and as said above, soft power has come to acquire different

connotations depending on whom is using it and a negative type of soft power, mainly used by non-democratic states begin to be highlighted by academics such as William A. Callahan and H. H. S.Viswanathan. This negative type of soft power, opposed to its initial purpose, is not based on attraction and persuasion, but rather a very subtle way to coerce and manipulate.

Vladimir Putin rose to power in 2000, to deal with a country that was not only submerged in economic, diplomatic and military problems, but also with a void in itsnational identity and national interests. Putin's rise to power represented the return to an idealized world ruled by order and stability and a wind of change to those who suffered from Yeltsin's presidency. With that change in leadership, Russian foreign policy changed as well, to focus on Russia as a sovereign democracy, on multipolarity as key to international stability, on Eurasia and Eurasianism and on the Near Abroad. Considering this, if a State such as Russia is in fact using soft power within its foreign policy, what is the ultimate objective underlying it? Is it to attract and persuade the former Soviet republics and thus create harmonious relations with them, serving a purpose of union? Or is it used as a weapon in order to regain its lost influence at a geopolitical level , strengthen its presence in the international system and restore Russia's great power status, with the purpose of division?

The concept of soft power entered Russian political discourses and Putin discourses officialy during his second term in power. Nevertheless, altough the idea of soft power was just recently incorporated in Russia's official discourse, soft power as a phenomenon in Moscow's relations with other actors has a much long history (Feklyunina, 2015: 781). The concept appeared in the context of Kremlin's more active policies towards the so called Near Abroad, more specifically as Moscow was seeking to consolidate its power among its compatriots (Sergunin & Karabenshkin, 2015: 349). By using the concept of soft power, Putin aimed to foster economic, political and socio-cultural integration in the post-Soviet space. Aditionally to this, there was a strong need for Russia to improve its international image, non only among the Commonweatlh of Independent States (CIS) countries but also worldwide, which resulted in a massive propaganda campaign lauched by the Kremlin to downplay Russia's image of an aggressive and undemocratic country. Russian leaders largely interpreted the soft power concept in a very instrumental and pragmatic way. In other words, it was perceived by

Moscow as an instrument of policy towards its compatriots in the Near Abroad. According to Alexander Sergunin and Leonid Karabeshking (2015: 352), Russian soft power strategy became a set of foreign policy to help Moscow's goals regard particular states and strengthen Russian position worldwide. Ilya Yablokov (2015) goes even further, arguing that Russia seeks to generate soft power through the promotion of Anti-American conspiracy theories on the RT television network. In other words the goal of Russian soft power is less to promote Russia's values, but rather to spoil the image of the United States, thus using conspiracy theories as a populist tool to reallocate power between the US and the Russian government (Callahan, 2015: 220).

It has been argued by scholars of Russian foreign policy that Moscow's understanding of soft power is somewhat different from Nye's conceptualization and more reminiscent of Soviet propaganda. This namely includes a set instruments and methods to achieve foreign policy goals, but with the help of instruments of influence (Feklyunina, 2015: 782). As a result, in the post-Soviet space, Russian authorities put into development various projects to promote the Russian language, Russian-language media, the Russian Orthodox Church and business networks (Bogomolov & Lytvynenko, 2012). According to Valentina Feklyunina (2015) the pursue of a more assertive policy in the neighbourhood aimed to stop the decline of Russian influence by preventing other actors, namely the US, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the EU from trying to expand their influence in the former Soviet space. The Russian World Foundation, for example, was created in order to promote the teaching of Russian within Russia and abroad and the Rossotrudnichestvo agency was also established to develop projects that would promote Russian language and culture abroad (Putin, 2007c; Rotaru, 2018: 39).

Although these two projects appear to be in line with the basic principles of soft power, academics such as Kavus Abushov (2009) and Zahoo Ahmad Dar (2020) have argued that for Russia the CIS worked as a tool to exert its influence in the former Soviet sphere and to attain Russia's national interest and great power status that is often mentioned by Russian foreign policy officials. As a consequence Russian policies towards the former Soviet republics aimed at limiting sovereignty for, and reintegration of, the former Soviet republics in the russian sphere of influence, guarantying Russia's domination and hegemony over them. As H. H. S. Viswanathan affirmed, the projection of one's culture is considered a positive thing. However, the "aggressive projection of a

big and historical nation's culture in smaller countries, particularly in the neighbourhood, can be interpreted as cultural imperialism" (2019, l.43-45).

Considering what was said above, this dissertation will follow a constructivist paradigm. Acclaimed by some and dismissed by others, constructivism has acquired a considerable significance within the field of IR (Zehfuss, 2002: 1). The constructivist theory affirms that states are the main actors in IR, that the structure of international relations is based on social theory and norms rather than material factors, and that states and their interests are an important part of the structure of IR. Constructivism appeared within the field of IR in 1989 as a result of Nicholas Onuf book *World of Our Making - Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* and was later expanded by other constructivists such as Friedrich Kratochwill and Alexander Wendt (Zehfuss, 2002; (Nogueira & Messari, 2005: 162). Constructivism reasserts that reality is socially constructed and that the identities and interests of the actors are built by shared ideas that end up being a key factor in international politics (Alves da Silva, 2013, p. 2). According to Nichoals Onuf, constructivism holds that "people make society and society makes people" (1998).

Usually, we think of agents as people who act on the behalf of other people or in other words, rules make it possible to act on behalf of social constructions. Agency appears thus as a social condition and as a result, the government of a country is a collection of people and a social construction. As decisionmakers, states can decide whether the international stage is going to be conflicting or cooperative. In other words, stability and instability within the international system depends on how states behave and how they decide about dealing with the international environment (Ahmad M. M., 2020: 2-3; Stanton, 2002: 8). Constructivism is thus a theory that gives a better understanding of international relations based on social theory. Accordingly, the structure of international relations is made by Humans and hence the structure is not unchangeable or constant, being possible to change it into a new system and develop it into a new model (Ahmad M. M., 2020: 4).

According to Luís Manuel Bernardino (2012) international cooperation among States should be understood as one of the best ways to prevent and resolve conflicts in the world. States are not abstract entities and thus they act through the stimulus of

individuals and leaderships. Additionally to this, they also act through the implementation of policies that characterize and constitute their political culture and identify them on the international system (Bernardino, 2012: 20). In this sense, States try to achieve their goals within the international system by resorting to the use of speech acts or, in other words, the act of speaking in a form that gets someone else to act (Zehfuss, 2002: 20). The success of speech acts depends on the willingness and on the addressee's response, meaning that they will only work in a certain situation (Zehfuss, 2002: 21-22).

That being said, constructivism differs from other theories in the sense that it highlights the ontological reality of intersubjective knowledge. Contrary to neorealism and neoliberalism which believe in the power of material world over social world, constructivism does not reject the material world, but stresses the importance of the social world in IR. In other words, constructivism considers that the material world shapes and is shaped by non-material world and hence they are interconnected, interacting to construct the world order (Nugroho, 2008: 91). Moreover, besides recognizing the importance of material power, constructivism also emphasizes the importance of discursive power, that is knowlegde, ideas, culture, language and ideology (Nugroho, 2008: 92). Discursive power works by "producing and reproducing intersubjective meaning." (ibid.) and thus enables that the same material expression can be manipulated to produce certain interpretations and silence other possible meaning (Nugroho, 2008: 92-93). Furthermore, the existence of state's domestic politics and identity also implies state's autonomy in front of international social strucutre and thus the combination of a State material power and discursive power will allow nations to project their identity across its national borders and thus expand their influence within the international system (Nugroho, 2008: 94).

Therefore and taking into account what was said previously, the argument of this dissertation is that it is not possible to observe a change in the type of power used in Russian foreign policy towards the former Soviet space, since the 1990s. However, marks of a negative soft power may be found within Russian foreign policy between 2004 and 2008. The USSR was mainly known by its hard power, yet it was also a major source of soft power in the former Soviet republics. After the collapse of the USSR, more specifically during the Yeltsin's presidency, it was also possible to find marks of soft power, initally more directed to the West and then more focused on the neighbourhood.

Finally, when observing Russian foreign policy under Putin, it is possible to affirm that soft power is being used as a tool to achieve Russian objectives in the international system, more precisely in the Near Abroad. That being said, it is possible to affirm that soft power was always present in Russian history and it continues to be. Nevertheless, it is a negative type of soft power that is used to coerce and manipulate instead of attract and persuade. The use of soft power within Russian foreign policy between 2000 and 2008 was essentially directed to the former Soviet republics was a way to counteract western influence to the region. By doing this, soft power is used as a weapon in order to regain the lost influence in the region and strengthen its presence in the international system, thus restoring Russia's great power status that is often mentioned by Russian foreign policy officials. As a result, soft power appears to be just an integral part of a hard power game Russia is playing.

Taking into account what was said above, this dissertation will resort to the use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), more precisely the Teun Van Dijk's Critical Discourse analysis theory to proceed to the discourse analysis. According to Ruth Wodak (2014: 302), CDA has its roots in "rhetoric, text linguistics, anthropology, philosophy, sociopsychology, cognitive science, literary studies, and sociolinguistics, as well as in applied linguistics and pragmatics" and it tries to explain the power in discourse and over discourse in the field of politics alongside with two fundamental concepts: ideology and power. In other words, CDA is a type of discourse analytical research that fundamentally studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are legitimized, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context (Van Dijk, 2005: 352). According to Teun Van Dijk, the relations between discourse and power are connected to specific forms of discourse, i.e the media, those of politics, or science, which consequently become a power resource. This means that, groups who control the most influencial discourse have more chances to control the minds and actions of others and indirectly might control some of their actions, as we know from manipulation (Van Dijk, 2005: 355).

That being said, the concern of power as a form of domination links CDA to issues such as power abuse and inequality. Putting it differently, CDA aims to explain how language can contributes to the domination of some people by others and thus CDA's main areas focus on issues of manipulation, exploitation and control (O'Regan &

Macdonald, 2009: 1-2). According to John O'regan and M.N. Macdonald (2009: 2), power as a form of domination is perceived as as oppressive force in society, used in order to subjugate opposition and hence maintain the interests of power holders. These usually consist of an alliance "of governments, capitalists and general stakeholders in capital, who together constitute the dominant bloc within capitalist societies" (ibid.). That being said, those who enact power in political discourses take advantage of the cultural aspect of power developed in social contexts (Kouzouloglou, 2015: 7). CDA unfolds the hidden notions and ideologies behind words and linguistic structures and aims to find and reveal connections between discourse and speech actor's intentions. That being said, the use of CDA in this dissertation will serve the purpose of analysing and discovering the aim behind Putin's discourses, defining the structure of the text and identifying its general characteristics and purposes.

In order to understand the type of power used within Russian foreign policy, Putin discourses regarding three case studies are going to be analysed using both a constructivist paradigm and a qualitative methodology, namely the Colored Revolutions, the Russian World Concept and finally the Russo-Georgian War. These three case studies were particularly chosen due to their contemporarity. They started during Putin's first two terms in power, nevertheless they are still happening. Since soft power results are not detectable right away, the choice of these case studies help us understand more effectively the type of power used in Russian foreign policy and Russian foreign policy discourses and what is the aim behind that power.

To conclude, this dissertation will be divided in three parts. The first chapter will work as a theoretical introduction to traditional approaches of power, namely Realism and Liberalism, foreign policy and foreign policy analysis. A leader's actions influence a state's domestic and foreign policy and hence they express his world view. Since each IR theory has a different approach of power his actions can be interpreted in light of a IR theory. The foreign policy of a country is formulated to safeguard and promote its national interest abroad and hence it is central to expand a state's influence in the international system. This theoretical introduction will then serve as a basis for understanding the role of soft power in foreign policy. The second chapter will provide a short analysis of both Soviet foreign policy and Yeltsin's foreign policy, thus allowing to see the changes that Russian foreign policy has undergone in the first decade of the Russian Federation and

the type of power used throughout those years. This analysis will allow a better understanding of Putin's new foreign policy objectives, namely Russia as a truly sovereign democracy, multipolarity as key to international stability, Eurasia and Eurasianism and Russia's relation with the 'Near Abroad'. Finally, the third chapter of this dissertation will focus on the search for soft power in Putin's foreign policy. This will be made through an analysis of Putin discourses regarding three specific events particularly: the Colored Revolutions, the Russian World Concept and the Russo-Georgian war.

Chapter 1 - The conception of power in Foreign Policy Analysis

The field of international relations emerged at the beginning of the 20th century with the US growing rapidly in power and influence. Throughout the years and as the field would grow in complexity, the theories would grow too, helping us to understand the world we live in and aiming to answer questions of why countries act the way they do. Each IR theory has a different approach of power and not only influence state at the internal level, but also at the external, meaning that both domestically and internationally the type of theory chosen by the leader of one state will have repercussions when making decisions. On one hand there are theories more directed to a hard type of power and on the other, there are theories more focused on the soft type of power, which is the case of Liberalism. Nevertheless, just recently scholars and politicians returned to pay attention to the benefits of soft power both internally and externally, choosing to use attraction and persuasion to legitimize its actions in the eyes of others. As the world is constantly changing, so is the nature of power adapting to the circumstances, context, and interest.

1.1 Traditional Approaches to power: Realism and Liberalism

In order to lay ground for a comprehensive reading of power, this section approaches the theoretical foundations of International Relations (IR), by focusing on two mainstream theories, namely Realism and Liberalism, and thus introduce their respective conceptual relations to power. These two theories are the two oldest schools of thought in IR, constituting the first great debate within IR. They have dominated the mainstream analysis of global politics and helped understanding the world by framing the actions of states. Nevertheless, they differ in several important aspects such as the visions of human nature; the solution to end war, which both believe is the central problem of IR; States as key actors; interests; the anarchic nature of IR and the nature of conflict among other aspects. The study of international relations began as a theoretical discipline has as foundational texts the E. H. Carr's, *The Twenty Years' Crisis* and Hans Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations* (Burchill, Liberalism, 2005). Throughout the years and as IR would grow in complexity, the family of theories that IR had to offer grew as well, aiming to answer questions related with the conditions of peace and war, explain and predict state

behaviour and interest and why states act the way they do in specific situations (Hosli & de Buck, 2020). Theories are constantly emerging, changing and complementing each other and as a result it became possible to divide IR theories in a three-part spectrum that includes traditional theories, middle ground theories and critical theories (McGlinchey et al., 2017).

IR theories allow us to understand the world, each one offering a different theoretical perspective, often used by diplomats to dictate the direction that a government should take regarding an international political issue, concern, or goal. They are influenced by other academic subjects and respond to historical and contemporary developments in the real world. Events such as the First and Second World War, the Cold war and the emergence of a close economic cooperation between Westerns states are just a few examples of real-world events that stimulated IR scholarship in the 20th century (Jackson & Sorensen, IR as an Acadeemic Subject, 2013). There are, nonetheless, certain theories that might be more widely accepted and legitimized than others as is the case of Realism and Liberalism. The reason for such theories to acquire such dominance compared with other theories may vary from the prevalence in debates with adversaries or even be the beneficiary of widespread beliefs that appear more relevant to the dominant events, as was the case of the dominance of Realism after the Second World War and the Cold war. Within IR there are two mainstream theories, also known as rationalist approaches to international relations, that attempt to take and empirical approach of IR, that is: Realism and Liberalism. These two theories constituted the 'first great debate' in the history of IR, becoming a dominant part of the self-image of the field and repeatedly addressed in textbooks (Schmidt, 2012). Nevertheless, throughout the years and as the international system would change, new theories began to emerge, namely: post-modern theories. These theories try to understand how the world is in reality. They are not concerned with objective data or the so-called 'brute facts' and hence take a more normative or philosophical approach of IR. In other words, post-modern theories have a post-positivist epistemology with the underlying goal of understand rather than explain (Hosli & de Buck, 2020).

These two major classical theoretical traditions in IR constitute the ground in which IR relies. It was after World War I that a necessity to separate academic subject of IR happened, driven by a desire to never allow human suffering on such a scale to happen again (Jackson & Sorensen, IR as an Acadeemic Subject, 2013). The First World War

brought an enormous number of questions regarding why great powers such as France, Russia, Britain or Germany would continue waging the war in face of such slaughter and the answers that the new discipline came up were profoundly shaped by liberal ideas. At the time, US President Woodrow Wilson had a vision of making the world safe for democracy (which later would be named the "Wilson's concept of League of Nations") that was based on two major points: the promotion of democracy and self-determination and the creation of an international organization that would regulate relations between states on a firmer institutional foundation. These liberal ideas appeared to claim some success in the international system of the 1920s. However, the World War II caused a severe crisis in the idealist paradigm, which resulted in its replacement by the realist paradigm, that at the time was able to do something that the idealist paradigm could not, namely explain the constant struggle for power among sovereign states and stop the expansionist power politics conducted by authoritarian regimes (Schmidt, 2012; Jackson & Sorensen, 2013). According to Andy Knight and Tom Keating (2010), idealism prevailed in the first wave of the development of modern international relations, nevertheless the second wave was dominated by realism, which became the dominant theoretical paradigm after the World War II and during the Cold war period. (Schmidt, 2012).

Realism is one the most distinguished school of thought in IR and its ground rules were established by two highly renowned academics, namely E.H. Carr with *The Twenty Years's Crisis,* first published in 1939, and later Kenneth Waltz's book *Theory of International Politics* published in 1979 (Brown & Ainley, 2009; Jackson & Sorensen, 2013). Nonetheless, defining Realism continues to be quite difficult for an old and well-established theory. Definitions may vary in detail, although there is consensus about the constraints on politics imposed by an egoist human nature (Burchill, Liberalism, 2005). Realists give primary emphasis to egoistic passions and are unanimous when affirming that human nature constrains a core of egoism which defines the central problem of politics. Another element of Realism's common ground is the recognition of anarchy as the absence of an international government; whereas within states, human nature is dominated by a hierarchical political authority, in international relations anarchy allows and encourages the worst aspects of human nature as well as a struggle for power. Accordingly, competition for power is universal and States rely on the constant presence of force to mark the affairs of nations (Burchill, et al., 2005; Donnelly, 2004; Jackson,

Moller, & Sorensen, 2019; Jackson & Sorensen, 2013). That being said, Realism is the theory that emphasizes the competitive and conflictual side of international relations (Antunes & Camisão, 2018). In traditional realist thinking individuals or groups of individuals aim at maximizing their power to increase their chances of survival. In other words, it is extremely important for states to accumulate and have as much power as possible to ensure that there are no security challenges and hence self-preservation (Hosli & de Buck, 2020). Machiavelli's book *The Prince* (1532) portrays this point of view in a very simple, nevertheless, precise way. Machiavelli states firmly that a leader's primary concern is to promote national security and to do this a leader must be alert and cope with internal and external threats to his rule, using power and deception as tools to conduct foreign policy (Machieavelli,2014). Most theorists adopt Realism as a theory of international politics, shifting our attention from human nature to political structure and hence statesmanship implies managing, and not eliminating conflict in the pursue of a less dangerous world (Burchill et al., 2005). Within realism, it is possible to observe two types of theorists. On the one hand, 'strong' realists who emphasize the predominance and importance of power, self-interest, and conflict, giving nevertheless a small amount of space for politically salient 'non-realist' forces and concerns. On the other hand, 'Weak' realists, that unlike 'strong' realists, accept the realist analysis of the problems of international politics, but are also open to a wider range of political possibilities. Emblematic figures of the realist theory include Niccolo Machiavelli, Hans J. Morgenthau, Thomas Hobbes, E.H. Carr, Kenneth Waltz (Kauppi & Viotti, 2020: 24-31; Burchill, et al., 2005: 30).

Within this theory, it is possible to distinguish Classic Realism from Neorealim (or Structural Realism). Hans Morgenthau and Thomas Hobbes, for example, are two prominent Classic realists. In his famous chaper 13 of *Leviathan*, published in 1651, Hobbes imagined politics in a pre-social state of nature, giving almost the same importance to human nature and international anarchy (Yurdusev, 2006; Burchill, et al., 2005). To him, world politics was characterized essentially as States' struggle for power as the relations among States took place in a state of nature which is essentially a state of war (Bull, 1981). Accordingly, the state of nature implies three basic assumptions. First, men are equal; second, they interact in anarchy; and thirdly they are driven by competition, diffidence and glory which ultimately leads to a war of all against all (Burchill, et al., 2005; Brown & Ainley, 2009; Hosli & de Buck, 2020). To Hobbes, men

are equal, in the sense that the weakest has strength to kill the strongest. He believes that the equality of hope ultimately will lead men to be enimies as a result of the scarcity of resources to have as much as he desires. Men's desires are unending as long as they live and therefore their search for power and self-preservation is constant and endless , caracterizing human passions as animalistic (Hampton, 1987; Yurdusev, 2006). This constant desire for power is exacerbated by competition, diffidence and glory. According to Hobbes, competition is the first cause of conflict, since men invade for gain. Consequently, Hobbes assumes that, as men are competing for things they want to seize or they were taken from, this leads to a sense of distrust, or in other words diffidence (Hampton, 1987). Aditionally to this question, men are also driven by glory in the pursuit of power, mainly for reputation (Hampton, 1987; Burchill, et al., 2005). If we add the absence of a government (anarchy), the mixture becomes unstable and vicious. Nevertheless, the same sovereign powers which, facing outward, create the international anarchy, when looking inward provide the possibility of social life. Even if states are in the state of nature and have no power of escaping it, Hobbes stresses that all men are driven by passions that incline them to peace and are equipped with natural reason or in his words "the laws of nature" (Hobbes, 1981; Bull, 1981; Burchill, et al., 2005). However, he has little confidence in the power of these forces over the egoistic passions of men, empahasizing his pessimistic view of human nature (Hobbes, 1981).

The second theorist who greatly contributed to the development of Classic Realism was Hans Morgenthau, a major proponent of the theory. Although Morgenthau's work may be seen as an attempt to restate the view of international politics presented in the works of Thomas Hobbes, it would be foolish to equate both (Bull, 1981). To Morgenthau, conflict and international politics are driven by human nature. Humans are aggressive and power-hungry beings and hence power struggles arise because men are constantly seeking power. It is because of this flawed human nature that nations and leaders strive and are constantly seeking to maximize their power on the global stage, often at the expense of other states (Morgenthau, 1948). Morgenthau also proposes a very narrow vision of politics, that is not quite accepted by the unanimity of IR theorists (Williams, 2004). Many theorists affirm that Morgenthau's understanding of politics appears to be inadequate or at least unsystematically theorized within Classical Realism and that "[a] broader, more sociologically and institutionally rigorous theory of the structure, dynamics, and multiple deeterminants of politics at the domestics level is

essencial for the further development of IR theory, whether 'realist' or not.]" (Williams, 2004: 635).The narrowness of Classical Realism's understanding of politics is a topic of discussion that still prevails within IR and one of the symbols of its limited theoretical bases (Williams, 2004). Some theorists argue that realism's narrow vision of political realtions is understandable, nonetheless inadequate. Whereas others affirm that Classic Realism's concern with human nature exceeds any sustained concern with the importance of potitical strucutres. According to Morgenthau, Realism is based on the pursuit of power and, that through power, national interests can be achieved.

Morgenthau's "second principle of political realism" according to Michael Williams (2004) lies in the definition of politics as "interest defined in terms of power" (Williams, 2004: 638). This vision of politics as 'interest defined by power' has two main interpretations. One reduces Realism to a form of materialism , particularly in military terms, which ends up characterizing international politics as a struggle for material power. The second interpretation is essentially instrumentalist; if power is a necessary mean to pursuit of interests, then power becomes an end in itself (Williams, 2004). Nevertheless, according to Morgenthau (1948), the concept of 'interest in terms of power' enables a theory of politics, international or domestic, that allows to distinguish between political and nonpolitical facts. This concept of interest defined as power, makes the theoretical understanding of politics possible and provides rational discipline in action and creates continuity in foreign policy: "American, British, or Russian foreign policy appear as in intelligible, rational continuum, by and large consistent within itself, reglardless of the different motives, preference, and intellectual and moral qualities of successive statesmen" (Morgenthau, 1948: 5). This statement brings two concerns: one is related to the motives; the other to ideological preferences. However, it cannot be concluded from the good or bad intentions of a statesman if his foreign policy will either be morally praiseworthy or politically successful. If we want to know the moral and political qualities of his actions, we must know the statesman and not his motives (Morgenthau, 1948). Morgenthau's realist theory has as the keystone the concept of power and he reinforces the belief in the human drive for power by introducing rationality. Instead of presenting an actual picture of human affairs, Morgenthau emphasizes the pursuit of power and the rationality of this pursuit as a norm (Korab-Karpowicz, 2017).

Furthermore, for realists, power is the currency of international politics and according to them Great Powers are constantly paying attention to how much economic

and military power they have compared to others, in order to make sure no other state tries to shift the balance of power (Mearsheimer, 2013). However, there are certain differences among realists, the most basic of which rests in a seemingly simple question: why do states want power? As mentioned above, for classical for realists such as Hobbes and Morgenthau, the answer lies in human nature, whereas for structural realists such as Kenneth Waltz, what really matters is the structure of the international system that forces states to pursue power, meaning that Great Powers are almost constrained to compete with each other if they hope to survive (Donnelly, Realism, 2005; Brown, 2009; Mearsheimer, 2013).

Structural Realism, or Neorealism, emerged in the late 1970s. For defensive realists, such as Waltz, Structural Realism attempts to focus on states' material capabilities, making the balance of power mainly a function of military assests or in other words, stuctural realists don't believe that domestic politics matters for how States behave on a daily basis on the international politics. Waltz's formulation of Structural Realism has two constant elements: The first is that international system is anarchic rather than hierarchic, meaning that there is no centralized authority that stands above the states (Keohane, 1986; Donnelly, Realism, 2005; Mearsheimer, 2013). To Waltz, the distinction between hierarchic and anarchic is extremely important. According to him, the international system is anarchic and it always has been (Brown & Ainley, 2009). The international system is a system of self-help and hence states are forced to look for themselves and to look for other states as potential threats resulting in the balance of power (Brown & Ainley, 2009); The second element of Waltz' strucutral realism is that in a anarchic system units are similar in nature and therefore there is an interaction among units with similar functions (Keohane, 1986; Brown & Ainley, 2009). Waltz explains the construction of balance of power in his book *Theory of International Politics* (1979) arguing that that is a central element in his structural realist synthesis. Although there are many interpretations of the concept, they all share a clear resemblance, namely that Great Powers rely on inbalances and concentrations in military and material capabilities in order to ensure the survival of major power in the international system. However, how states will balance power depends on the distribution of capabilites among Great Powers (Lobell, 2014). After the Cold war, unipolarity became a central topic in IR as a result of the pessimism regarding achieving stability in a two-power world, yet for Waltz (1964) the bipolar world of the post-war period showed a remarkable stability and thereby

affirmed that bipolar system was easier to manage since the number of parties involved was smaller. To him, competition in a multipolar world is more complicated since the uncertainties about the capabilities of other states multiply as the number of Great Powers grow as well. As a result, and as said above, Waltz strongly believed that a bipolar world has more advantages than a multipolar world (Waltz, 1964; 2000).

States have as primordial objective their preservation but at the same time a drive for universal domination. They do not only seek to maintain their position in the international system and hence protect their sovereignty, antonomy and independence (Burchill, Liberalism, 2005). In order to maintain the security and survival of the state, realists argue that foreign policy plays an extremely important role, as it can both expand the influence of a state and bring advantages to the same, as it can also have fatal consequences for the state and its citizens (Wivel, 2017). Realists explain foreign policy in terms of power politics, and despite the fact that some may disagree on the meaning of power, they all affirm that the influence of domestic politics on foreign policy is likely to vary depending on the security challenges from abroad *(ibid).*

Considering what was said above, the core premises of Realism essentially consist of human selfishness (egoism), the absence of an international government (anarchy), power, security, rationality and state-centrism. Therefore, it is a view of international politics that stresses its competitive and conflictual side. On a more negative side, Realism puts emphasis on power and self-interest. However, not all realists deny the presence of ethics in international relations, as is the case of Classical Realism. Realism includes various approaches and claims, and despite being subject to criticism from IR theorists, it continues to be greatly important in the international system (Korab-Karpowicz, 2017).

After approaching Realism, the second major classical theoretical tradition in IR is Liberalism. These two theories, as said in the beginning of the chapter, constitute the first great debate within IR and have clear distinctions between them. After World War II Realism was seen as the theory that was needed in face of the failure of Liberalism. Much later, after the demise of Soviet Communism in the beginning of the 1990s, liberal theories were once again enhanced within the academy and within the international system (Burchill, Liberalism, 2005: 55). According to Francis Fukuyama (1992), the end of the Cold war symbolized the success of the "ideal state" and a particular form of political economy, that is, liberal capitalism. Like many other liberals, he believes that

history is progressive, linear and directional (Burchill, Liberalism, 2005: 56) and hence argues that there is a common evolutionary pattern that all societies follow and that will lead, eventually, to liberal democracy "For it constitutes further evidence that there is a fundamental process at work that dictactes a common evolutionary pattern for all human societies – in short, something like a Universal History of mankind in the direction of liberal democracy" (Fukuyama, 1992: 48). Although it is an old and well-established theory, Liberalism continues to have a plurality of meanings. According to Michael Doyle, Liberalism "[r]esembles a family portrait of principles and institutions, recognizable by certain characteristics – for example, individual freedom, political participation, private property, and equality of opportunity." (1997: 206). To Scott Burchill, Liberalism

> "[h]as championed limited government and scientific rationality, believing individuals should be free from arbitrary state power, persecution and superstition. […] has also argued for individual competition in civil society and claimed that market capitalism best promotes the welfare of all […]" (2005: 55).

To David Rousseau and Thomas Walker, in the realm of IR, students look at Liberalism to "[e]xplain how human reason, progress, individuals rights and freedoms can give rise to more peaceful interstate relations" (2010: 21). Considering the definitions above, of Liberalism on based in the following principles: 1. Individuals have the right to life, liberty and property which is the highest goal of government; 2. Protect and maintain the wellbeing of the individuals; 3. Construction of institutions that protect individual freedom by limiting and checking political power; 4.Limitation of military power within the state and within foreign policies; Promotion of democratic peace; 5. The belief in a process by which human reason tries to create a more prosperous, free and peaceful world; 6. Political liberty and Popular Sovereignty (Hobhouse, 2009; Meiser, 2018; Rousseau & Walker, 2010).

Three leading thinkers of the Enlightnment have inspired the emergence of Liberalism in IR, namely Thomas Paine, Immanuel Kant and Michael Doyle (Fukuyama, 1997; Rousseau & Walker, 2010). Within Liberalism, and similar to Realism, it is possible to categorize the theory in a number of ways. To Zacher and Matthew (1994)

there are six strands of liberal international theory; to Robert Keohane (2002) and Moravcsik (1997), it is possible to distinguish a more conventional categorization of ideational, commercial and republican Liberalism; and to Walker (2008) the field can be divided into the evolutionary Liberalism of Kant and the revolutionary Liberalism of Paine (Rousseau & Walker, 2010). For liberals, peace is the normal state of affairs, as a result of the human tendency for cooperation and harmony. However, to academics such as Keohane (1986) it cannot offer a specific normative guidance. Three specific variants of liberal theory still may be referred, namely ideational liberal theories, which are theories linked to state behaviour to different conceptions of desirable forms of cultural, political and socioeconomic order; commercial liberal theories, which are theories that stress economic interdependence; and republican liberal theories, which emphasize the role of domestic representative institutions, elites and leadership dynamics (Moravcsik, 2011: 240-241). The foundations of liberal internationalism were brought by liberals aiming to propose preconditions for a peaceful world and the result of this preconditions saw the elimination of war lay with a preference of democracy over aristocracy and free trade over "aurtarky" (Burchill, Liberalism, 2005). Some have argued that democracies will spend less in defense than authoritarian regimes, sharing the opinion that high investiments in the military are dangerous for both domestic and international politics (Rousseau & Walker, 2010: 23). That being said, wars are more likely to be created by militaristics and undemocratic governments that are trying to pursuit vested interests, giving governments the excuse to increase their control over their citizens and providing excuses to expand their bureaucratic apparatus (Burchill, Liberalism, 2005: 59). The high military spendings are therefore associated with acquiring power and are most of the times considered as threathening by a neighbouring state (Rousseau & Walker, 2010: 23). Kant argues that the establishment of a democratic form of government would lead to a peaceful international relations because the ultimate consent of war would rest in with the citizens of the state (Kant, 1991) and therefore peace was only a question of establishing legitimate domestic orders.

Aditionally to this, to eighteenth and nineteenth- century liberalis, war and international commerce were incompatible. According to Carr (1945), mercantilism's main purpose was to increase the power of the state and hence wealth was the source of power. That being said, the only way for a nation to expand its markets was by capturing them from other nation (Carr E. , 1945). Free trade would, hence, become a more peaceful

mean for achieving national wealth, since it would remove protective barriers to trade, promote peace, break down the divisons between states and unite individuals, it would encourage international friendship among others aspects (McDonald, 2004; Burchill, Liberalism, 2005: 63). According to David Ricardo (1911: 114), free trade would bind societies together by sharing a common interest. Taking this into account, free trade and the removal of barriers to commerce woul become the heart of interpendence. Cooperation between states would be achieved and both could gain mutual advantages. American political scientist Joseph Nye goes even further by stating that afilliation to international institutions can significantly broaden the concepts of self-interest aiming at widening the scope of cooperation (Keohane & Nye, 1989). However, trade's ability to promote peace may be restricted to democratics states, since the groups that most suffer from interruptions to commerce may pressure their government with polities for more peaceful foreign policies (McDonald, 2004). Following this line of thought, the advocay of democracy and free trade implies state's respect for human rights of its citizens. However, since conceptions of democracy and human rights are "cultural specific, ethnocentric" (Burchill, et al., 2005: 68) it appears irrelevant to societies that which are not Western in cultural orientation.

Many societies perceive appeals to universality and human rights just as a scapegoat that states use to conceal the means by which one nations imposes its culture on another and do not accept the argument that human rights are indivisible and universal, rebelling against the West (Burchill, Liberalism, 2005). Many societes perceive Western values as a form of cultural imperalism and as a mean to expand their influence (Viswanathan, 2019). Aditionally, the question of globalization has also raised considerable debates between liberals and statists over globalization. For some academics such as Theodore Levitt (1983), globalization constitutes a new phase of capitalism that will create opportunities for both economic and techonological developement. However, for the skeptics, globalization will not provide netheir economic nor technological development since it reinforces the disappearance of boundaries and combines socio-economic, political and cultural factors in a single standardized entity (Amadi, 2020). To neo-liberals, only free trade will maximixe eocnomic growth and generate a healthy competition that will promote the most efficient use of resources, people and capital and due to the current phase of globalization, national economic sovereignty has not been lost, although it has been considerably undercut by globalization of relations of production and

exchange. Sovereignty has been significantly ceded to groups that are democratically unaccountable in any jurisdiction (Burchill, Liberalism, 2005). In the eyes of liberals, globalization ended up undermining nation-states and hence sovereignty became no longer an automatic protection against external interference turning transnational political cooperation more importance than national administration.

To sum up, there are significant differences between both theories. Starting with human nature, about which liberals assert that humans are good and altruistic and realists believe humans are selfish and evil. Regarding the central problem of IR – war – liberals emphasize the promotion of efforts to establish peace and cooperation, while realists assert the importance of national security and the importance of investing in the military. Concerning interest, liberals believe it is possible to take longer-term perspectives on national interest, whereas realists argue that only individual interest of the state matter and hence they tend to focus on the immediate survival of the state. Liberalism, however, became the theory of choice for Western nations and in the 1970s, Neoliberalism was created as a response to Neorealism. This variant of Liberalism brought new concepts that have enriched the liberal theory such as the concept of soft power and asymmetrical and complex interdependency, presented by Joseph Nye, an american political scientits, co-founder of Neoliberalism. Throughout the years, and especially more recently due to globalization, the concept of soft power became a topic of discussion within IR and more specifically within foreign policy analysis (FPA), with democratic and non-democratic states including the term in their political speeches and using it as a tool in their foreign policies.

1.2 Foreign Policy and Foreign Policy Analysis

The end of WWII and consequently the Cold war period led to an increasing growth in the development of sovereign states, which was followed up by the establishment of the Organization of the United Nations (ONU) and the decolonization of many states into sovereign entities resulted into the formation of more plural "foreign policies". These aimed to determine and identify the decisions, strategies, and the purpose of interactions of one state with another (Held et al., 1999). Within the international system every nation has always been interdependent, even after attaining the highest level of development, meaning that every nation importantly depends on other nations to fulfill

their own interests and that the framing of foreign policy is an extremely important and necessary tool of the modern State (Ahmed, 2020: 787).

Within the field of foreign policy analysis (FPA), several definitions of foreign policy may be found, but they are often too simplistic, and misused, either out of context or with a different meaning, leading some scholars, such as Charles Hermann to call it a "neglected concept" (Hermann C. F., 1978 *apud* Gerner, 1992; Neack, 2009). Hermann rejects the idea that the study of foreign policy is strictly connected with the study of policy, defining foreign policy as "the discrete purposeful action that result from the political level decision of an individual or group of individuals […]. It is not the decision, but a product of the decision." (Hermann, 1978: 25). Contrary to this view, scholars such as Bruce Russett, Harvey Starr and David Kinsella (2012: 99) define foreign policy as "a guide to actions taken beyond the boundaries of the state to further the goals of the state". Nevertheless, the definition that I agree the most is Jesmine Ahmed's definition and hence for the purpose of this dissertation that is the definition that is going to be used. According to Jesmine Ahmed's foreign policy consists of "the strategies, methods, guidelines, agreements that usually national governments use to perform their actions in the international arena." (Ahmed, 2020: 788), being used as an instrument for sovereign states to pursue and fulfill their national interests.

Hence, each foreign policy is formulated to safeguard and promote its national interest when it comes to the relations with other countries, both bilaterally and multilaterally, and the process of policy-making is constantly influenced by leaders, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), bureaucracies, criminal organizations, citizens and even by the domestic policies of the State (Alden & Aran, 2017: 1). As previously stated, foreign policy is central to pursue national interests as well; however, the study of how domestic policies influence foreign policies is a subject of disagreement within the FPA field. For scholars such as James Fearon (1998) there is no clear evidence that domestic factors, relative to international or systemic factors, are important when determining foreign policies. He argues that depending on the version of systemic IR theory one takes as the baseline, the domestic politics will appear, or not, more important to the formulation of foreign policy. Whereas to scholars such as Chris Brown and Kirsten Ainley (2009), Robert Nalbandov (2016) and Jesmine Ahmed (2020), the domestic affairs of one State, will necessarily have a profound effect on how the State behaves internationally. These authors argue that domestic policy and

foreign policy are strictly connected, meaning that a change in the foreign policy of a State will cause a change in the domestic policy of the same State and vice versa. A significant and growing literature in IR argues that domestic politics is normally an extremely important part of the explanation for state's foreign policies. The political environment of a state is going to influence or restrict individuals and/or institutions. Put in other words, the head of the government and the decisions he makes will be made considering the political environment he is operating in and hence even the international decisions depend on domestic politics. Like Fearon, many scholars argue that domestic and foreign policy are not connected, coexisting without being influenced by one another. Nevertheless, the consensus in IR literature is that foreign and domestic policy are interrelated, meaning that both policies depend on each other. This dissertation will also follow this theory (Hussain, 2011).

It is through foreign policy that a State tries to achieve their goals and expand their influence within foreign governments and hence shape international affairs to suit the state (Apodaca, 2017). Foreign policy is formulated to protect a country's core values, economic prosperity, security, national interest, among others. Nevertheless, and contrary to what normally happens when applying domestic policies, that is the high probability of a State achieve the desired outcomes since it has the authority and means to do it within the State, foreign policy can or cannot be accepted by other States. The reason for this to happen is strictly connected with the fact that, internally, States usually have the monopoly of means of coercion, whereas internationally states do not hold that position (Brown & Ainley, Compreender as Relações Internacionais , 2009). Thus, within foreign policy, it is possible to observe two types of aspects. One has to do with how foreign policy is formulated in the sense that a state selects a line of action it wants to follow. The other regards the way foreign policy is executed, which can be very different since the results are the products of an interdependent decision-making and hence whereas internally a state has a monopoly of coercion, externally no state has that type of power (Brown & Ainley, 2009: 136-137). Additionally, three types of objectives may categorize foreign policy: the short-range objectives which are the matters related with the basic existence of a nation; the middle range objectives related to trade, foreign aid, and economic progress; and the long range objectives which are mostly plans and visions concerning the political and ideological organization of the international system (Ahmed, 2020: 788). These objectives, the formulation and the implementation of foreign policy

are normally made in a group setting, which includes small group dynamics, organizational process, and bureaucratic politics (Hudson, 2014). States seek to achieve these objectives through a variety of tools such as public diplomacy, soft power, cooperation and association, agreements, foreign aid, trade, economic among others (Apodaca, 2017: 2). These tools are used by States to help maintain and protect the status quo or to change it (Palmer & Morgan, 2006).

Each tool of foreign policy is extremely important to the external affairs of the State, nevertheless, soft power, and consequently public diplomacy, are the ones to be focused on, for their complementarity. As said above, soft power is the power to shape preferences and obtain something through attraction rather than coercion (Nye, Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics, 2004) and public diplomacy is the connection between nations, peoples, and cultures and the image cultivation, propaganda and activities of one State towards the others (Melissen, 2005; Rasmussen, 2014: 2-3). It works as one of soft power's key instruments and has a long history as a tool for promoting a country's soft power (Nye, 2019). Both tools are used in foreign policy to help obtain the desired outcomes and therefore expand the State's influence within foreign governments. They can play a huge role in the acceptance and support of other nations despite its limitations and the willingness of the interpreters and receivers (Rahman, 2019). Some skeptics such as Fouad Ajami (2009) believe that soft power should not be a guide for foreign policy, since popularity is ephemeral, and the support of foreign lands is not a necessity, ending up dismissing completely the information era in which we are currently living, the globalization and the power of ideas and attractiveness. Despite this point of view, soft power is not just about image, as it is also about a type of power (Nye, 2004c: 257). When a state's policies are seen as illegitimate and lose credibility to others, a loss of support is expected on the part of foreign states. A clear example of this is the US loss of support by Germany after 9/11, when the US geared for the unpopular Iraq War and prior to that, the loss of support as a result of the war in Afghanistan, which led to a widespread disbelief regarding the reasons US gave for going to war. Similar to a snowball efect, Germany began to mistrust the decisions and actions made by the US government, which also adopted a more hardened posture that fueled a climate of tension and distrust among nations (Nye, 2004c: 257).

Taking into account what was said above, it is possible to affirm that within foreign policy there are numerous tools that help States to achieving their desired

outcomes. The type of power underlying the pracftice of foreign policy of a certain State is one of them. Although several scholars continue to see hard power as the first choice when talking about foreign policy, numerous others accept and believe that soft power is indeed a State's asset that in the long term will bring more advantages for the State and its position in the international community.

1.3 The role of soft power in Foreign Policy

As states previously, the notion of soft power developed by Joseph Nye in the late 1980s, has become increasingly important among politicians in recent decades. These statesmen saw in it a type of power more adequate for the current international system. Soft power is state's foreign policy tool and, contrary to hard power, which is strictly connected with military intervention and coercion, it uses attraction and persuasion for one to obtain the desired outcomes relying on three pillars, namely culture, political ideals, and policies. Nevertheless, soft power only works if these three pillars are legitimate in the eyes of others. The use of soft power in a State's foreign policy, will only have the desired outcomes if what the state is trying to project is attractive to other states. However, in recent years, academics have begun to highlight the fact that, soft power variations could also present a negative connotation and could also be used to control and coerce. That being said, this chapter will approach soft power, its limitations and variations and its role within foreign policy.

Niccolò Machiavelli, a renowned diplomat, historian, philosopher, musician, and poet of the Renaissance period, affirmed that if a leader was given the choice of being feared or loved, they should choose fear. To him, leaders should be capable of being ruthless and manipulative when necessary, in order to maintain and preserve order and stability and hence the use of violence would be permissible (Snook, 2008).Under the Westphalian tradition, great powers were tested in war and both politicians and diplomats commonly defined power taking into account tangible resources, such as territory, natural resources, economic size, military forces, and political stability (Nye, 1990a:154). According to Joseph Nye (1990b), the nature of power is changing and having the power to coerce is as important as having the power of attraction. Power can neither be measured nor obtained in a single way, as it is not a single entity, covering a wide range of concepts and phenomena, being dynamic and multidimensional. It is not immutable, as it changes

according to the circumstances, context, and interest of the one who is using it (VeneKlasen & Valerie, 2002: 39).

Power is thus a contested concept, far too complex in its sources, results, and productions and with different interpretations that are connected by resemblance rather than a core meaning. Because of that, the meaning we choose determines which relations that we are going to consider important and how we conceive of world politics (Barnett & Duvall, 2005: 67). This has led to longstanding debates within the international community between realist and idealist interpretations, which have resulted in two main contrasting views of power, namely power as a form of domination, characterized by *power over*, and power as a form of empowerment, described as *power with* (Haugaard, 2012). The first main view of power – *power over* – has many negative association, such as repression, coercion, abuse of power among others. Power is seen as a win-lose relationship, in which having the power involves taking it from someone else and then using it to dominate and prevent others from gaining it (VeneKlasen & Valerie, 2002: 45). Contrary to this, the second main view of power – *power with* – works by finding common ground among different interests and building collective strength, meaning that it will help create and build bridges across different interests and reduce social conflict (Partzsch & Fuchs, 2012: 359-360).This view of power is usually connected with public diplomacy and became more important during the Cold war period, when the Marshall plan was created and the contest of ideologies (communism versus democracy) was at a high (Rasmussen, 2014). Traditional diplomacy, the traditional role of the diplomat and the primacy of bilateral relations has not been forgotten or decreased in importance. Nevertheless, the power of ideas, the power to create bridges to promote and project interests has become the stick and stones of the modern state. That being said, public diplomacy is "the communication between nations, peoples, and cultures" (Rasmussen, 2014: 2-3) and ,because of the current era of globalization and information era, it has started to gain more importance througoverhout the years. However, if public diplomacy does not broadcast values and policies that are attractive to other States, it will not be able to completely fulfill its purpose. Because of this, public diplomacy usually works in tandem with soft power in order to achieve the desired outcomes (Nye, 2008). The resources that produce soft power arise from the values an organization or a country expresses in its culture and policies. What public diplomacy does is to mobilize these

resources to communicate and attract the people from other countries, rather then merely their governments *(ibid).*

The concept of soft power is seen as a liberal concept and was first coined in the late 1980s by Joseph Nye, and it can be explained as a nation's capacity to influence through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion. Although the term was only coined in the late 1980s, it has permeated world politics *in practice*, being used throughout centuries by politicians, diplomats, and monarchs to pursue their goals without resorting to any type of military or economic pressure against the other. The soft power of a State arises from three basic pillars: the attractiveness of a country's culture, its political ideals and its policies. (Nye, 2004a: x). When these three pillars are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others, the soft power of a country is enhanced, and the State is able to make others do something without using threats or inducements. The first pillar of soft power – culture – is a contested concept with numerous varying definitions (White, 1959; Kramsch, 1998; Schein, 2011; Anderson-Levitt, 2012). But to Joseph Nye, the proponent of soft power, culture is seen as a set of values, beliefs and practices that create meaning for and within a society. It can be separated into two categories: high culture, which is strictly connected with literature, art and education, and popular culture, which focuses on mass entertainment, that is a type of entertainment that appeals to most people regardless of their social background (Nye, 2004a: 11). If a country's culture includes universal values and its policies encourage values and interests shared by others, it may increase the probability of achieving the desired outcomes since it creates a relation of attraction (Nye, 2004a: 11). Regarding the second and third pillar of soft power – political ideals and policies – the power of attraction needs to be emphasized again. Political ideals and policies can either reinforce or destroy a nation's soft power. If a country's policies appear to be reluctant, arrogant, hypocritical, aggressive, outdated, and indifferent to the opinion of others, the soft power of that country will be undermined and the capacity to change and affect the preferences of others is going to decrease: "Governments can attract or repel others by the influence of their example" (Nye, 2004a: 14).Therefore, soft power can be included in the second point of view, that relates power to a form of empowerment.

However, the notion of soft power has acquired a broader meaning across time; metaphorically, Nye has compared it to children whom we can love and discipline while they are young, but as they grow and wander off, find and choose their own company, both good and bad (Nye, 2017). As a result, the notion has given rise to a variety of

interpretations depending on the country it is applied to (Wang & Lu, 2008). To some scholars such as Tsygankov (2006) a new pillar was added to Nye´s original three, that is, economic interdependence. This new pillar focuses on the attractiveness of a country's labor markets, financial or trade system to others, being used by many nations to expand their soft power (Tsygankov, 2006). This indirect way of obtaining the desired outcomes without resorting to more violent means is many times named the "second face of power" (Nye, 2004b). However, there are certain conditions under which attraction is more likely to succeed, as any form of power depends on the context in which it is performed. But soft power, for its reliance on attraction, depends even more upon the existence of willing interpreters and receivers. The effects resulting from attraction are not automatically observable, however they create a general influence that can make a significant difference whether the desired outcomes are obtained or not. This type of power is also more likely to achieve favourable outcomes when dispersed in a country rather than concentrated, since it helps to perceive state activities as legitimate and it may have a direct effect on specific objectives.

Although soft power appears as a great alternative to violent means, such as military interventions and economic sanctions, it also presents some limitations regarding its application and the concept itself. Some academics argue that although soft power is an extremely good remedy for the paucity of mainstream accounts by pointing towards the non-material forms of power, it does not offer a theory of power that reflects the production and various expressions of attraction, remaining an imprecise concept (BİLGİN & ELİŞ, 2008: 5-6). Attraction and persuasion are not forms of power since they do not produce and cannot guarantee much power over policy outcomes and cannot always assure the desired outcomes. These types of arguments arise from the fact that some individuals believe that power can only be obtained in terms of command or active control. Araştırma Makalesi (2017) highlights three additional issues regarding soft power, namely **originality, measurability problems**, and the **ambiguity** about the agent or structure of the concept. Regarding the originality of the concept, Makalesi considers soft power to be very similar to many other approaches in IR, such as Steven Lukes's approach regarding three-dimensional power. *In Power: A Radical View* (2005) Luke claims that power has a third dimension in which A might exercise power over B by getting him to do what he does not want to through the influencing, shaping and determining his preferences (Lukes, 2005). By shaping B's preferences and creating an

illusion that his preferences his own, a potential conflict is prevented. Another approach extremely similar to the notion of soft power is E.H.Carr's division of power into three categories, that is: military power, economic power and power over opinion. Carr states that material resources, such as military or economic power, are as important as intangible sources like attraction, human psychology, or public opinion. To him, the art of rhetoric and persuasion has always been a central part of the skills of a political leader and, because of that, when we think about the current public diplomacy attempts as a tool of international propaganda, it is possible to see the similarities with Carr's approach (Makalesi, 2017). Finally, another concept that shows resemblance with Nye's concept of soft power is Antonio Gramsci´s conceptualization of hegemony (Cox & Parmar, 2010). The influence that Gramsci had on Nye's concept may be seen in the fact that hegemony, as soft power, works by achieving consent on a set of values and general principles that will secure the supremacy of a group and at the same time provides some kind of satisfaction to the remaining groups (Cox & Parmar, 2010: 14). Both concepts start by referring to a set of values, institutions and general principles shared by. However, they are also resources of power, influence and control over one group by the other.

The second problem is related to the impossibility of measuring the effectiveness of soft power; in other words, the difficulty of proving that a State's behavior change is due to another State's soft power. Because the ability to control others is often associated to a state's military and economic capacities and that a country's change of behavior is a consequence of the international system and material capabilities of another country, political leaders have frequently defined power as the possession of resources (Nye, 1990b: 178). Contrary to this, in Nye's approach, soft power is about improving a country's image among other countries in the assumption that the better the image transmitted to the world, the more allies and support regarding their policies that country will receive: "A country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries admire its values, emulate its example, aspire to its level of prosperity and openness. Soft power co-opts people rather than coerces them" (Nye, 2004b: 1). Nevertheless, since soft power relies on intangible resources and co-optive power, it cannot be determined whether a country changes its behavior according to the other country's image.

The third problem – the ambiguity of the agent or structure – is due to Nye's focus on either agency of actors, for example the US, or the structure, setting aside the

combination of the two. Nye focuses almost exclusively on the agent rather than the structure, drawing attention from the subject to the agent, and turning soft power into a tangible means in which resources can be enhanced or produced (Lock, 2010). Scholars such as BİLGİN and ELİŞ (2008) believe that Nye accepts the stockpile of soft power and focuses on the ways in which it could be used best, recongizing the sources of soft power, but failing to reflect upon how those sources came to be considered "attractive" by the rest of the world. To Lock (2010), Kearn (2011) and Malakesi (2017), Nye also fails to consider the relational or structural forms of power, that conflate with each other. These two conditions – a rule-governed setting and the presence of underlying mutual interests – need to be strictly connected with one another for soft power to be accrued, duly applied, and consequently succeed. These two conditions are often used individually and not combined, ultimately creating ambiguity in the nature of soft power.

Additionally, some academics have noticed a negative type of soft power, being used mainly in non-democratic states such as China and Russia (Callahan, 2015). Over the years, the original concept began to gain different interpretations, depending on whom it was used by and as Joseph Nye himself affirmed, the notion of soft power has acquired a broader meaning across time (Nye, 2017). What was initially a liberal concept, used in democratic states, rapidly became something other than liberal. As Viswanathan (2019) affirmed, the projection of one's culture is considered a positive thing, but "[…] aggressive projection of a big and historical nation's culture in smaller countries, particularly in the neighborhood, can be interpreted as cultural imperialism". The meteoric rise of soft power made it an appealing concept for several leaders, as was the case of Russia (Rutland & Kazantsev, 2016). Russian leaders were determined to master the art of soft power, investing millions of dollars in soft power projects, and emphasizing the role that cultural promotion should play in Russian foreign policy. Even during the Soviet period, the Soviet Union had an extensive network of propaganda agencies advancing what would now be called the soft power of USSR. However, this soft power was accompanied by new forms of oppression, such as the Purges, the Gulag, the collectivization, among others (Rutland & Kazantsev, 2016). That being said, to what extent can this be considered soft power and not just some distorted manner of oppression? This question will be further addressed.

Despite these limitations and the 'negative' soft power mentioned earlier, soft power is a fundamental tool for States to expand their power and sovereignty in a very

subtle, nevertheless effective, way. It might not have visible or tangible actions and its results may take longer than economic sanctions or military interventions, but the outcomes last longer and are more beneficial: "Winning the peace is harder than winning the war, and soft power is essential to winning the peace." (Nye, 2004a: xii). Hard power interventions are strictly connected to tangible resources of a country and its military capacity. The relation between two countries in which one is pursuing hard power interventions is not a win-win relation. Whereas one is benefiting from the intervention, the other is suffering from it and, as a result ,a climate of tension between the two countries will always be present and it can eventually lead to the resurgence of a conflict. Instead, if one of the countries decides to pursue soft power actions the relations between both will be in a win-win situation, since none of the countries would be repressed, rather their relation would be based on attraction and mutual preferences. However, soft power relies on intangible sources, such as culture and policies that must be shared by both parties in order to succeed. If both the domestic and foreign policies of a country are not attractive to others, it will be more difficult to persuade and attract its peers, to build alliances and to expand its influence. When the soft power of a country works, harmonious relations with other countries may be created and long-lasting peace achieved. However, when hard power prevails, peace is temporary as a result of the tension between the parties. Taking into account what was said above, what is the role of soft power in the foreign policy of a country and why is it such an important tool for states to achieve their goals and interests?

Every State that aims to strengthen its position and image in the international arena and to create conditions for its socio-economic development must take soft power into account (Nye, 2009). The increase of interdependence between states and the excessively high price nations pay for trying to achieve foreign policy goals through hard power has made it clear that soft power should start to occupy a more prominient position in a country's foreign policy (Amirbek & Ydyrys, 2014). However, and since soft power is based on attraction, this is only possible if it manifests itself in values that are shared universally and with an open and interactive approach which serves as a starting point for international dialogue (Calder, 2009).

The exercise of soft power, as described above, has three benefits that help enhance and expand a nation's foreign-policy capabilities in the international system. The first one is related to the fact that soft power, since it is based on attraction, might help

legitimize a nation, or a leader, through mass media, the general public and the political elites (Calder, 2009; Nye, 2004a). The second benefit is that soft power makes it easier for nations and leaders to obtain information about partner nations' aspirations and capabilities. In a multipolar and hyper-connected world, the diffusion of information and digitalization leads to a greater diffusion of influence, and hence by sharing common values and interest, nations linked by soft power, see each other as allies and become more open about their aspirations and circumstances (Calder, 2009; Dubber & Donaldson, 2015). Finally, the third benefit of soft power in a nation's foreign policy is that it helps countries build transnational networks. These are central to the processes of interest and norm formation among states and non-state actors, and most of the time, they operate simultaneously across multiple scales (Lipschutz and Conca, 1993; Wapner, 1996; Smith, Chatfield, and Pagnucco, 1997; Jakobsen, 2000; Newell, 2000; O'Brien et., 2000 *apud* Betsill & Bulkeley, 2004: 474). Over the years, they have become continuously more and more important, as a consequence of goblalization and the networked world in which we live (Calder, 2009).

It is therefore possible to affirm that because outcomes are not unilateral decisions, and the success of soft power depends on other nations as well, soft power by itself is not sufficient to achieve the foreign policy goals of a nation (Viswanathan, India's Soft Power Diplomacy, 2019). However, it can strengthen the foreign policy of any free nation, whether by legitimizing its initiatives, by helping to show a more realistic and truthful view of its partners in the international system, or by promoting and fostering transnational networks that will assist and facilitate the achievement of its foreign policy goals (Calder, 2009: 31). Soft power is not about "image polishing" or just attracting others and persuading them into doing something one wants. It is rather a type of power that, when properly used, can have long-term outcomes and thus help a nation expand their influence and co-habit peacefully with other nations. Nevertheless, when the mere image polishing is made without a proper corresponding improvement, the results can be counterproductive (Viswanathan, India's Soft Power Diplomacy, 2019). As the world is constantly changing, so is the nature of power and winning hearts and minds has become as important, if not more important, than winning the war. Using only hard power as the primary strongholds of power was, and still is, the first option of many politicians such as Hart (1976) and Machiavelli (2014) when it comes to power and influence. Machiavelli (2014) himself preached about absolute control over their territory and capability, and

refused to be influenced in their domestic matters by external powers: "[…] a ruler can very easily win over men who opposed him when he came to power, if they are not in a position to support themselves with their own resources. […]" (2014: 84).

This way of thinking could have worked and provided the desired outcomes in the 19th century. But in the contemporary world, the use of hard power alone may not be the best choice. Over the years, the sources of power began to change and multiply, and hard power became one source of power among many. Nations such as the US, the EU, China, Russia, among others, already understood the benefits of attraction and persuasion and even though it may take a while for them to be completely understood and put in practice, its recognition and use is an extremely important step for the practice of foreign policy.

Chapter 2 - Understanding power under Russian Foreign Policy

In the previous chapter, we saw that the type of power used by States within the international system changes depending on the leader in power, the context, and interests of the moment. The concept of soft power, which has regained importance within the international system, has been adopted by several democratic States as a tool of foreign policy. However, authoritarian States such as Russia and China, also started to use the concept within their political discourse, creating their own conceptualization of the term. In this chapter, we will see that, although the Soviet Union was mainly known for its hard power both inside and outside the country, after its collapse there was a change in Russian foreign policy discourse, in which the concept of soft power played an increasingly important role.

2.1 Soviet Tradition - What was the type of power used in Soviet Foreign Policy?

In order to understand the current foreign and domestic policy of a nation, it is necessary to consider how they have come to change across time. This chapter will focus on the most important aspects of Soviet foreign policy and the distinct phases it went through. Several distinct phases may be outlined to characterize Soviet foreign policy, each one adapted to the international context of the moment and the type of leader in power. The first one (1917-1921) was directed to an all-out revolutionary offensive against the "bourgeois" world; the second one (1921-1934), to a defensive isolationism; the third phase happened during the rise of Nazi Germany, the so-called Popular Front (1934-1938); the fourth stage saw the Soviet Union is departing from its ostensible Western orientation, was called Aggressive Isolationism (1939-1941); in the fifth phase (1941-1946) in which the aggressive isolationism came to an abrupt end and gave place to a wartime alliance with the West; the sixth (1946-1953) happened during the period of the Cold War and finally the seventh phase, in 1953 and was marked by the beginning of a transition to a policy of outward amiability.

To comprehend the foreign policy of a country, it is important first to consider the aim behind that foreign policy. As was said in the previous chapter, foreign policy can be understood as the projection of domestic policy, being connected with the form of

political and social organizations of the nation and its institutions (Rakovsky, 1926; Papp, 1995; Birgerson & Kanet, 1997). Soviet foreign policy was a function of the Soviet Union's pursuit of its international agenda, the different personalities, beliefs and perceptions of Soviet leaders and the demands of domestic Soviet political aims and issues (Papp, 1995). Throughout almost four decades, Soviet foreign policy was flexible in its tactics and hence compatible with long range strategies and objectives (Chamberlin, 1956: 77). These strategies sought to serve three ends, namely (1) strengthening and, consequently, keeping the current regime in power; (2) the satisfaction of pre-war Russian nationalist aspirations; and (3) the attainment of Communist objectives, more specifically the international communist revolution (Chamberlin, 1956). That being said, William Chamberlin distinguishes seven phases in Soviet foreign policy (Chamberlin, 1956).

The first and second phase (1917-1921) began with Lenin's and Stalin's desire for presence in the network of capitalist state and hence in the international system. By 1921 the World was the stage of several changes, such as the end of the brutal "War Communism", the restoration of a measure of free-market activity and the restructuring of the Soviet government along traditional ministerial lines (McDougall & Cook, 2022). This led the USSR to pursue traditional relations with foreign powers in search of trade, capital and technology for reconstruction. This would be obtained by a two-track approach in which USSR would continue to be dedicated to overthrowing the capitalist powers and, at the same time, would conduct a disguised regular existence as a nation-state recognizing and aiding themMcDougall & Cook, 2022). According to Walter McDougall and Megan Cook (2022) the aim was not to create a peaceful and progressive reform in the West, but rather to enhance Soviet power.

The third phase (1934-1938) was marked by the rise of Nazi Germany and a militarist Japan. Soviet orientation shifted from Germany to the Western powers and the result of this new foreign policy became visible with the Soviet entry into the League of Nations in 1934, and again in 1935 with the creation of new alliances with France and with Czechoslovakia. The Kremlin began to replace revolutionary propaganda with the concepts of peaceful coexistence and a new facet of a Soviet Union against the war and Fascism was disclosed (Stone, 1956). Alliances with Socialists were sought – the so-called "popular front" – aiming to achieve the one Soviet goal of the time, that is: to promote the clash between Western powers on one side, and Germany and Italy on the other. (Chamberlin, 1956; Stone, 1956). This type of policies showned the type of dual

foreign policy that the Soviet Union was developing and which persisted even during the years of the popular front movement.

From 1939 to 1941, it was possible to observe a new shift in Soviet foreign policy from its ostensibly Western orientation, the so-called Aggressive isolationism. In August of 1939, a Nazi-Soviet pact that would end up shapping the following two years of Soviet diplomacy was made (Chamberlin, 1956; Johnston, 2011). Taking into account its previous phase of foreign policy, this pact was an absolute shock for both people inside and outside the USSR. The Soviet Union that had spent a decade positioning itself against fascism and fascist coalitions, was now walking in a total different direction (Johnston, 2011: 57). The replacement of Maksim Litvinov, a symbol of pro-Western sympathy and of collective security, as Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, by Molotov, was just another demonstration of the new path undertaken in Soviet foreign policy. This shift led to the attack of Finland, the acquisition of Eastern Poland, followed by the Baltic States and, consequently, the Bessarabia and Bukovina. As a result of these invasions the Soviet Union was expelled from the League of Nations (Chamberlin, 1956; Dyke, 1997; Johnston, 2011).

This phase of isolationism, in which the Soviet Union acted as neutral towards Nazi Germany, came to an end when Hitler decided to expand German influence towards the East and began to command military forces against the Soviet Union. From this moment on, the hostilities between Hitler and the Soviet Union became evident and, as a consequence, cooperation between the East and West against Hitler started to emerge. This fifth phase of Soviet foreign policy between 1941 and 1946 was marked by this wartime alliance with Western powers (Gorodetsky, 2013). In 1941, Hitler ordered the invasion of the Soviet Union, planning to colonize the western parts of the Soviet Union, especially Ukraine due to its resource-rich lands. This invasion broke the non-agression pact between the two coutries, and initiated a period of tension, not only between the two countries, but also among all Europe (Glantz, 2001: 10-13).

The end of World War II gave rise to a new period of tension, the so-called Cold War, the lasted between 1946 and 1953. A new order emerged, and the US and the Soviet Union became the two major powers in the international system (Reynolds, 2002: 214). For scholars such as Vojtech Mastny (1996), Constantine Pleshakov and Vladislav Zubok (1996), Soviet foreign policy objectives at this time were mainly a quest for security and preservation, and expansion of the Soviet Union. However, this insatiable quest only

stressed the gap between the two major powers. That being the case, creating friends and influencing people outside the Soviet Union became extremely hard. Occasionally, this period of tension seemed to be taking on a dar character. The Soviet blockade of West Berlin, was one of the measures taken by the Soviets to force the Western powers out of the former German capital. The invasion of South Korea in 1950, equipped with weapons from the Soviet Union made this period of tension even more emphatic (Chamberlin, 1956: 83). The official Soviet attitude towards foreigners became extremely hostile and suspicious partly due to Stalin's morbid obessions and cumpulsions, resulting in a new type of xenophobic and rigid diplomats. This posture, only reinforced the unprovoked, aggressive and threatening image the West had of the Soviet Union the West had (Zubok & Pleshakov, 1996: 24).

The last phase of Soviet foreign policy, started in 1953 with Stalin's death. This phase, contrary to what had happen in the previous ones, was marked by the beginning of a transition to a policy of outward amiability, that nevertheless did not completely change the main objectives of Soviet foreign policy. The replacement of Stalin by Khrushchev reflected the shift from a regional conception of security to a more offensive and global one, as well as the rise of the nuclear-rocket era (Hoffmann & Laird, 1986: 231). During the process of adaptating to a more global policy and the consequent process of expansion, the confrontation between the USSR and the US grew. That adaptation to the nuclear age was another security issue that highlighted both the internal and international tensions of that time (Chamberlin, 1956; Hoffmann & Laird, 1986).

In the nine years Khrushchev was in power, three major changes transformed Soviet foreign policy. The first one was strictkly concerned with the principle of coexistence between communist and non-communist countries. The second was the country's transition to socialism using peaceful means, and the third one was the development of a new approach to the Third World (Edmonds, 1983: 15). Khrushchev saw Soviet's championing of recently-independent countries as a part of the Soviet Union's new global role. As a result, not only were a series of provocative speeches made against the West during his visits to Burma, India and Afghanistan, but a closer relationship with India was also developed, and the military aid provided to Egypt began (Chamberlin, 1956: 84; (Edmonds, 1983: 15). This last phase of Soviet foreign policy did not seem to bring peace and stabilization to the international community, but rather an intense political and military competition "[…] by any and all means short of large-scale

war.[…]" (Chamberlin, 1956: 84). Nevertheless, scholars such as Erik Hoffmann and Robbin Laird (1986) affirm that Soviet power increased remarkably between 1945 and 1965 and, as result, threats of the use of Soviet military power were becoming a regular feature of Soviet diplomatic exchanges, whilst communism as a set of ideas was declining (Dallin, 1961: 201).

After Khrushchev's presidency, Leonid Brezhnev's presidency opened an era of stagnation, followed by the decline and collapse of the USSR. Contrary to Khrushchev's impulsive and often autocratic style of policy-making, Brezhnev reinforced a 'scientific'and 'objective' approach to policy-making, giving scientists greater room for manoeuvre to pursue their research free of political interference. Brezhnev's objective was to ensure the primacy of the USSR in the communist world and to establish a strategic parity with the USA in order to secure Western acceptance of the post-war order in Europe, while expanding the Soviet power in the developing world (Tompson, 2014: 28). However, and contrary to the beginning of his career as president, after the mid-1970s his accomplishments began to come apart, and his own health deteriorated, which resulted in a prolonged succession crisis that would end up dominating Soviet politics for half a decade (Tompson, 2014: 111). Even though Khrushchev left the Soviet Union going in the wrong direction, both at a domestic and international level, as well as economically and politically, Brezhnev did almost nothing to change course, and the collapse of the Soviet Union is considered to be in part the result of his 18-years presidency. (Crump, 2014: 205).

After Brezhnev, the Soviet Union had three leaders before its collapse, namely Yuri Andropov, Konstantin Chernenko and Mikhail Gorbachev. However, Gorbachev is the main focus, because during his mandate, between 1985 and 1991, the most radically new policies were adopted, which eventually led to a chain of events that would end up with the Cold War and the USSR itself (Miller, 1991; Suri, 2002). Nevertheless, his philosophy of "new political thinking" (NPT), which later became the foundation of his foreign policy achievements (Suri, 2002), was his main focus, aiming to paint a different picture of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev's NPT was a component of several systemic reforms, which included *perestroika* (restructuring) and glasnost (openness), contributing to the restruturing ofthe Soviet economy, domestic economic reform and political openness (Zwick, 1989: 215). Implementing the "new thinking" in foreign policy was not an easy task and numerous obstacles emerged, from internal political resistence to

ideological obstacles to a skeptical international audience (Zwick, 1989: 215). Gorbachev's aspirations sought to improve relations with the West and a modernizing China and hence worked as an attempt to modernize the Soviet system and make Moscow more economically and politically competitive in the world (Patman, 1999: 578). This utopian vision of cooperation between states was the new foundation of Soviet foreign policy. It included Western values such as universal human values and global interdependence (Larson & Shevchenko, 2003) and marked a fundamental shift in identity and in how the Soviet Union viewed itself in relation to the rest of the world. Deborah Larson and Alexei Shevchenko (2003) argue that this idealistic "new thinking" had one goal, that of enhancing Soviet international status while preserving national identity. As a result, Gorbachev and his advisor understood that military power alone was not enough to confer political influence or acceptance and hence this new Soviet identity woud be based on soft power (Larson & Shevchenko, 2003: 103). These radical changes in Soviet domestic and foreign policy were grounded in impressive coercive capabilities. However, Gobrachev's new soft power strategy did not persuade the Western powers. The changes in Soviet domestic and foreign policy, alongside with the late recognition of the seriousness of Soviet economic problems, marked the beginning of the collapse of the USSR (Larson & Shevchenko, 2003: 103).

Taking into account what was said above, it is possible to affirm that Soviet doctrine was mainly self-righteous in its pronouncements on international affairs. For scholars such as Zbigniew Brzezinski (1984) the Soviet Union was not simply based on national oppression. It was based on a system that would use both co-optive power and suppression. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1990, the possibility of a new era of democracy, respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights protection emerged within Russian policy.

2.2 Russia's post-Cold War Foreign Policy into context: Boris Yeltsin's presidency

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Boris Yeltsin was elected first president of the newly-erected country, the Russian Federation. A change in domestic and foreign policy was now possible, although it never completely detached from Gorbachev's idea of a new Russia, more directed to Western capitalism and development. Considering that

the foreign policy of a country is strictly intertwined with its domestic policies, in order to approach and comprehend the current Russian foreign policy, the past cannot be forgotten nor Russia's foreign uncertainties during the Boris Yeltsin administration. According to Rajan Kumar (2018), Russia's foreign policy went through three phases: the first one during the Yeltsin's presidency, in which the main goal was to establish a capitalist liberal democratic form of governance and, consequently, to substitute the decaying socialist institutions. The last two phases fall under Putin's administration.

The collapse of the USSR essentially created a void in Russia's national identity and national interests and allowed for the opportunity to implement elementary principles of representative democracy, such as a referendum on the new constitution, a consolidation of the political base of the new leadership, the reorganization of governmental structures and wide changes in the personnel of the state bureaucracy's personnel (Arbatov, 1993), - yet that did not happen. The primary objective of Yeltsin's foreign policy followed what Gorbachev had been trying to implement previously, that is, breaking the hostilities brought about by the Cold War, the acceptance of Russia as an equal member of the world by the Western nations, the creation of a non-threatening external environment that would ultimately contribute to Russia's internal economic and political development and the preservation of Russia's great power status (Timmermann, 1992; Donaldson, 1999). Russia was heading towards a more Western Capitalist model of development and the international situation of the moment made Westernization compelling to Russian citizens. The goal was to develop Russia in the same direction as the West, and to assert a different national interest, focused on transforming Russia into a free, independent state that would guarantee the rights and freedoms of all Russian citizens (Tsygankov, 2010: 62). To achieve this goal, three key components to assert a new vision of national interest were implemented; first, a new radical economic reform - the so-called "shock therapy" - was advocated. Adopted before Russia was institutionally and politically prepared, this reform would set aside Russia's military power and geopolitical aspirations, and focus on making Russia's transition to a Western style of government faster and irreversible, aiming for the so desired recognition by the West. However, the liberalization of prices, several cut in budgets, credits and subsidies would put the economic and social structures of Russia on the verge of a catastrophic collapse, in 1992, forcing Yeltsin to ask for external assistance (Arbatov, 1993; Tsygankov, 2010; Huygen, 2012). In addition to the economic problems, which created political anxiety and

lowered the living standards of the Russian population, this reform also allowed the creation of a class of oligarchs due to short-sighted policies and inept privatization measures (which undermined the possibilities for a true capitalist system to exist) and made Yeltsin reverted to more authoritarian tactics to consolidate his position (Huygen, 2012: 63). Secondly, the participation in international organizations was fundamental. Now that Russia was not on a quest to achieve hegemony and was open to cooperation, it should gain a new status and economic institutions, such as the European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), G-7, among others (Tsygankov, 2010: 59; Arbatov, 1993: 18-29). As a result, Russia would no longer rely on the former Soviet new status carried because of the Soviet Union and would try to imitate the West in problem-solving. Finally, the last key component was the prioritization of the new concept of national interest that laid down Russia's interest in integrating the West over the relationships with ex-Soviet republics. Leaders of the Western nations had concerns with Russia's connection with nondemocratic countries, especially the ones that derived from the former Soviet Union.

In addition to this, Yeltsin's administration believed that the ex-Soviet republics, or in other words the 'New Abroad' were a burden, constantly draining Russia's resources and, hence, an economic, political and cultural separation between Russia and them was essential (Tsygankov, 2010: 59; Arbatov, 1993: 42). As a result, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), a regional intergovernmental organization founded in 1991 to help integrate and facilitate the Soviet successor states' journey towards independence failed to achieve its primary goal, and the former Soviet republics were left to deal with a new geopolitical reality on their own (Sakwa & Webber, 2010; Willerton, 1997).These three key components and hence this new vision of national interest and identity that focused on the West shaped Russia's new foreign policy concept of Russia. For the first time in Russian history, the new leadership was willing to dismantle their imperial institutions, trust Western intentions and be critical of their own history - ultimately aiming to become more like the West. Nonetheless, Yeltsin and Prime Minister Andrei Kozyrev's vision for Russia and the enthusiasm of the Russian population with Western integration rapidly deteriorated within the country.

On a domestic level, Russian citizens experienced a drastic decline in living standards, whereas externally the ties that were once shared with Asia and the former Soviet republics began to disappear, and the sense of insecurity due to prospects of NATO

expansion towards Russian borders and military conflicts led to a distrust of Western intentions (Donaldson, 1999; Tsygankov, 2010; Aboyade, 2018). As the initial euphoria was gradually faded away, it was possible to observe, in 1993, a change within the political spectrum. After the December elections, it was clear that integration with the West was not going to happen and the number of anti-Western voices in parliament grew in a remarkable way. Both Russian leaders and their opposition advocated for more active policies with Asia and the East, the non-cooperation with NATO, and the refusal to join its Partnership for Peace Programme, and even Kozyrev acknowledged the need for Russia to strengthen its foreign policy activities with China, India and the former Soviet Unions. After the resignation of Andrei Kozyrev as prime minister, Yevgeny Primakov took his place in 1996. Contrary to Kozyrev, Primakov was an Eurasianist and pragmatic nationalist, who continued to see Russia as a great power and hence believed that its foreign policy should correspond to that status (Donaldson, 1999: 291). Due to the political, social and economic problems Russia was going through the vision of national identity and national interest once advocated by Yeltsin gave way to a different vision of national interest and national identity. With Primakov as foreign minister, the rise of Statists was noticeable and the lost interest in the former Soviet republics resurfaced. The Statists' philosophy consisted in viewing Russia as a great power and a sovereign state, fundamental to the stability of the international system. They believed in cooperating with the West, but not at the expense of the loss of their objectives and international status as a Great Power. In 1996, Yeltsin started to promote once again the CIS integration during his campaign and, as a result, a new concept of the Russian nation emerged amongst intellectuals, the concept of Rossiiskaya or, in other words, the Russian nation as a community (Tolz, 1998: 1009).

Despite this new direction in Russia's foreign policy, the Yeltsin's and Kozyrev's integration with the West was a complete failure. The Yeltsin administration aspired to immaculate the West in a precipitous change, despising and setting aside a society that was not ready to respond to such a significant transition. This desire for a fast transition led to serious of problems both at the internal and external levels. It created a deeper void within Russia national interests and Russian identity. The 'New Abroad' which should have always been a priority for Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, was forgotten and seen as a burden not only in the transition to a more democratic Russia, but in the political, economic and cultural spectrum. Yeltsin's mandate from 1991 to 1999

saw Russia to decay and lose its influence, not only in the former Soviet republics but also within Asia and, hence, the loss of most of its influence and status at the international level. The ideological and national vacuum that the dissolution of the Soviet Union created was not fulfilled and the Yeltsin and Kozyrev's administration only strengthened Russian nationalist sentiments. Ultimately this led to a change of perception regarding the West as a result of NATO's expansion to the East, more precisely within the former Soviet republics (Mankoff, 2009: 2) "Russia's core perceptions of the West changed from those of a friend or a strategic partner to those of a potential threat." (Tsygankov, 2010: 88).

In 1999, Vladimir Putin become the new President of Russia, representing the return to an idealized world ruled by order and stability (Lo, 2003) and a wind of change for those who suffered with the Yeltsin Presidency.

2.3 The Putin Era

2.3.1 A truly sovereign democracy

The politics of "sovereign democracy" appeared within Putin's discourse and started to gain more importance during his second term in power, promoted by some elites as a new type of national identity (Averre, 2007: 174). This new term introduced a Russian alternative to Western liberal democracy and gave name to the Russian type of 'managed' democracy prioritizing political stability and economic reforms and asserting Russia as a democracy (Fisher, 2014).

The notion is constituted by two concepts, sovereignty and democracy. The foundation of sovereignty is based on the assumption that there is a final and absolute political authority in a certain political community presenting itself as a form of legitimation. In other words, in a system of sovereign states, each State recognizes the other as being the definitive authority in their respective territories, perceived as the sole and final authority within the international community (Croxton, 1999: 570). It is a key international norm that has played a major role in Russian foreign policy, being connected with Putin's recentralizing project domestically, and to the reassertion of Russia's position as a great power in the international system (Ziegler, 2012: 401). Regarding the concept of democracy, its meaning and origins go back to Ancient Greece, being coined

for the first time in their political theory. The term literally means "government by the people" and "government for the people", enabling the participation of the governed in the government, the principle of freedom in the sense of political self-determination and the creation of a government that acts in the best interests of the people (Kelsen, 1955: 2). Despite being an ancient concept, over the years the number of definitions trying to explain the concept has grown over the years. Nevertheless, there is one definition that fairly summarizes its functionality, that is, namely that "the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote" (Schumpeter, 2003: 269).

According to Andrey Okara (2007: 3) sovereign democracy should not be interpreted merely as an ideological term, but rather as an attempt to formulate Putin's discourse in the form of a textual/contextual policy of the current era. On the contrary, to the then- Minister of Defense Sergei Ivanov, sovereign democracy " [i]s the quintessence of our internal structure, meaning the right of citizens themselves to determine policy in their country and defend this right against external pressure by any means, including military." (cit. in Averre, 2007: 181). To Vladislav Surkov, former first deputy chief of the Russian Federation Administration, sovereign democracy can be defined "[as a model of the political life of society […] directed exclusively by the Russian nation in all its unity and diversity […]". (2009: 9)

Sovereign democracy has its origins within Kremlin's conceptualizations of the Orange Revolutions of November 2004 to January 2005 in Ukraine. Soon after, the concept of sovereign democracy became the official doctrine of Putin, in an attempt to reassert Russia's status as a great power in the 21st century (Fisher, 2014). The relation between the use of sovereign democracy by the Kremlin and its aspiration to great power status may be understood in the light of the interrelated role of discourse, hegemony and populism. As was said above, the concept of sovereign democracy appeared within Putin's discourse in his second term in power. However, it was Vladislav Surkov, a Russian politician and founding father of Putinism, who first introduced the concept into Russian discourse. The objective was to differentiate it from concepts such as "managed democracy", which assisted Russia by limiting the power of oligarchs and consolidate support for a state agenda after the 1990s, which had rested predominantly on the popularity of a single leader (Makarychev, 2008: 49 (Tsygankov, The Managed

Democracy, 2014), and to demonstrate Russia's intention of being regarded as a 'normal' country trying to establish closer relations with Europe, more precisely France and Germany, the old European nations.

Moreover, the concept indicates much more than Russia's intentions to establish relations with the old European countries. It specifies a certain distinction from another category, that of sovereign non-democracies, such as China, Iran, or North Korea among others; it seeks to establish different relations with what might be called 'The New Europe', and it can be used as a toolkit to construct Russia's international identity (Makarychev, 2008: 51).

> Frankly speaking, there are not so many countries in the world today that have the **good fortune** to say they are **sovereign**. You can count them on your fingers: **China, India, Russia** and a few other countries. All other countries are to a large extent **dependent either on each other or on bloc leaders**. This is not a very pleasing situation [...] (Putin, 2007a; emphasis added)

As the excerpt from Putin's speech shows, the right to be a sovereign country is reserved to a specific group of countries that do not rely on others or that, in other words, are economically, militarilly and culturally independent from others coutries. By asserting his view of China, India and Russia as truly sovereign States, Putin legitimizes his policies both domestically and internationally and reinforces the ideia of Russia's Great Power status. Aditionally, by reinforcing the idea of India and China as sovereign states, Putin also accentuates the BRIC as emerging powers. To the Kremlin, sovereignty is not a right, but rather a capacity, which implies economic independence, military strength and cultural identity; and for any given State to become sovereign, it needs to have an elite with strong and national values or, as Krastev put it, a "nationally-minded" elite (Krastev, 2006: 116) .

Considering what was said above, the concept of sovereign democracy is a master-concept in Kremlin's recent ideology, using philosophers, journalists and military strategists as key elements to raise awareness and spread this new ideology, crafting a defense mecanism against international criticism (Krastev, 2006; Fisher, 2014). According to the Kremlin, sovereign democracy is a democracy that fits in with Russian traditional values. However, this model of democracy can be found in countries such as

China and Iran, where the rulers affirm that their authority comes from the sovereign people, yet the people are absent from the structures of governance (Ahmad, 2015: 85). Thus, what is being created is a democracy in which the people, under some type of constraint, have the liberty to elect those chosen by them to senior positions. They are then expected to remain silent, or serve as a supportive chorus while the elected government continues with the job (Anderson, 2016: 250).

Putin's desire to restore order and pride in a battered Russia was developed through what was first a "managed" and then a "sovereign" democracy which was a model better suited to Russian cultural conditions. In this sense, people can vote, yet Kremlin-backed parties or individuals dominated, increasing the degree of electoral fraud (Anderson, 2016: 256). The legitimacy of sovereign democracy and the stability of the regime is also achieved through a discursive strategy that justifies the way Russia conceives its power and global and regional aspirations. In Russia, the political elite proclaims publicly that it needs to protect the society and the state from false conceptions of history. As a result, Russian ideological discourses and Putin's populist power play a major role in the discourse on sovereign democracy, as part of a larger ideological package bundle, which is also extremely important to the establishment of a centralised quasi-authoritarian power structure by Putin and his allies. Putin's populist power and the concept of sovereign democracy are not sufficient to stabilize an authoritarian power structure. However, it is extremely important for the Kremlin's efforts to retain power and control society (Schroder, 2014: 121).

Stability in Russia has much to do with the reproduction of power, either symbolic or ideological, and with the reestablisment of vertical power. In other words, stability in Russia is achieved through a shift from local autonomy to the partial re-establishment of a hierarchical model of regional and urban governance, which is then accompanied by the reinforcemnt of the basic cultural values, namely ideological, political, symbolic and religious values (Bonnell, 1998: 188; Sharafutdinova, 2009). During the first two years of his presidency, Putin managed to turn the Russian political stage into a symbolic center of power, creating the base for a new Russian identity in a new symbolic landscape. Aditionally, Putin's administration has also been increasing its hold on significant symbols of the Russian past such as the Great Patriotic war, which was once a central source of legitimacy for the Soviet Regime (Casula & Perovic, 2009: 271-272). Moreover, the reinforcement of ideological shepes is also extremely important for the

maintainence of Russia's stability. The ideological sphere is reflected in a particular set of values/ideas that have become rooted into people's minds by the Russian power elite throughout the years. Values such as 'Great Power', 'Strong State',and 'Stability' are deep-rooted in Russian political discourse, whereas other values such as 'freedom', 'modernization', 'democracy', among others are left in the periphery of mass consciousness (Ledyaev, 2008: 19-20). Russia is willing to assert its national interest if necessary, showing how Russia can be active at the semantic level with the concept of sovereign democracy as one of its weapons, but also how it can also mobilize hard power as well in order to defend its interests.

2.3.2 Multipolarity as the key to international stability

Since the end of the Cold war period, scholars, commentators, and practitioners of foreign policy have debated what world power structure would follow the bipolar US-Soviet competition and what US foreign policy would replace it (Posen, 2003). In the following years, concepts such as bipolarity, unipolarity and multipolarity started being used to describe the international system of the time. The distinction between bipolar, unipolar and multipolar international systems became common-place within academic discussions of international politics (Wagner, 1993). Although the distinction between the terms bipolarity and multipolar system might not be well-defined (Wagner, 1993: 78), there are certain features that are particular to each one, as will be seen later in this chapter.

Bipolar systems usually occur after a war or a major crisis, and concerns elites rather than masses, and it is based on external material coercion and cooperation (Väyrynen, 1995: 362). According to scholars such as Hans Morgenthau (1948) and Wolfram Hanrieder (1965) the post-world war was bipolar with two nuclear states, namely the US and the USSR, holding preponderance of power over other states. (Dean & Vasquez, 1976: 8). This type of power is tied up to a bipolar system in which two superpowers built 'blocs' around themselves and competed worldwide find neutrals that would commit to their own policies, influence, and ideologies. The emergence of this type of system was directly linked to the impact of nuclear weapons on the distribution of power (Dean & Vasquez, 1976: 8).

According to Richard Rosecrance (1966) and Kenneth Waltz (1964), there are four reasons that explain why a bipolar order would reduce international violence and hence create international stability. Fisrt the absence of peripheries means that any event that involves the fortunes of the Soviet Union or the US will elicit the interest of the other, and only those two superpowers will have the power to damage the other to an extent that no other state can. Secondly, the competition is extensive and its intesity has increased in the sense that all sorts of problems are relevant to international relations – and, by asserting the interests of both powers the system continues well-balanced. The third reason is that tpresence of pressure and the recurrence of crises are desareble as long as there are only two major protagonists. Finally, the prevailing power of the two superpowers means that minor shifts in the balance will not have a decisive significance.

That being said, when scolars refer to bipolarity, they are referring to the distribution of power among two states after WWII. This distribution of power accompanied the Cold War. Nevertheless, the economic problems of the Soviet Union, the reunification of Germany, and the independence of Eastern Europe changed the distribution of power among states (Wagner, 1993: 77). The collapse of the USSR made the US the preeminent state in terms of power, and ,as a result, a new debate emerged among scholars, aiming to describe the new distribution of power and the effects that it would have in future international conflicts. The collapse of the USSR led to a unipolar world, in which only one power prevailed.

Unipolarity is a structure in which one state's capabilities are too great to be counterbalanced by another state (Wohlforth, 1999: 9). The rise of unipolarity after the Cold war affected the membership of different alliances and the nature of relations within them, since it shaped the alliance choices that were available to different states (Walt, 2009: 86-87). To Kenneth Waltz (1997), this type of distribution of power is the least stable of all structures and causes States to take action in order to restore the balance, thus contributing to the emergence of conflicts. However, William Wohlforth (1999: 7-9) advances three propositions that undermine Waltz's argument. First, the world is unequivocally unipolar, with the US displaying much superiority compared to other states. Second, a unipolar world is prone to peace, since the previous source of conflict is absent, that is, hegemonic rivalry over leadership of the international system. Finally, the third proposition is that the current unipolarity in addition to being more peaceful is also long-lasting, given that in the next decades no State is likely to be in a position to take on

the US in the elements of power. Nevertheless, states such as Japan, China, and Russia are strong candidates to polar status. This type of distribution of power enables the US's dominance in terms of military capabilites vis-à-vis all other major powers. In other words, it allows for the "command of the commons" (Posen, 2003: 7). This positions requires military dominance over sea, air and space, resulting in an international system that contains only one state capable of organizing a major politico-military action anywhere in the system (Posen, 2003) . However, unipolarity may also bring consequences for the international system, which might ultimately explain why a unipolar world is unlikely to be successful. According to Christopher Layne (1993: 7), for instance, a unipolar world contains the seeds of its own collapse, since it creates an environment that may lead to the emergence of new great powers, due to an hegemonic unbalanced power and consequently, the emergence of new great powers erodes the hegemon's relative power. In other words, states will respond to concentrated power by counterbalancing it (Ikenberry, Mastanduno, & Wohlforth, 2009: 2). The stability of the international system depends on the degree to which the major powers are satisfied with the distribution of power within the international system (Ikenberry, Mastanduno & Wohlforth, 2009: 12).

Although the US continues to enjoy a comfortable position of superiority over other nations both in military power and economic underpinnings, the current distribution of power is not unipolar anymore. Reports of a new shift in the balance of power have been released, as early as in 2008, year of the economic crisis affecting major Western economies. The report *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World* (2008) by the US National Intelligence Council namely alerted to a gradual emergence of a multipolar world (cit in. Posen, 2009: 347). Multipolarity, or a mulitpolar world, can be defined as a system which contains more than two hegemonic states, resulting in multiple centers of political and economic influence that are sustained by normative pluralism in the cultural and ideological spheres (Wagner, 1993: 86; Chebankova, 2017: 1). This type of distribution of power affords a greater number of opportunities and cooperation among nations, it diminishes the attention paid to other states and has a dampering effect upon arms races, contributing to international stability (Deutsch and David Singer, 1964; Rosecrance, 1966) . The rise of emerging countries beyond the West is crucial to understanding the gradually shift in the global system (Cooper & Flemes, 2013: 944).

Instead of one emerging power, there are several countries that can be considered emerging powers namely Brazil, Russia, India and China (*BRIC*).

> And a similar calculation with the **GDP of the BRIC countries** – Brazil, Russia, India and China – **surpasses** the cumulative GDP of the **EU**. And according to experts this gap will only **increase in the future** (Putin, 2007b; emphasis added)

As early as in 2007, it was clear to Putin's government that new centers of power were emerging around the globe. By saying that the GDP of the BRIC countries will only increase in the future, Putin is emphasizing a change in the distribution of power within the international system with the appearance of new centers of power from the East. Within these emerging powers, Russia is the country most Western countries have difficulties to picture as a growing power (Cooper & Flemes, 2013: 945). Elena Chebankova (2017) argues that a close examination of Russian philosophical and political debates demonstrate that Russia has become a strong proponent of the multipolar world order. As a result, Russian foreign policy continues to focus on creating a system, in which large states are the primary guardians of the global order, free to pursuet their national interests, respecting one another's primacy within the circumscribed sphere of influence and hence maintain a general balance of power between themselves (Mankoff, 2009: 12). This focus on a multipolar world can be seen in several speeches given by Putin. One of these is the speech he gave at the Meeting with Members of the Valdai International Discussion Club[1] in 2007.

> "In the **medium-term future**, Russia will need **strong presidential power**. I cannot imagine another system. I already mentioned that we need to **strengthen** and **develop** the **multiparty system**." (Putin, 2007a; emphasis added).

[1] The Valdai Discussion Club was established in 2004, named after Lake Valdai. One of its main objectives is to promote dialogue among the wordwhide intellectual elite worldwide in order to find solutions to overcome the crises of the international system (Foundation, 2022)

As can be seen in Putin's speech above, it is extremely important for Russia to reassert its presidential power. The reaffirmation of presidential power, accompanied by the strengthening and developement of a multipolar system it's a forewarning of Putin's ambitions to assert power in an ever-stronger presidentialization of his regime. Consequently, this would be an extremely important step for Russia to reaffirm itself as a Great Power. That being said, totalitarian ideologies can hardly be separated from geopolitical goals and hence all totalitarian ideologists believe that their political model will assure happiness, prosperity, and can effectively be realized as a 'progressive' state under their political guidance (Lukin, 2016: 97). That is what Putin's intention to reassert his presidential power suggests.

Russia's refusal to follow the West is the first sign of a nascent move away from unipolarity. The influence of the West is expected to diminish, whereas other centers of power will grow as they seek to build zones of influence around their borders (Lukin, 2016: 107-108). It is important to bear in mind the theoretical and pratical dimensions of multipolarity. At a theoretical level, a multipolar world is expected to diminish state sovereignty whereas at a pratical level it is expected to consider state sovereignty as a favorable transitional status "[a]nd an expedient instrument for preserving cultural distinction and self-standing in the rapidly globalizing world." (Chebankova, 2017: 6). Nonetheless, the emergence of a multipolar world enables Russia to promote an international system based on constraints, using military force to balance what is considered to be Western expansionism, and using economic statecraft to promote multipolarity aiming to construct a Greater Eurasia (Diesen, 2019: 126).

US attempts to balance Russia and China suggets that there is still a commitment to unipolarity rather than accepting the emergence of multipolarity. Both the US and the EU continue to hold on to the idea of collective hegemony, despite the appearance of new centres of power (Diesen, 2019: 128). Nevertheless, Russia continues to be a strong proponent of a multipolar world, aiming to construct a Greater Eurasia and, ultimately, to become a Great Power again.

2.3.3 Eurasia and Eurasianism

As was said above, distribution of power within the international system has shifted across time, in particular since 2000. With new centers of power emerging around

the globe, such as Russia and China, the US is still struggling to keep its position amidst this shift. Nevertheless, countries such as the ones mentioned above are attempting to solidify the concept of Eurasia and create a new economic center aiming to reformulate the global geopolitical order (Karaganov, 2018).

Traditionally, the Eurasian region, as a landmass, worked as a barrier between the Western world and non-Western civilizations. It occupies a vast space between central and northern Europe, and eastern Asia, connecting and stabilizing some of the most volatile territories such as the Balkans, Afghanistan, and the Caucasus, among others (Tsygankov, 2012: 2). Historically, each one of these territories were located between major cultural entities producing a kind of melting pot with a mixture of ethnic, religious and linguistic affiliations that under more stable international conditions serve as cultural, political and transportation bridges, connecting large cultures and continents (*ibid.*). Since the 18th century, Eurasia has established itself as a Russian-centered empire, and in 1943, Halford Mickinder referred to Russia as the "Heartland" of Eurasia (Mackinder, 1943: 601). In a purely geographical sense, Russia has always dealt with the problem of lacking clear boundaries, as nature offered little protection when Russia was still developing., And as it grew stronger, there were few barriers to stop it from projecting its power virtually in all directions (Trenin, 2001: 41).

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the term "Eurasia" underwent a profound transformation, growing beyond the purely intellectual circles, and becoming a victim of its own success, now being used as a catch-all vision of Russia (Laruelle, 2008: 1). That being said, the term "Eurasia" in Russia expresses both a geopolitical principle and a philosophical principle. As for the former Russian claims of being the main player of the post-Soviet world, it consequently has the right to oversee the strategic orientations of its neighbors. Philosophically, Russia's status as the "other Europe" is claimed, in which Eurasia is perceived as a response to what might be perceived as the deadlock of liberalism, and as an alternative to the West as a civilization. Lastly, Eurasia works as a memory commemmoration, in which Russian society can understand their Soviet past, and, experiences and at the same time integrate them into a national grand narrative (Laruelle, 2015: 3).

The official concept regards Russia as an emerging power and hence as an independent source of power and influence within the international system (Trenin, 2001: 283). But the term "Eurasia" *per se* did not seem to have much importance in Russia until

almost the end of the 19th century (Gleason, 2010: 27). With the continuation of the Russian Empire's territorial movement south and west, across the Asian landmass, and the acquisition of more non-Slavic subjects, the situation changed; Russia imagined a different destiny for itself, claiming more influence in Asia to ultimately achieve Russian hegemony over both Europe and Asia (Gleason, 2010: 27).

The critical importance of Eurasia can be found in the later development of "Eurasianism" as an ideological and socio-political current emerging around 1921, intended to respond to Western culture and consequently Western political systems and ideas of political/social conflict (Laruelle, 2006: 10-11). Eurasianism is unified by the concept of Russian culture as non-European phenomenon, presenting both a combination of Western and Eastern features, thus demonstrating that Russian culture belongs to both East and West, while, at the same time, it cannot be reduced to either of them (Dugin, 2014: 24). Eurasianism has its origins in the 1920s, and its founders were Nikolai Trubetzkoy, Pyotr Savitsky, Georges Florovsky, George Vernadsky and Nikolai Alexeyev. The core value of the concept consisted of ideas born out of the tradition of Russian history and statehood, which affirmed that Russian people should not be placed either among the European nor the Asian peoples, since they belong to a unique Eurasian community (Dugin, 2014: 24).

By the end of the WWII, Eurasianism would be known in all the USSR. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, it became a major ideological doctrine of the opposition to the Yeltsin regime. By 2000, when Vladimir Putin assumed the presidency of the country, although Moscow's position in the region had already been severely undermined due to Yeltsin's presidency, the term "Eurasianism" began to be used again regarding Russian foreign policy (Laruelle, 2008: 7). Under the presidency of Vladimir Putin, Eurasianism gradually regained its importance with the launch of two Eurasian parties. Eurasianism and Soviet ideology had a lot in common and, as a matter of fact, some aspects of Eurasianism, such as the belief in a strong government and the emphasis on the organic unity of the ethnic groups, are aspects of the Soviet doctrine. As a result, Eurasianism can be seen as a viable ideology that provides legitimization for Russia as a multi-ethnic state and provides the opportunity for a variety of geopolitical arrangements (Laruelle, 2006: 13-14). What the term signifies for Russia's relation with East Asia varies according to different elite interpretations, although all interpretations share an instrumentalist nature. There are three major interpretations of Eurasianism, namely, (1) Pragmatic Eurasianism,

which perceives Russia's eurasianist identity as legitimizing Russia's interests both in the West and in Asia, and provides Russia with the claim of having a right to play a role in East Asia; (2) Neo-eurasianism, which is primarily based on geopolitical thinking. The core of this approach is to realign Russia away from the West, and to become make allies with other powers. The third interpretation (3) is Intercivilazitional Eurasianism, which emphasises Russia's potential 'intercivilizational' role between the two continents, working as a melting pot. Within these three major interpretations, the dominant one has been Pragmatic Eurasianism, with Neo-Eurasianism and Intercivilisational Eurasianism remaining almost insignificant in policy implications and policy statements (Rangsimaporn, 2006: 372-373).

Eurasia being the pivot of global power rested on the fact that in the beginning of the 20th century, the Russian Empire possessed every resource, meaning that Eurasian power was sufficient to develop its own military and industrial structure without any country's permission. As a result, Russia has become more vulnerable to challenges posed by minor players such as Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova, resulting in overtly aggressive foreign and defense policies from Moscow towards those same neighbors (Tchantouridze, 2008: 14-15). Although the USA still maintain their initial position of pushing towards a more open Eurasia, Russia has insisted on being the major power in Eurasia and has sought to reassert its undisputed dominance in Eurasia, using its control of vast pipeline networks in the former Soviet Union in its favor (Tchantouridze, 2008: 15).

> It seems to me that this is not **linked to the weather** but rather to the ability of certain **Georgian politicians to correctly evaluate** the situation concerning mutual **relations with Russia**. There was an unfortunate incident, and yes, **deliveries were suspended** (Putin, 2006a; emphasis added)

As can be seen in Putin's speech, the control of vast pipelines networks in the former Soviet Union is used as a meana of control over those same regions. The decision of Russia to do so is not arbitrary, for it may be linked to a major aspiration in which Russia is the ultimate player in the former Soviet republics. Accordingly if the governments of those regions do not agree with it, they will suffer the consequences as it

was possible to seen in the case of Georgia's "unfortunate incident" with the suspention of gas deliveries.

More broadly, although contemporary Eurasia had been declining after the disintegration of its economic, political and cultural structures, partly due to the presidency of Gorbachev (Tsygankov, 2012: 3), it became a center of development under Putin. More recently, for example, the creation of the Eurasia Economic Union (EEU) in 2014, aims to become an alternative to the Euro-Atlantic parternship and alliance.[2]

Geopolitics and Eurasianism are thus part of Russian post-Soviet foreign policy. The concern with the international legitimacy of Russian national interests and the perceived need to confer a moral dimension to Russian foreign policy underlay the claims of Russia's "Eurasianness". As a result, it was imperative that Russian post-Soviet foreign policy elites presented their foreign policy as geopolitical, invoking Eurasianism as its inner-rationale and significance, and as a greater good with a sense of mission (Morozova, 2009: 671-672). Some scholars, such as Pavel Baev (1997) argue that Eurasianism is devoid of substance, and that it is only about regaining control over the Near Abroad, whereas scholars such as David Kerr (1995) affirm that as long as Russia's great power status remains a topic of discussion within foreign policy debate, Russia's submission to geopolitics will continue. In other words, as long as Russia's desire to be a great power prevails, it must remain an Eurasian power.

In this geopolitical context, Eurasia has also served as a terrain of rapprochement to the wider Asia-Pacific region:

> Already at that time [during the Eurasian integration], we started developing ties […] within the framework of the **Greater Eurasian Partnership**. Our motivation was not the **political situation** but global economic trends, because the center of **economic development** […] moving, continues to move into the **Asia-Pacific Region**. (Putin, 2022; emphasis added)

[2] The EEU, established by Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation, had the objective of increasing cooperation and economic competitiveness for the member states and the promotion of stable development in order to raise the standard of living in those same states (Mostafa & Mahmood, 2018: 164).

According to Putin, the politcal situation of Eurasia was not the only focal point in Russian foreign policy, for the economic trend should also be taken into account as it played a major role in the creation of ties with the Asia-Pacific Region, thus fortifying Eurasia and a Greater Eurasian Partnership. Ultimately, this geopolitical extension of areas of influence inevitably frames the rapprochement with China, central to Putin's foreign policy as well.

> Once again, I say that the experience of **cooperation** between our two countries shows very clearly that coordination and cooperation between Russia and China is a **stabilizing** factor in world affairs. What lies at the foundation of this positive **influence**, in my firm **belief**, is the very approach our two countries take to resolving the problems facing modern civilisation and global and regional policy issues. Rather than **imposing** our point of view **by force and flexing our muscles**, we consistently support a **political and diplomatic approach** to conflict resolution. We **respect** our **partners' interests** and we seek in turn respect for our **interests** and our **sovereignty** (Putin, 2006b; emphasis added)

Seemingly, the relation of cooperation and coordination between Russia and China is an important aspect for stabilizing the international system. Putin strongly believes in the positive aspects of the relation between the two countries and affirms that instead of using hard power techniques to solve problems within the international system, they choose to use soft power techniques, such as political and diplomatic approaches to conflict resolution. This is achieved through mutual respect of both countries' interests and sovereignty. By portraying Russia and China as sovereign democracies, Putin tries to legitimize their combined actions within the international system. Russia continues to play an important role in Eurasia; not only does it maintains dominant military and diplomatic resources, which are used to resolve several conflicts in the region, it also upholds an unparalleled historical experience and cultural capital, whilst serving as a state-building example in the region and possessing vast energy reserves exploited in its favor (Tsygankov, 2012: 5-9). According to Marlène Laruelle (2008:7-8) several of Putin's presidential addresses focus on reopening the question of Russia's place between Asia and Europe, giving way to a re-emergence of two interrelated and reinforcing

discourses namely the discourse on geopolitics and the discourse on Eurasianism (Morozova, 2009: 668).

Despite the fact that contemporary Eurasia is in a state of decline due to security vacuum and disintegration trends, it continues to be a part of Russian foreign policy discourses. Although the US continues to keep pushing towards a more open Eurasia as demonstrated by Hillary Clinton "We know what the goal is and we are trying to figure out effective ways to slow down or prevent it" (cit in. Liberty, 2012: l.7-8), Russia still sees itself as a pivot of global powerm and insists on reasserting its undisputed dominance in the region. As an attempt to achieve this, regaining the influence lost during the Yeltsin period became a fulcral point in Russian foreign policy.

2.3.4 Russia's relation with the 'Near Abroad'

The collapse of the USSR created a complex situation with its newly independent neighbors. The process of creating a conceptual approach to these relations took time and Moscow's policy towards the 'Near Abroad' suffered from significant indecisiveness for its inability to adapt to the newly arising realities (Babak, 2000: 93). Relations with the former Soviet Union republics have been the primary direction of Russian foreign policy ever since their independence, and it still occupies a central role within Russian foreign policy (Nalbandov, 2016: 185-186), corollary to the Eurasianism approached in the previous section.

The common Soviet space, allied with the Newly Independent States (NIS) was replaced by a Russian Federation comprising 14 sovereign states, and by the Commonwealth of Independent States[3] (CIS) providing Russia with the opportunity to redefine its identity and, consequently, its interests (Porter & Saivetz, 1994: 75; Laenen, 2012: 23-24). The first year of the Russian Federation was largely focused on bringing order to internal affairs and establishing itself as the successor state to the Soviet Union. The concern regarding Russia's role in the world led Yeltsin to concentrate his efforts on policies towards the US and Western Europe (Porter & Saivetz, 1994: 76). The states that

[3] The Commonwealth of Independent States is a free association of sovereign states formed in 1991 by Russia and eleven other republics that were formerly part of the Soviet Union, namely Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. It coordinates its member's policies regarding their foreign relations, defense, economies, law enforcement and immigration policies (Encyclopaedia, 2022)

integrated the CIS were left on their own during the first years of Yeltsin's presidency and as a result economic crisis, political instability, and ethnic conflicts in most of the former Soviet republics became recurrent (Babak, 2000: 94). While in 1991 Russia's concern with the former Soviet republics was minimal, in 1993 the scenario changed dramatically with the implementation of a wide range of political, military, and economic pressures and inducements to reassert the influence lost in the Near Abroad (Porter & Saivetz, 1994: 76). At that time, Russia's economic ties with the post-Soviet countries were significantly reduced and some of the newly-independent states were able to redirect their economies to countries of the far abroad. From this point on, it became clear that Moscow's political weight in the international system was diminishing and that the influence of Russian foreign policy had weakened (Babak, 2000: 95-96). The transition from Yelstin to Putin was a turning point for Russia and Russian foreign policy. Contrary to Yelstin, Putin took a stronger and more decisive hand in dealing with the Near Abroad, using Russia's economic power to attain his goals (Rywkin, 2015: 234-235). The objective was to abandon useless confrontation with the West, due to the financial situation Russia was in, and concentrate economic pressure on the Near Abroad, taking advantage of their energy dependence on Russia (Rywkin, 2015: 235). To Russia the CIS worked as a tool to exert its influence in the former Soviet sphere, and to attain Russia's national interests and the great power status that is often mentioned by Russian foreign policy officials (Ahmad Dar, 2020).

After Putin's rise to power in 2000, it was possible to observe a consensus on Russia's identity and national interests in the Near Abroad (Laenen, 2012). The Near Abroad has become Russia's primary area, in which it is acting as a regional and global power, vigorously seeking to carve out 'imperial' spheres of influence. Putin's strategy relied in part on the rhetooric of integration and internationalization aiming to prove Russian normality through public diplomacy, Russian normality and reduce the suspicion of the international community (Secrieru, 2006: 290-291). This rhetoric of integration and internationalization was also applied to the pursuit of a strategy of power concentration at home and in the 'Near Abroad', attempting to reestablish Russia's greatness, assure the state's 'real sovereignty', increase the great power autonomy in relations with the most powerful and significant players of the international community (Secrieru, 2006: 291).

> In **protecting Russia's interests** in foreign affairs, we are interested in **developing the economy** and **strengthening** the international **prestige** of our **neighboring countries**. We are interested in the synchronization of the pace and parameters of reform processes in Russia and **CIS states** […] and are ready to adopt **useful experience** from our neighbors and also **share our ideas and the results of our work** with them (Putin, 2005a; emphasis added)

As shown by Putin's speech, it was clear that the Near Abroad began to regain its importance within Russia's foreign policy. In order for Russia to achieve and protect its national interests, it had to regain the lost influence in the former Soviet republics, which would be achieved through the development of the economy and the strenghtening of the prestige of the neighboring countries for Russia. According to Putin, this would also be achieved through a relation of cooperation in which these countries would share ideas, experiences and results. Instead of using hard power interventions, Putin opted for a soft power discourse in order to attract countries in the Near Abroad. Recovering the lost influence in the former Soviet sountries became a priority and the CIS played a major part in trying to achieve that goal. The re-birth of the 'CIS project' entailed the reemergence of Russia's century-old great power identity and Russia's pro-active engagement in the defence of the highly-challenged *status quo* in the periphery. Russia's official discourse frequently refers to "vital national interests" as being of extreme importance to guarantee the state's survival. However, Russia's definition of these vital interests goes beyond the protection of its own territorial integrity and welfare, stretching into the neighbouring area of the Near Abroad. One of the key vital national interests, as defined in the Near Abroad, is precisely that of defending and protecting the rights of the Russian "compatriots" in the former Soviet republics, pointing to Russia's historical legacy of imperialism (Laenen, 2012: 28).

> The **civilizing mission** of the Russian nation on the Eurasian continent should continue. This means that **democratic values** multiplied by **national interests** should **enrich** and **strengthen** our **historical unity** (Putin, 2005a; emphasis added)

The Near Abroad thus continues to play a major role in Russian foreign policy and Russian national interests. Putin's reference to democratic values, his use of the Soviet Union's legacy and history is a means to attract support and regain its lost influence in the region, as it legitimizes its actions in the neighoring area. Nevertheless, Russian policies towards the former Soviet republics are aimed at limiting sovereignty for, and reintegration of, the former Soviet republics in the Russian sphere of influence, and have been designed to guarantee Russia's domination and hegemony over them, whether by cooperative or coercive means (Abushov, 2009: 189). Russia's use of oil and gas supplies as an instrument of foreign policy can beseen as an example of a political and economic lever of influence towards the Near Abroad, with Russia using gas cutoffs, threats of supply disruptions, price increases and attacks on the pipelinesin order to maintain its position and influence within the Near Abroad.

Moreover, in 2000, Putin engaged and started promoting the Eurasia Union aiming to create a possible counterpart toof the EU. The economic component of this newly created entity was seen by many as a real foundation and it was complemented by the creation of the Eurasian Economic Community (EEC) in 2001, which would later would be the precursor to the Customs Union in 2010 and the Common Economic Space in 2012. The EEC had the task of promoting ideals of economic integration and harmonization of the institutions of its member states (Nalbandov, 2016: 205). Additionally, Russia also took advantage of the Russian language as a tool for maintaining Russian influence abroad. However, through the course of the years and with a young generation emerging, Russian proficiency began to diminish (Rotaru, 2018: 38). As a way of counteracting this trend, Moscow established the Russian World Foundation, with the goal of promoting the teaching of Russian within Russia and abroad "The foundation is designed to promote the study and popularity of Russian language in Russia and in the world, as well as disseminate and develop Russia's cultural heritage […]." (Putin, 2007c). The *Rossotrudnichestvo* agency was also established to develop projects promoting Russian language and culture abroad, representing a valuable instrument for Russian foreign policy in the Near Abroad (Rotaru, 2018: 39).

> Today, when many states actively use the **soft power policy** to pursue their **national interests**, we see an escalating role and responsibility of Rossotrudnichestvo and its branches

> in **promoting a positive image** of our country abroad, **strengthening its prestige and influence**. It is essential for the world to obtain reliable information about modern Russia, to learn about our spiritual and intellectual **traditions**, rich **history** and enormous contribution to the **development of civilization** (Putin, 2012; emphasis added)

As demonstrated in the quote above, these organizations work as a tool of soft power within Russian foreign policy, aiming to promote Russian language and culture abroad. According to Putin, the soft power policy of many countries is just a mean to achieve their national interests. However, for Russia these organizations work to promote a new image of Russia abroad. Their purpose is to demonstrate that, despite being a new Russia, its spiritual and intellectual traditions, its rich history and importance had to the development of civilization continue to be of extreme importance and thus Russia should receive the prestige to which it is entitled. By doing this, Russia not only legitimizes its position within the international system, but it also aims to create a historical and emotional connection with every country that had the same background. Nevertheless some scholars affirm that by instrumentalizing its soft power resources Russia has motivated its neighors to seek to restrict its influence, being perceived by the former Soviet republics as a threat to their national identity (Ćwiek-Karpowicz, 2012: 22).

The desire to keep the ex-Soviet republics under Russian influence are only a small display of how Russia is still conneceted to its Soviet past. According to Robert Nalbandov (2016: 206-207), Russian post-Soviet imperialism differs from Soviet imperialism in the fact that it was designed to be ethnic in form (led only by Russians) and imperial in content (forcefully imposed on its members). Russian foreign policy changed tremendously after Putin's rise to power in 1999, taking a new path both domestically and internationally that is oriented to its Russia as sovereign democracy,the concept of multipolarity, Eurasia and the Near Abroad. This was enhanced by the inclusion of a liberal, democratic concept in Russian foreign policy discourses, namely the concept of soft power. Russian foreign policy was mainly known by its hard power both within the country and abroad, yet times are changing and the power of ideas became an important part of countries' foreign policy.

Chapter 3 - Looking for (Soft) power in Putin's Foreign Policies

In the previous chapters, we saw how Russian foreign policy developed under the Soviet regime and during Boris Yeltsin's presidency. Different phases were highlighted, which alternated from isolationism to openness to the international community. After Putin's rise to power in 1999, Russian foreign policy took a new direction to fill the ideological gap left by Yeltsin and to recover the (perceived) lost influence in the international system and in the Near Abroad. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia retained its military strength. However, the cultural and ideological appeal was largely lost. In this chapter, the type of power implicit in Putin's foreign policy will be questioned and analysed. It will be seen that Putin's rise to power brought with it the inclusion of a liberal concept in Russian foreign policy discourse, namely the concept of soft power. Accordingly, the search for soft power is going to be conducted through the analysis of Putin's discourses regarding three particular events, that is: The Colored Revolutions, the Russian World concept and the Russo-Georgian War. These three events appeared during Putin's first two terms in power and are included in the time period in which soft power first appears within Russian foreign policy discourse. Nevertheless, many scholars affirm that both events are marked by hard power instead of soft. That being said, the purpose of this chapter is to analyze Putin's discourses and conclude if there are signs of soft power related to these events or if Russian foreign policy continues to be characterized by hard power.

3.1 Colored Revolutions

The fall of Communist regimes generated a wave of excitement and hope for millions of people who had seen their freedom reduced to the bare minimum during half a century. However, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, this wave of excitement began to dissipate and, particularly the former Soviet Union republics, began to see a grim reality in which building a free and prosperous country was not going to be easy (Mitchell, 2012: 1). Although Putin had adopted a stronger and more decisive hand when dealing with the near abroad, his efforts came late. Western influences in the Near Abroad had already emerged and, in 2003, peaceful protests – the Color Revolutions - emerged in Georgia

(Rose Revolution), Ukraine (Orange Revolution) and Kyrgyzstan (Tulip Revolution). These non-violent protests brought an end to governements that would take advantage of fraudulent elections, kleptocracy, and corruption, and replace them with freely-elected leaders. In Georgia, the former Soviet foreign minister and the then Georgian president Eduard Shevardnadze were forced to resign and new presidential elections were held, in which Mikhail Saakashvili, a US-educated lawyer, well-known for his strong oposition to Russia and anti-corruption stance, won with majority. In Ukraine, the opposition pressure continued until the parliament announced that a new election would be held, which would end up declaring Viktor Yushchenko winner and take Viktor Yanukovych out of the presidency. Lastly, in Kyrgyzstan, protests were made after accusations were made that the presidential elections were fraudulent. The political pressure on President Askar Akayev led him to flee to Moscow, and a newly formed parliament declared Kurmanbek Bakiev as the new interim president and prime minister (JAZEERA, 2005). For two years, these protests brought the possibility of reshaping the political terrain of the former Soviet republics and brought to power a new government that was initially pro-democracy and pro-Western in orientation, resulting in a change of balance between Russia and the US (Mitchell, 2012: 2).

This democratic development in the former Soviet republics was seen by Russia as part of an American conspiracy to ensure that pro-American leaders were in place in the countries surrounding Russia, posing a threat to Russian leadership in its very own sphere of influence. Russian authorities voiced concerns about these protests, thus laying the hypothesis of having to intervene to defend other governments against foreign-sponsored protests through its military capabilities and tactics (Bouchet, 2016: 1). This Russian regime's phobia has deep historical roots and is connected to the Russian discourse regarding the maintainance of a sphere of influence. This, combined with the fact that Russia was unable to secure elections in Ukraine, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Belarus, led Russia to countering Colored Revolutions by focusing on neutralizing soft power channels, such as information and communications, instead of using hard power interventions or suppression. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) started to be controlled by the Justice Ministry and the Federal Registration Service, conducting check-ups of the NGO's activities to verify their compliance with its objectives and its founding documents. Taking into account that NGOs were at the center stage of the

Colored Revolutions, Putin was especially concerned with Western NGOs and foreign founding of Russian NGOs (Volk, 2006: l.2-18).

> Our country is **directly involved** in **settling** a number of **conflicts in the CIS** area. I wish to stress that we will continue to fulfil our **peacekeeping mission**, in spite of the **open provocation** that we sometimes encounter. […] Of course, **supporting** and **protecting** the **rights** of **Russians abroad** remains one of the **priorities** for our country's foreign policy. This is a question of our **humanitarian** and **economic national interests**. (Putin, 2006c; emphasis added)

Although Putin does not make a direct reference to the US and NATO, the number of conflicts that are mentioned in his speech are the ones brought by the Colored Revolutions. As shown above, despite the open provocation that Russia encountered when dealing with these conflicts, Putin affirms that what he deems to be "peacekeeping missions" would continue to be a priority in Russian Foreign Policy. The CIS continued to be an important part of Russian identity and, as a result, Russia's foreign policy and domestic policy would continue to be focused on supporting and protecting Russian compatriots abroad. By implying that their protection was a question of humanitarian and economic national interest for Russia, Putin aimed to legitimize Russia's actions in the region and regain the influence that had been lost during the Yeltsin presidency.

The Colored Revolutions, as stated above, were perceived by many in Russia as part of a broad US plan to place Russia within pro-Western countries, consequently increasing the tensions between Russia and the US (Mitchell, Russia, 2012: 92-93). After this, Putin and Russian officals adopted a stronger stand in relation to thecolored evolutions, portraying the protests as warfare instigated by the US and its allies.

> The most important thing, what concerns me, is that the use of **illegal methods** in the **political struggle** in the post-Soviet area is **in my opinion** absolutely **unacceptable**, because this will **plunge** enormous territories into a **state** of **confusion** and **destabilization** (Putin, 2005b; emphasis added)

According to Putin, what was happening in the former Soviet republics was the result of illegal methods between various political subjects that were pursuing their own

interests in the region, completely disregarding the political and economic situation that most former Soviet republics had been in and continued to undergo. When Putin makes reference to the political struggles in the region, he is alluding to the Colored Revolutions and the role the US and the EU had in urging them. To him, this was an extremely undesirable situation that would lead to confusion and destabilization in the region. By saying this, Putin is not only describing the Colored Revolutions as illegal, but is also portraying the US and the EU as powers that are only concerned with their national and foreign policies. Moreover, the mentioned unacceptability plays a major role in this excerpt. By proclaiming the situation to be "unacceptable" and that it would lead to a catastrophe, Putin ended up legitimizing his actions in the region, differentiating his actions from US and EU actions. Russia was thus portrayed as a nation which continued to fight for the prosperity of the former Soviet republics and, hence, the increase of Russian influence in the region was necessary.

This resulted in the creation of an agenda and the formalization of the authorities' counter-colour revolutions which focused on the danger of domestic subversion and the influence of the West in Russia, as well as the militarization of the protest threat (Bouchet, 2016: 2). Russia stepped up its efforts to make alliances with other authoritarian regimes that were concerned with the possibility that the popular uprising could lead to their demise, and to damage the unity of the Western alliance through the development of political alliances with right-wing parties. At the military level, Russia determined that the best option to counteract US strategy was through a combination of strong support for existing authoritarian regimes around the world (Gorenburg, 2014: 3). Opposed to Russia's militarized position and aggressive view towards the colour revolutions, some scholars believe that Russia's response was more focused on soft power. According to Jarosław Ćwiek-Karpowicz (2012: 6), Russia increased its soft power activity in regards to the Near Abroad, focusing on formulating an ideological response, promoting their own vision of democracy and criticizing Western liberal democratic countries for ideological imperialism. Significant bilateral projects were launched between 2004 and 2005, such as the Valdai International Discussion Club the Russian-German Petersburg Dialogue, the Franco-Russian Dialogue, the Russian-American Council for Business Cooperation, while at the same Russia began to integrate the international media market, resulting in the Russian international television channel Russia Today (Ageeva, 2021: 121-122). Sergei Markov, former State *Duma* deputy, suggested that Russia should

significantly step up its public diplomacy, NGO, public relations and media strategies in order to increase its influence in its post-Soviet neighborhood (Sinikukka, 2014: 51).

> I also wanted to raise another, very specific, issue here today, namely, what must be done to **ensure** that **national television** fully takes into account **Russian civil society's** most relevant **needs** and **protects** its **interests**. We need to establish guarantees that will ensure that **state television** and **radio broadcasting** are as **objective** as possible, **free from the influence** of any **particular groups**, and that they **reflect** the whole spectrum of public and political forces in the country (Putin, 2005c; emphasis added)

As can be seen in Putin's speech, Russia's response to the increasing Western influence in the former Soviet space focused significantly on the creation of media strategies that would substantially increase Russian public diplomacy and its influence not only abroad, but also within Russia. National television should thus portray Russian civil society's needs and interests and guarantee that the information that is broadcasted is objective and unbiased, and that it reflects the public and political situation of the country. Consequently, this would allow Russia to formulate an ideological response to Western expansion and promote their own vision of democracy. However, these efforts were accompanied by repressive measures.

After the Rose Revolution, Russia's relation with Georgia deteriorated. The Russian military bases in Georgia were closed down, Russian diplomats working as spies were expelled and, consequently, Russian authorities became angered and their relations rapidly degenerated. As a result, Georgian products were banned from Russian markets and thousands of Georgians were deported back to Georgia on cargo flights (Beacháin & Polese, 2010: 26). Regarding Ukraine, the aim was to increase Russia's influence over the former Soviet Union in order to boost its relative standing in the world vis-à-vis and with the other would-be superpowers such as China, India, the US and the EU. Ukraine was crucial to test Russia's foreign policy and its ability to exert influence over the Near Abroad. The tactics that were applied in Russian elections were also applied in the Yanukovych campaign, and Russian support came under a variety of forms. Their support came in the form of political advisers, the famed political technologists such as Gleb Pavlovsky, whose role was to provide tactical and campaign advice, such as: the use of state's resources, namely the media; the use of vote-rigging techniques, such as the

carousel voting and the use of 'dead souls'; the replacement of suspect bureaucrats in wavering provinces with officials that could be trusted to deliver the right result; the use of pressure on those who were dependent on the state, among others. Support also came from the Russian media, especially television, by broadcasting a solidly pro-Yanukovych message. Despite this, Russia failed to contemplate the possibility of Yushchenko's victory and, by insisting on a 'more of the same' campaigning for the second round, the Kremlin lost the chance to switch its support to Yushchenko or step gracefully aside (Beacháin & Polese, 2010: 36-37). Finally, similarly to Georgia's Rose Revolution, the catalyst for Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution was flawed parliamentary elections. The Tulip Revolution contributed to the perception of a "wave" of color revolutions across the former Soviet Republics, yet it did not lead to a pro-Western regime. The movement in Kyrgyzstan was not seen as a move towards or away from Russia and, as a result, Russia was able to secure and resume its relationship with Kyrgyzstan without the need to redirect the country's course (Hinkle, 2017: 5). Kyrgyzstan, which was on the path of democratic development, started moving towards authoritarian consolidation under the presidency of President Bakiev (Jackson N. J., 2010: 103).

Taking into account what was said above, it is possible to observe signs of both hard and soft power within Russian foreign policy. Russia's legacy from the Soviet Union relies primarily on hard power, meaning that military interventions, coercion and suppresion are still a large part of its influence. Nevertheless, it is also possible to note aspects of Russian soft power towards the Near Abroad. Russia's response to the Colored Revolutions was clearly marked by the presence of hard power in both Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. However, marks of soft power can also be identified when it came to promoting their own version of democracy, step up public relations, public diplomacy and media strategies in order to increase its influence in the post-Soviet area.

3.2 The Russian World Concept

The collapse of the USSR originated an identity and ideological gap within Russia, as well as among every former Soviet republic, which saw the necessity of searching for a place in a new world and a conceptual basis for a new model of development. Millions of former Soviet citizens who considered themselves Russians

were now citizens of the new post-Soviet states neighbouring Russia. Although Russia could not return to its imperial policy of the past, Moscow's priority was to restore Russia's image as a global center of power, continuing to operate in the appropriate surroundings and using the resources available to preserve its influence in the neighboring states.

Although soft power was only recently introduced in Russia's official discourse, soft power as a phenomenon in Moscow's relations with other actors started much earlier. Whereas in the early post-Soviet period Russian authorities first neglected any coordinated image-projection efforts, in the early 2000s the situation changed with an outburst of image-building. Initially, Moscow focused mainly on Western countries, trying to project a narrative of Russia's belonging to the greater European civilization. However, the Colored Revolutions, especially the Orange revolution in Ukraine, marked a crucial turning-point. The events that brought to power pro-Western President Yushchenko were perceived by Moscow as a result of democracy promotion by the EU and the US (Putin, 2007d). Russia's fear of losing influence in the neighboring area led Russian authorities to increasingly restore the idea of soft power (Feklyunina, 2015). The Colored Revolutions were the breaking point with the old Russian foreign policy and, in 2005, Gleb Pavlovsky, a Russian political scientist, observed a major change in Russia's policy towards the post-Soviet space, linking Russian global ambitions for the future to the projection of its influence in the former Soviet countries (Polegkyi, 2011: 11). This change in Russian foreign policy was accompanied by a discursive change and a rapid rise of various diplomatic actors, such as the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation, and the radio station 'Voice of Russia' (Feklyunina, 2015: 782). Russia has also set up several umbrella organizations to project its soft power abroad. The Institute of CIS Countries, for example, which was created in order to channel fundings to Russia-friendly parties, the Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund and the Russian World Foundation were also established in order to promote Russian culture and language abroad (Polegkyi, 2011: 12; Feklyunina, 2015: 782).

Prior to the creation of the Russian World Foundation in 2004, the "Russian World concept" was formulated in the early 1990s by intellectuals suchs as Petr Shchedrovitsky, Efim Ostrovky, Gleb Pavlovskiy and Valery Tishkov as a response to the Russian issue of people who identify as Russians but live beyond Russian borders (Polegkyi, 2011;

Suslov, 2018; Gigitashvili, 2016). The Russian World concept was set up to uphold and foster ties between the Russian state and Russian speakers abroad, especially those in the post-Soviet Space, which consequently would allow Russia to expand and re-establish its identity and "sphere of influence" and hence strengthen Russia's international presence (Zevelev, 2014: l.50-55; Suslov, 2018: 7; Gigitashvili, 2016: l.30-31). According to Andis Kudors (2010), those who speak Russian and carry the heritage of the Soviet Union also think Russian and consequently act Russian. The Russian World concept is used to refer to individuals who live outside the borders of the Russian Federation and who feel that the historical, cultural and linguistic background connects them to Russia (Zevelev, 2014: l.80-84). The Russian World concept became a soft power vision, strengthened by the drafting of the Russian Foreign Policy Review *in 2007*[4], and the Russian Foreign Policy Concept, *in 2008*[5]. (Maliukevičius, 2013: 72). By incorporating the 'Russian World' narrative into the official discourse, Russian authorities prepared their own interpretation of the concept and made it visible in Russian foreign policy. The Russian World was also promoted by actors such as the Russian World Foundation, ROC and the Rossotrudnichestvo, which emphasized four key points both at home and abroad (Feklyunina, 2015: 783).

First, the Russian World concept depends on the assumption that Russian compatriots abroad have an emotional attachment to the common Soviet past and nurture loyalty for Russian culture, language, and knowledge (Maliukevičius, 2013: 76; Suslov, 2018: 331).

> All peoples, **all republics of the former USSR**, **suffered** their own irreparable **losses**. Grief reached **every household**, touched **every family**. That is why 9 May is a **sacred** day for all nations in the **Commonwealth of Independent States**. We are **united** by our **anguish**, our **memory** and our **duty to future generations**. And we must pass on to those who will come after us the spirit of **historic connection**, **common aspirations** and **common hope**. (Putin, 2005d; emphasis added)

[4] The Russian Foreign Policy Review, as the name implies, is a review of the policies currently in place. (Putin, The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, 2008).
[5] The Russian Foreign Policy Concept is a system of views on the content, principles, and main areas of interest of the foreign policy activities of Russia (Putin, The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, 2008a).

As demonstrated by Putin's speech above, Putin often makes reference to a common past, shared by all the people who live in former Soviet republics. It takes advantage of the common past Russia shared with the CIS countries, by alluding to a past which reached every household and touched every family, and a present in which all former Soviet republics are united, not only by the anguish and memory, but also by an obligation to future generations. Future generations shall embrace the spirit of historic connection, common aspirations, and common hope. By using emotional, cultural and historical connections in his speech, Putin uses Russia's soft power, which is based on the unification of the Russians, to strengthen Russia's diplomatic influence in the Near Abroad and, consequently, to regain the lost influence in the region.

That being said, it is clear that culture and language play an important role in Russian foreign policy and Russian identity. Nevertheless, the concept of the Russian World includes more aspects than those mentioned by Putin. It also depends on three other aspects, that is, the geography, language, and religion of the Russian World. The geography of the Russian World regards the transcending of geographical barriers and borders of the Russian Federation. It focuses on transcending the geographical barriers and, hence, it could be interpreted as a reference to every Russian citizen scattered around the world, which also includes the integration of the 'Holy Union', that is Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. The role that language plays in the Russian World concept is also very important. Language works as an instrument of union to Russian speakers and, hence, has a strong soft power potential since it attracts all Russian speakers. Finally, it is important to observe the role religion plays within the Russian World, in particular the role of the Orthodox Church. The ideas of the Russian World suffered an enormous boost when the Orthodox Church decided to join in. Kirill, the Patriarch who spoke at the third assembly of Russian World, claimed that spiritual union and common culture are the main criteria for distinguishing good from evil. Such an affirmation, charged with emotional and spiritual beliefs by the head of the Orthodox Church, finalized the formation of the Russian World as an ideology of Russia's soft power towards the former Soviet republics (Maliukevičius, 2013: 88; Feklyunina, 2015: 783; Gigitashvili, 2016).

> Just a few days ago, on June 22, I signed a decree approving a state programme to help **Russians living abroad** voluntarily **resettle** in Russia. It is important that this programme really begin

> functioning without delay. […] Russia needs immigrants, **above all, from the CIS** countries, of course, where people **speak Russian** like their **native language** and share practically the **same culture**. (Putin, 2006c; emphasis added)

Putin's speech reinforces the idea that Russia and the CIS, despite being separated because of the collapse of the Soviet Union, continue to be one. Putin emphasizes Russia's need for immigrants, yet he specifies that they should be, above all, from the CIS countries. By a common past, common culture and common language, Putin uses instruments of union to appeal and attract Russian speakers in the region. This speech highlights the pillars of the Russian World Concept and accentuates the importance played by the Near Abroad within Russian foreign policy. As was said previously in this chapter, the geography of the Russian World is about transcending Russian borders and barriers and, hence, it can be applied to every Russian citizen all over the world.

The Russian World concept drew on a specific interpretation of the common past. On the one hand, it was based on the common origins of the now-separated states, which stresses the perspective that the Russian empire is one cohesive body, one people, downplaying examples of coercion. On the other hand, the Russian world narrative, as proclaimed by Moscow, was not a call to challenge the sovereignty of the post-Soviet states. The third key point focuses on the narrative of the Russian World as a hierarchical relationship between Russia and other members of the community. However, the projected identity was inconsistent, since it relied on the vision of the Russian World as a multinational civilizational identity, with Russia as one of its constituent parts, and a vision of a Russia-centric 'Russian World'. Finally, the fourth key point is that the project of the Russian World legitimized a pattern of state-society relationship, highlighting the differences between the Russian World in relation to the West. The uniqueness of the Russian World implied thus that it could not follow Western political models, but needed to seek its own path (Feklyunina, 2015: 783-785).

Even though the ideas about the Russian World were formulated and shaped into the concept we know during Yeltsin's administration, the real consolidation and implementation of the concept as a soft power tool was only possible during Putin's presidency (Maliukevičius, 2013: 72). Therefore, this transformation of Russian foreign policy was formulated based on a series of ideas about a unique civilization – the Russian

World – and the need to protect compatriots abroad, even if that implied having to resort to the use of force. This created a great tension, not only between Russia and Western countries, but also in practically all post-Soviet states. What may be the rectification of historical injustice and protection of the "Russian world" to some nations is just a large state taking over the territory of a weaker neighbor to others (Zevelev, 2014: l.324-326).

3.3 Russo-Georgian War

The abrupt war between Russia and Georgia in the summer of 2008 provoked an international crisis, triggering various reactions from most Western states, which ranged from strong condemnations of Russia's role in the conflict – such as the USA and Great Britain – to expressions of general concern for the conflict's escalation (Larsen, 2012: 102). The war between Russia and Georgia began in August 2008, with a Georgian offensive on Tskhinvali, the administrative center of the breakaway region of South Ossetia, as well as on Russian troops who crossed into South Ossetia around the time the Georgian operation was starting (Friedman, 2008: 1-2; Welt, 2010: 63). This offensive posture of Georgia led to a Russian counterattack to drive Georgia out of all South Ossetia. This counterattack was made through (1) an ethnic cleansing of around 20,000 Georgians, (2) air, land, and sea attacks much further into Georgia, (3) the loss of a strategic territory in Georgia's second breakaway region, and finally (4) the Russian military occupation of both Tskhinvali and Abkhazia, and unilateral recognition of their independence (Welt, 2010: 64). The Russian invasion of Georgia did not change the balance of power in Eurasia. However, it did reveal that the balance of power had already shifted. While the US was engaged with other wars, such as the Iraq and Afghanistan war, Russia saw an opportunity to reassert its influence in the former Soviet republics without having to concern itself with a possible response from the US or from Europe.

The Russo-Georgian War was driven by two events. On the one hand, it was influenced by the Colored revolutions that started in 2003 and represented a triumph of democracy and Western influence from an European point of view and for the US. On the other hand, it was also driven by the decision from Europe and the US to support Kosovo's separation from Serbia (Markovic, 2008; Feklyunina, 2013: 225)

> But it is not just a matter of the **US administration** being unable to restrain the Georgian leadership from this **criminal action**; the US side had in effect **armed** and **trained** the Georgian army. Why spend many years in difficult negotiations to find **comprehensive compromise solutions** to inter-ethnic conflicts? It is easier to **arm** one of the parties and push it to **kill** the other and have it done with. What an **easy solution,** apparently. In fact, however, that is not always the case. (Putin, 2008b; emphasis added)

In Putin's view, the US administration played a part in what happened in Georgia. According to him, not only were the USA not able to restrain the Georgian leadership from committing a criminal action, as they also armed and trained the Georgian army, instead of trying to achieve a more peaceful solution to inter-ethnic conflicts. By alleging this, Putin is portraying the US as the agressor, which is not only using the conflict but also the Georgian army, to expand their sphere of influence by taking advantage of smaller states. Putin is thus claiming that US foreign policy in the region was never to prevent the conflict, but rather to arm one party and push it to kill the other, enabling the escalation of a conflict in the region. At the end of the excerpt, Putin appears to use sarcasm when speaking about US actions in the region and the easy path they took when dealing with inter-ethnic conflicts. As a result, Putin ends up legitimizing Russia's decision of intervene in Georgia in order to prevent a calamity and restore the stability in the region.

> **One state** and, of course, first and foremost the **US**, has **overstepped** its national borders in every way. This is visible in the **economic**, **political**, **cultural**, and **educational policies** it **imposes** on other nations (Putin, 2007b; emphasis added)

As stated above in Putin's speech, there is "one state" that continues above all to overstep its national borders, namely the US. By saying this, Putin is portraying the US as the main player Russia faces when dealing with the Near Abroad. According to Putin, the US systematically oversteps its national borders, not only economically, but also politically, culturally and educationally. By implying that the US imposes their policies

on other nations, Putin is claiming that the US is subduing the sovereignty of other nations in order to expand their influence.

According to Valentina Feklyunina (2013: 225-226), Russia's rapid response to the Georgian attack on Tskhinvaoli was motivated by a strong opposition to Washington's growing power in the region, representing an attempt to prevent the US from encroaching on Russia's neighborhood and reclaim its sphere of influence. The confrontation between Russia and Georgia ended with Georgia's military and with an advance of the Russian military into Georgia's territory, allowing Russia to maintain its influence in the area. There were various signs that the conflict was approaching, namely the multiple violations of Georgian airspace by Russian warplanes as mentioned above, a gradual increase of Russian troops above their usual peacekeeping levels, Russia's undermining of Georgian unmanned surveillance drones and a Russian military exercise close to the border that resembled Gerogia's invasion from April to July 2008 (Kakachia, 2009: 13). This resulted in a huge setback in relations between the US and Russia; nevertheless, other nations such as Germany and France, maintained a more peaceful approach (Markovic, 2008; Blank, 2009: 440). Regarding France, the active role this nation played as mediator in the conflict gave credibility to the EU as an international actor, demonstrating the EU's willingness and ability to act as a reliable conflict-solver and prevent new escalations in the area. Although France showed a strong engagement in investing diplomatic efforts for the sake of promoting a common EU position in the conflict, the French foreign minister, Bernard Kouchner, refused to take a side in the conflict, making appeals to the need to end hostilities, adopting a pragmatic approach. French concerns about a change in the balance of power between the EU and Russia were predominant during the conflict (Larsen, 2012: 106-107). Concerning Germany, there was a confrontation-averse foreign policy and a lack of strong-worded statements, due to the country's past events in the Second World War. That being said, the historic traumas of the country are relevant in Germany's relationship with Russia. Acording to Henrik Larsen (2012: 111), this explains Germany's abstinence from criticism of Russia which can be traced to one generational factor, namely the fact that the generation presently in power in Germany is mostly grateful for Russian support of German reunification in the 1990s. Focusing now on Russia's relations with Georgia, it is clear that any attempt by Georgia to move closer to the West would not be accepted by Moscow.

> Tbilisi takes very **aggressive steps** against South Ossetia. This is very **sad** and very **concerning**. It will **obsviously** lead to **Russia's actions in return**. It is very sad that the **military actions** have already touched upon **Russian peacemakers**. We cannot leave these events out of our attention (Vladimir Putin cit in. Sudakov, 2008; emphasis added)

As shown by Putin's speech, Russia's intentions to intervene in the region were completely justified. He describes the aggressive steps the Tbilisi (Georgia's capital) was taking towards South Ossetia as sad and concerning. The fact that Russian peacemakers were attacked legitimized Russia's actions in return as a response to defend Russia's national interest, and protect both local and Russian population from the unrecognized republic, as well as the Russian peacemakers who were in the region with a humanitarian purpose. Although Putin characterizes this intervention as necessary and reasonable, due to the events with Russian peacemakers, some scholars considered the occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as illegal. Since 2008, Russia has illegally occupied Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which has given Russia substantial military presence in the South Caucasus, in a continuous borderization process that adds influence in the lands near the occupation line in South Ossetia. Along with this military coercion, Russia also continues to actively deploy information operations, diplomatic and economic pressure and political warfare against Georgia (Foucher & Giuliani, 2008; Shaishmelashvili, 2021).

As a result of this invasion, Russia undermined Georgia's territorial integrity without suffering any lasting political cost in its foreign relations. It violated the cornerstone of European security by completely ignoring the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces (CFE) in Europe, and what might be considered as the constitutional foundation of the contemporary world, altering the boundaries of a sovereign European state. Finally, Moscow used this war to chip away at the foundations of the European and international political order (Blank, 2009: 426). The Russo-Georgian War represented a clash of powers in Eurasia, with several regionalisms coming up against each other (Sakwa, 2012: 607). Taking into account what was said above, the objectives of the Russian invasion in Georgia included Georgia's renunciation of its ambition to join NATO, sending a strong message to other former Soviet republics that an intention of joining NATO might end up in war or dismemberment. It also enabled the establishment

of a protracted military presence in the South Caucasus; revealed Russia's discontent with NATO expansion to the former Soviet republics; led to the recognition of Abkhazia's and South Ossetia's sovereignty as a means to legalize Russia's permanent military presence in Georgia; and, finally, allowed for the monopolization of the Caspian sea's energy supplies (Kakachia, 2009: 14).

Although Russia's actions in the region are seen by many as a hard power intervention, there are some avenues that enable Russia's use of soft power in Georgia, namely the use of religious diplomacy. The integrity of the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) was supported by the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) in a way that would allow Russia to retain influence, but also expect support when it came to tricky policy controversies; the use of Russo-Georgian advocates, which could serve as channels of communication between Russia and Georgia such as the Caucasian Dialogue program; and Pro-Eurasian Advocates, who advocate for Georgia's full integration in Eurasian projects (Makarychev A. , 2016). Although Russia has soft power potential in Georgia, this event was clearly a hard power intervention. Russian soft power in the region was mainly a security tool for Russia, used for strategic purposes concordant with the Kremlin's post-Soviet regional agenda. In other words, to de-legitimize the role of Western institutions in the region and persuade neighbors to acknowledge Russia as a protective nation. Instead of winning hearts and minds, Russian soft power managed to take advantage of the Euro-skeptic attitudes and, thus, Russian soft power in Georgia was used to control rather than attract.

Conclusion

The purpose of this master's dissertation was to answer to the question of whether it is possible to observe under Putin's administration between 2000 and 2008, a change in the type of power used in Russian foreign policy and if it is possible to finds marks of change in Russian power, what is the aim behind that change. Drawing on a qualitative methodology and a constructivist approach of analyses of Putin discourses, it can be concluded that although there are marks of soft power within Putin's foreign policy, Russian power continues to be mainly based on hard power. By analysing Putin's discourses regarding the Colored Revolutions, the Russian World Concept and the Russo-Georgian war, this thesis has shown that even though it is possible to finds marks of soft power within Russian foreign policy, it is usually a negative type of soft power used towards the former Soviet republics to coerce and control.

As mentioned in the beginning of this dissertation, the field of IR is constantly changing and adapting to the context of the international system. Nevertheless, Liberalism and Realism continue to dominate the mainstream of global politics. These two theories vary in several aspects, such as the question of human nature, the central problem of IR, key actors, actor motives, interests, nature of IR and nature of conflict. Taking this into account, Liberalism and later Neoliberalism became the main choice for Western nations. This variant of Liberalism brought new concepts that improved the liberal theory, such as the concept of soft power. The concept became a topic of discussion within IR, specially within foreign policy analysis and over the years, both democratic and non-democratic states started to include it in their speeches as a tool for their foreign policy. Foreign policy is used as an instrument for sovereign states to pursue and achieve their national interests. In other words, foreign policy is formulated to safeguard and promote a country's national interests and it is interrelated with domestic policy, meaning that they depend on each other.

There are several tools state's use to achieve its foreign policy goals. However, public diplomacy and soft power are the ones to be focused on because of their complementarity. Both tools use a power based on attraction and persuasion and are used by State's to expand their influence within foreign governments, presenting themselves as a great alternative to violent means. The soft power of a country relies on three pillars namely culture, political ideals, and policies, yet it only works if these three pillars are

seen as legitimate in the eyes of others. Nevertheless, the notion of soft power began to acquire a different meaning and different interpretation over the years and what started as a liberal concept, used within democratic governments, rapidly became something else. Every state that aims to strengthen its position and image in the international system must take soft power into account. Firstly, it helps legitimizing a nation or a leader through the mass media, the general public and political elites; secondly, it enables leaders or nations to obtain information more easily on other partner nations' aspirations and capabilities and finally, it helps a country building transnational networks. Soft power regained its importance within the international system and nations began to realize once again its benefits. However, scholars noticed a negative type of soft power primarily used to control and coerce, mainly found in non-democratic countries such as China and Russia. Russia's soft power goes way back to the Soviet Union period, being connected to an extensive network of propaganda agencies advancing what now would be called USSR soft power.

During the Soviet Union period, it was possible to observe different phases of Soviet foreign policy over the years, more specifically seven distinct phases in which it was possible to note that the Soviet Union was not only bases on oppression, but rather on a system that would both use co-optive power and suppression. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Boris Yeltsin took over the presidency of the New Russian Federation, and Russia began to head to a more Western capitalist model of development, that would allow Russia to assert a different national interest and would guarantee the rights and freedoms of all Russian citizens. This new direction in Russia's foreign policy was a complete failure and it emerged Russia in deeper void regarding Russia's national interests and Russia's identity. The Near Abroad was forgotten and Russia's influence in the region undermined. After this, Putin rises to power in 1999, hoping to fulfil the ideological and national vacuum left by the Yeltsin and Kozyrev's administration and the concept of soft power begins to enter Russian foreign policy discourses.

In order to achieve this and define Russia's national interest and identity, Putin directed Russian foreign policy along four vectors, namely Russia as a truly sovereign democracy, multipolarity as key to international stability, Eurasia and Eurasianism and Russia's relations with the Near Abroad. Regarding the politics of sovereign democracy, the notion became a key international norm and played a major role in Russian foreign politics, being connected with Putin's recentralizing project domestically and the

reassertion of Russia's lost position as a great power in the international system. Regarding multipolarity as key to international stability, Russia became a strong proponent of a multipolar world and thus Russian foreign policy was directed in creating a system in which large states are the primary guardians of the global order, free to pursuit their national interests, respecting one another's primacy within the circumscribed sphere of influence and hence maintaining a general balance of power among themselves. The emergence of a multipolar world enables Russia to promote an international system based on constrains, using military force as status-quo to balance what is considered to be Western expansionism and using economic statecraft to promote multipolarity aiming to construct a Greater Eurasia. Focusing on the third pillar of Russian foreign policy – Eurasia – the term has undergone a profound transforation being now used as a catchall vision of Russia. The official concept appeared under the entry of the multipolar world that regards Russia as an emerging power and hence as an independent pole of power and influence within the international system. In the recent years it was become more vulnerable to challenges posed by minor players such as Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova among others, resulting in an overtly aggressive foreign and defence policies of Moscow towards those same neighbors. Regarding Eurasianism it advocates Russia's revival as an empire and it relies on its own interpretation of Eurasia to justify its imperial ambitions. Focusing now on the last pillar of Russian foreign policy, the relation with the Near Abroad, Putin took a more stronger and decisive hand in the region. The Near Abroad became Russia's primary area in which it is acting as a regional and global power, soughting vigorously to carve out 'imperial' spheres of influence. That being said, Putin's strategy relies, in part, in the rethoric of integration and internationalization. This rethoric was also applied to the pursue of a strategy of power concentration at home and in the 'Near Abroad', attempting to reestablish Russia's greatness, assure state 'real sovereignty' and hence increase the great power autonomy in relations with the most powerfull and significant players of the international community. Russia's official discourse frequently referes to 'vital national interests' as being of extremly importance to guarantee the state's survival. However, Russia definition of these vital interests go beyond the protection of its own territorial integrity and welfare, strecting into the neighbouring area of the Near Abroad. Russian policies towards the former Soviet republics aimed at limiting sovereignty for, and reintegration of, the former Soviet republics in the russian sphere of influence and hence have been desinged to guarantee

Russia's domination and hegemony over them, whether by cooperative or coercive means. Within these four new pillars, it was possible to find marks of soft power within Putin's speeches. Nonetheless it was also possible to find marks of hard power.

When analyzing the first case study of this thesis, namely the Colored Revolutions, it was possible to observe that both marks of hard and soft power were present in Russian foreign policy towards the former Soviet repulics. Russia's response to the Colored Revolutions, were mainly based on hard power both in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. Nevertheless, soft power was also present, namely when it came to promote Russia's own vision of democrac, the set-up of public relations and public diplomacy and media strategies in order to attract the former Soviet regions and increase its influence in the near abroad. In other words, Putin's perception of the Colored Revolutions was mainly accompained by hard power, yet in his speeches, Putin continuosly uses soft power in order to legitimize Russia's actions in the region, portraying Russia as country which ultimately wants to protect and support compratiots abroad and the US as the enemy. The second case study, that is the concept of the Russian World, is clearly a soft power source for Russia in the Near Abroad. Nevertheless, it is a negative type of soft power. The concept is based on the idea of a unique civilization and the need to protect compatriots abroad, even if having to resort to the use of force. This concept is used to legitimize Russia's actions in the Near Abroad, taking advatange of a common past shared by Russia and the former Soviet repuvlics. The concept is used as part of Russia's soft power and it is used to strengthen Russia's diplomatic influence in the Near Abroad aiming to regain the influence that was lost during the Yeltsin presidency. In other words, what for one might be the retification of historical injustice, for others it might be perceived as a major nation taking over the territory of a weaker neighbour. Finally, when analyzing the last case study, is it possible to classify it as a hard power intervention. Although Putin tries to use soft power within his political discourses to justify the military intervention in Georgia, it is a negative type of soft power. Russia undermined Georgia's territorial integrity and made use of its military capacity to do it. Nonetheless, it tried to justify its military intervention by alleging that it was not a question of taking over Georgia, but rather maintain the stability of the region and protect both the local and Russian population that were there.

Taking into account what was said previously, it is not possible to observe an actual change in the type of power used in Russian foreign policy of Putin between 2000

and 2008. The fact that soft power was introduced and used within Russian foreign policy did not mean a change in the type of power used by Putin to achieve its goals. Russia has a strong soft power potential, specially in the former Soviet space, nevertheless the Russian use of soft power was not intended to attract and persuade, rather it was intended to coerce and oppress, thus becoming a negative type of soft power. In this case, both hard and soft power have been used as a weapon in order to control Western expansion in the Near Abroad and consequently try to regain the influence that was lost throughtout the years in the region. Russian soft power is thus being used as a weapon in order to regain its influence at the geopolitical level and strengthening its presence at the international level. Almost three decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia appears to continue to search for its place within the international community, in an attempt to regain its lost influence, both in the international system and in the Near Abroad and hence go back to its former great power status that is often mentioned by Russian officials.

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