

Russia's Soft Power & Identity Entrepreneurship

*in the 'Shared Neighborhood':
The Case of Moldova*

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Abstract

Russia has recently demonstrated a greater awareness of its 'soft power' capacities, on both a discursive and a practical level. Thus, this article will first look at how a 'soft power' discourse fits into Russia's realist paradigm, which provides a matrix for interpreting the international environment and offers guidelines for how to achieve its national objectives. Secondly, it will explore the development of Russia's 'soft power' resources and the general framework of their deployment in the context of identity entrepreneurship in the 'shared neighborhood'. The final section of the article will focus on Russia's 'soft power' usage in Moldova, which has recently been striving to get closer to the European Union. This paper will reveal how Russia employs cultural influence and human resources to deepen identity division in Moldova and to stonewall the country's European integration.

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‘Soft Power’ Reinvigorated

Just a few years ago the concept of ‘soft power’ was almost absent from Russian foreign policy discourse. The surrounding debate was largely confined to academic circles, though also involving experts working with the presidential administration who were pushing for a greater focus on Russia’s international image in the aftermath of the color revolutions, and on its use of cultural resources in the post-Soviet region. As a consequence, the Kremlin has slowly started to build structures to sustain and operationalize its ‘soft power’ tools. Despite investments made in relevant institutions, ‘soft power’ as such has not become the Kremlin’s priority. Recently, however, ‘soft power’ has emerged as one of the main themes in major foreign policy speeches, reflecting a growing understanding of the limits of ‘hard power’ and the need to develop more sophisticated instruments to advance the country’s interests in the international system. The deployment of ‘soft power’ has moved beyond the discursive level. Russian authorities have renewed their efforts to multiply institutional ‘soft power’ capacities and have tested several of them in the post-Soviet region.

According to Russian officials, efforts to consolidate and systemically employ ‘soft power’ resources are still in the early stages.¹ Nevertheless,

¹ Konstantin Kosachev, “Russia’s Reputation Abroad is

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reinvigorated ambitions to boost its ‘soft power’ demand detailed analysis, in particular with regard to the implications for post-Soviet states as the primary targets of these new instruments in Russia’s foreign policy toolbox. Thus, the article will first look at how a ‘soft power’ discourse fits into Russia’s realist paradigm, which provides a matrix for interpreting the international environment and offers guidelines for how to achieve its national objectives. Secondly, it will explore the development of Russia’s ‘soft power’ resources and the general framework of their deployment in the context of identity entrepreneurship in the ‘shared neighborhood’. The final section of the article will focus on Russia’s ‘soft power’ usage in Moldova, which has recently been striving to get closer to an alternative regional structure in Russia’s vicinity, namely the European Union.

‘Realism with a Human Face’

Traditionally, Russian foreign policy has been viewed through realist or neo-realist lenses.² But despite a deep-

Clearly Worse Than Warranted”, *Kommersant*, 9 April 2012, <http://www.ruskiymir.ru/ruskiymir/en/publications/interview/interview0080.html>

² Andrey Makarychev, *Russia, EU and International Society. Conceptual Models and Policy Strategies*, Lambert Academic

ly engrained realist outlook, Russia has adopted recently a “multidimensional view of power”.³ For instance, Russia’s classic realist perspective has been diluted by a distinction between hard and soft power resources, but also between hard and soft power behavior. In an article, former minister of foreign affairs Igor Ivanov, following the ‘smart power’ narratives,⁴ has advocated for a ‘smart economy’ and ‘smart foreign policy’ as prerequisites to accomplishing Russia’s international ambitions.⁵ The ‘soft power’ theme was picked up by Vladimir Putin during his presidential campaign in 2012. In his long electoral manifesto on Russia’s foreign policy, he made reference to the application of ‘soft power’ by state actors and called for the use of Russia’s cultural heritage to facilitate the promotion of national interests.⁶ Similarly, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev made a link between the state’s influence in the international arena and its ability to export its cultural values and language.⁷ Thus, both leaders sub-

Publishing, Saarbrücken, 2011, pp.14-15.

³ Olga Oliker, Keith, Crane, Lowell, Schwartz, Catherine, Yusupov, *Russian Foreign Policy: Sources and Implications*, Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, 2009, p.88.

⁴ Joseph Nye, *The Future of Power, Public Affairs*, New York, 2011, pp.207-234.

⁵ Igor Ivanov, I., „What Diplomacy Does Russia Need in the 21st Century?“, *Russia in Global Affairs*, 4/2011.

⁶ Vladimir Putin, „Rossya i Menaushisya Mir [Russia and the Changing World], *Moskovskie Novosti*, 27 February 2012, <http://mn.ru/politics/20120227/312306749.html>

⁷ Dmitry Medvedev, *Speech at Meeting with Representatives of Rossotrudnichestvo Abroad, Moscow*, 4 September 2012, <http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/ru/publications/articles/article0940.html>

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scribe to a utilitarian meaning of ‘soft power’ which implies tight management of ‘soft power’ resources by the state in the promotion of its foreign policy agenda. At an annual meeting with Russian ambassadors, President Putin explicitly called for combining traditional methods of diplomacy with ‘soft power’ technologies.⁸ At the same time, Prime Minister Medvedev declared that ‘Rossotrudnichestvo [Federal Agency for the CIS, compatriots living abroad and international humanitarian cooperation] shall become one of the key instruments of so-called soft power’.⁹

This renewed focus on ‘soft power’ does not mean that the Kremlin is paying less attention to ‘hard power’ resources. Russia’s military reform, launched in late 2008, and its attempts to maintain an arms acquisition program at pre-crisis levels despite lingering prospects of an economic slowdown, offer vivid proof of the Kremlin’s concern with shape and combat readiness of military forces. Thus, Russia’s current interest in non-material factors of national strength does not represent a departure from its realist philosophy. It

⁸ Vladimir Putin, *Speech at Annual Meeting with Russian Ambassadors, Moscow*, 9 July 2012, <http://www.kremlin.ru/transcripts/15902>

⁹ Medvedev, *op.cit*

has to be seen, rather, as an attempt to foster ‘realism with a human face’, which envisions equilibrium and a greater synergy between hard and soft power resources.

Attempts to give ‘old realism’ a face-lift are easily discernible in Russia’s policy in the ‘shared neighborhood’ with the EU. The Russian leadership is increasingly looking for ways to render a socially acceptable projection of its power in the neighborhood. Regional integration, which should deliver immediate benefits and speak directly to the people, is seen as one way to promote Russia’s ‘soft power’ behavior under an ‘integration without incorporation’ formula.¹⁰ The imitation of neo-functionalism and institutionalism in the post-Soviet area is part of this agenda, confirming Russia’s intentions to upgrade its traditional realist approach. By internalizing the EU’s integration lexicon and even its bureaucratic design (e.g. the Eurasian Commission) into its regional multilateralism, Russia seeks to legitimize its claims to the post-Soviet region, as well as to streamline its ‘soft power’. By portraying integration initiatives as ‘win-win’ situations for all participants, Moscow seeks to distance itself rhetorically from the ‘zero-sum logic’ of which it has often been accused. Officials are keen to underscore publicly the voluntary and mutually beneficial char-

10 Konstantin Koshachev, “Ne Rybu, a Udochiku” [Fishing Rode, not Fish], *Russia in Global Affairs*, No. 4, July/August 2012, <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/Ne-rybu-a-udochku-15642>

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acter of integration. It is worth mentioning that integration on the Russian agenda has caused scuffles with partners over regulations, standards and tariffs, which sound familiar in the EU political realm, but represent new challenges for Russian economic diplomacy and bureaucracy.

Last but not least, ‘Russia’s incorporation of the normative arguments in its foreign policy arsenal does not mean the ultimate refusal of more traditional geopolitical approaches.’¹¹ Thus, Russia’s drive for ‘soft power’ is not a deviation from *realpolitik*, but rather an effort to attune it to new realities, in particular intense normative competition. Russia increasingly perceives global dynamics through values-system competition,¹² in particular in the ‘shared neighborhood’. ‘Attempts to revise perspectives on Russia’s history, its role and place in world history’¹³ are perceived as a threat to national security, because they target some of the normative

11 Andrey Makarychev, *op.cit.*, p.25.

12 *The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*, 12 July 2008, <http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/docs/2008/07/204750.shtml>

13 *Russia’s National Security Strategy to 2020*, 12 May 2009, <http://rustrans.wikidot.com/russia-s-national-security-strategy-to-2020>

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narratives Russia is promoting in the post-Soviet space. This perception in turn triggers pro-active defense of historical events regarded as constitutive of Russia's great power status. Russia's integration initiatives should also be interpreted in competitive terms. Russia senses the influence of the EU's 'soft power' fading away, thus providing a window of opportunity to lay down initiatives and push them through. The speed with which Russia promoted the transformation of the Customs Union (CU) into a Common Economic Space while setting a target to reach the Eurasian Union by 2015 speaks volumes. Active engagement in a 'soft power' competition with regional players and regional building is rooted in Russia's self-perception as a great power. Thus, Russia aspires to preserve its strong position in the 'shared neighborhood' to uphold its self-esteem and its great power status.

Soft Power Resources and Identity Entrepreneurship

Despite the fact that Russia's cultural clout in the "shared neighborhood" has been overshadowed by other regional actors, the Kremlin still holds

several strong cards and has recently invested substantial resources to boost its 'soft power'. Russia and its politicians perform well in opinion polls in several states in the 'shared neighborhood', sometimes even outperforming local leaders. In Ukraine, for instance, in one opinion poll almost 45% declared themselves as sympathetic towards Vladimir Putin.¹⁴ At the same time, only 10% of citizens fully support the Ukrainian president.¹⁵ In Moldova, Putin enjoys a 76% approval rating, far above Western leaders like Barack Obama (34%) or Angela Merkel (31%).¹⁶ On a public level in the post-Soviet region Putin is often viewed as a politician who gets things done without too

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much talk or futile debates, unlike local politicians. In addition, important segments of these societies (between 40% and 90%) see Russia as an ally (Armenia), a strategic partner (Moldova) or an attractive economic integrator via the Customs Union or the

14 Mikhail Ryabov, *Na Ukraine Upala Populyarnosti Putina i Medvedeva, a Takzhe Chislo Tekh Kto Schitaet Ee Bratskoi Stranoi*, „Noviy Rezhion”, 15 February 2011, <http://www.nr2.ru/kiev/320606.html>

15 Public opinion polls – Do You Support Activity of Viktor Yanukovich?, “Razumkov Center”, 2011, http://www.razumkov.org.ua/eng/poll.php?poll_id=90

16 Barometrul Opiniei Publice-Moldova, “Institutul de Politici Publice”, Aprilie-Mai 2012, http://www.ipp.md/public/files/Barometru/Brosura_BOP_05.2012.pdf

so-called Eurasian Union (Belarus).¹⁷ Even in Georgia after the 2008 war, the overwhelming majority of citizens who regarded Russia as a threat to national security supported dialogue with Russia and the normalization of relations.¹⁸

Russia's high scores in the neighborhood rest on Russian language and pop culture, religion, mass media, the Russian-speaking population, scholarships for students, nostalgia for Soviet-era social welfare among the older population, immigrants who work in Russia, and socialization via Russian social networks, like *V Kontakte* – 'In Contact' or *Odnoklassniki* – 'Classmates'. Looking to increase its penetration into the neighborhood states, the Mail.Ru Group has unveiled plans to launch local platforms of *Odnoklassniki* in Armenian, Georgian, Romanian and Uzbek languages by the end of 2012. To amplify their advantages and convert cultural potential in the neighborhood into political or economic dividends, the Kremlin has relied on renewed partnerships with existent institutions (the Russian Orthodox Church), and developed new institu-

tions (e.g. Rossotrudnichestvo – Federal Agency for the CIS, compatriots living abroad and international humanitarian cooperation; Department of Socio-Economic Cooperation with CIS Countries, Abkhazia and South Ossetia within the presidential administration; Special Presidential Representative for Cooperation with Compatriots Organizations Abroad, Special Presidential Representatives for Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria) as well as state sponsored NGOs and movements (*Russkiy Mir* – 'Russian World' and its centers; Gorchiakov's Public Diplomacy Support Fund; 'Fatherland-Eurasian Union'). Until recently, the Kremlin was mulling over plans for a Russian Aid Agency modeled after USAID. In order to increase its visibility as an international donor, Russia seeks to channel aid via bilateral programs to increase its impact and exposure in recipient countries. However, instead of establishing a new structure, the Kremlin opted to develop an additional branch within Rossotrudnichestvo to attain the objectives with which the hypothetical 'RUSAID' would have been entrusted.

Besides organizing work with compatriots and promoting Russian culture, this institutional infrastructure has been put to use in promoting Russian-friendly historical narratives, diminishing social support for the EU, propagating the idea of a Eurasian Union and forestalling some reforms by invoking incom-

17 Armenia National Study, "International Republican Institute", January 2008, <http://www.asa.am/downloads/IRI/2008%20Janury%20Armenia-poll.pdf>; Barometrul Opiniei Publice-Moldova, "Institutul de Politici Publice", Noiembrie 2011, http://www.ipp.md/public/files/Barometru/2011/BOP_11.2011-nou.pdf; Results of the Nation Opinion Poll-Belarus, "Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies", 2-12 June 2012, <http://www.iiseps.org/edata1.html>

18 Georgian National Study, International Republican Institute, October/November 2011, <http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2012%20January%205%20Survey%20of%20Georgian%20Public%20Opinion%2C%20October%2027-November%2011%2C%202011.pdf>

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patibility with religious and moral values. All of these are part of identity entrepreneurship on the part of Russia. As societies in the neighborhood remain divided about how to interpret the past and what their domestic and foreign policy priorities should be, Russia is deploying its ‘soft power’ to feed a “mixed-identity ‘swamp’, [where] populations lack clear identity markers or the confidence of a stable traditional cognitive environment.”¹⁹ In turn, identity ambiguities in neighborhood states have wide ramifications for economics, politics and neighbors’ foreign orientation. This facilitates Russia’s pre- and post-electoral entrepreneurship (putting pressure on or supporting local politicians via Russian mass-media), provides an environment for non-transparent economic deals, and feeds into ‘multi-vector’ foreign policies, which keep states in limbo rather than placing them under regimes and structures with certain norms of behavior and security guarantees.

Russia’s ‘soft power’ seduces not only the general public, but inspires

¹⁹ Andrew Wilson, *Virtual Politics. Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World*, Yale University Press, New Haven/London, 2005, p.42-43.

elites as well. Russia provides a model of “authoritarian capacity building”,²⁰ which ensures the resilience of political regimes against bottom up democratization efforts.²¹ In some cases, it also offers examples of foreign policy behavior. For instance, the pronounced authoritarian trends in Ukraine after the presidential elections in 2010 were described as a “Putinization” of the political system. The decision to install video-cameras in polling stations in the run up to parliamentary elections in Ukraine in

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2012 resembles the approach adopted by Russian authorities in an effort to fake transparency before presidential elections.²² Ukraine’s attempts to get away with a democratic backslide and at the same time get what it wants from the EU are regarded as an imitation of the Russian approach²³; “the

²⁰ Jessica Allina-Pisano, “Social Contracts and Authoritarian Projects in Post-Soviet Space: the Use of Administrative Resource”, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 43:4, 2010, pp.373-382.

²¹ Author’s interview with former high-ranking EU diplomat, Brussels, March 2012.

²² Aleksandr Sviridenko, Artem, Skoropadski, „Vybory Provedut na Glazah u Vseh [Elections will be Organized Openly]”, *Kommersant-Ukraina*, 3 July 2012, <http://www.kommersant.ua/doc/1972383>

²³ Andrew Wilson, „Ukraine after the Tymoshenko Verdict”, *ECFR Policy Memo*, 2011, <http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/UkraineMemo.pdf>

tactic which precludes Ukraine from moving closer to the EU and advancing its interests inside the EU.”²⁴

How does it work in Moldova?

In Moldova, the ‘soft power’ developed by Russia has impacted elites as well as the general public. The outgoing leader Vladimir Voronin tried in 2009 to reproduce an authoritarian scheme of power (non-) transfer. By moving into the position of Speaker of the Parliament and naming the successor to the presidential seat, Voronin tried to emulate a Putin-style power transition rather than follow the example set by Central Asian dictators of eliminating limits for presidential terms (e.g. Kazakhstan). Thus, he aimed to respect constitutional provisions formally in order to remain in the political sphere and consolidate his position in the power pyramid. As this soft authoritarianism scenario failed and Moldova formed a European-oriented coalition government instead, Russia actively employed ‘soft power’ instruments to shape the information space and public opinion. In the aftermath of post-election violence, Russia revived the rhetoric of the Romanian threat to Moldovan statehood. Later the Russian foundation ‘Recognition’ switched focus from Ukraine to Moldova. It organized a series of public debates questioning the feasibility of Moldova’s European choice, criticizing the deployment of U.S. mis-

sile shield elements in Romania and attacking those who tried to ‘falsify history’, the term often applied to interpretations of history which diverge from the Russian version.

In 2011 Russia supported Communist Party candidate Igor Dodon for the position of mayor of Moldova’s capital. Russian TV ‘Channel One’ (51% of shares owned by government) aired critical reports about the mayor of Chisinau, and after the first round of voting, the Russian government gave a critical assessment of the local elections in Moldova, in particular in the capital city where the Communist candidate ultimately suffered defeat.²⁵ However, the Kremlin was more successful in ousting Transnistrian leader Igor Smirnov after 20 years of uninterrupted rule in the separatist region. Besides applying political and economic levers, Russia extensively exploited its predominance in Transnistrian information space to undermine Igor Smirnov in the popular standings. Russian TV-channel NTV aired reports about Smirnov’s family shadow businesses and illegal enrichment, which in the end had electoral effects. Elections in Transnistria also exposed the limits of ‘soft power’ tools. Despite a strong information campaign, Kremlin-friendly candidate Anatol Kaminski lost in the second round to independent contender Evgheni Shevchuk.

25 Comment regarding Preliminary Results of Local Elections in Moldova Held on 5th June, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 8 June 2011, http://www.chile.mid.ru/rus/mre/r11_566.html

24 Author’s interview with EU official, Brussels, March 2012.

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Russian officials have selectively adopted a ‘soft power’ discourse in relation to Moldova. For instance, former representative of Russia in the bilateral inter-governmental economic commission Andrei Fursenko declared that “Russia never regarded Moldova as a wine republic only. You had in the past a strong school of physicians and mathematicians”.²⁶ To provide a new impetus for cooperation in the humanitarian sphere, he promised to increase the number of scholarships for Moldovan students in Russian universities from 160 (2009) to 500. In 2009 Russia opened the Center of Science and Culture in Chisinau, while ‘Russian World’ launched its regional center in Transnistria. In just three years the Russian Cultural Center substantially increased its visibility not only in Chisinau, but across the country. It has organized concerts, film screenings, lectures and book distributions (the ‘shiny bus’ project), and history debates across Moldova’s regions,

26 Fursenko – Russia Will Provide Moldova in 2010 at least 500 Scholarships for Students and PhDs, *Novosti-Moldova*, 5 February 2010, <http://www.allmoldova.com/ro/moldova-news/1249047255.html>

particularly in those which are home to Russian-speaking minorities. Notably, many of the Center’s initiatives target young audiences, confirming the future-oriented character of Russia’s ‘soft power’ behavior in Moldova. The importance Russia attached to its ‘soft power’ in Moldova was confirmed by Konstantin Kosachev, the head of Rosstrudnichestvo, who visited Chisianu shortly after he assumed the office to discuss the intensification of humanitarian cooperation with Moldova.

Russia’s ‘soft power’ instruments were put to work in Moldova in order to blur national identity formation, to influence foreign policy priorities and to hinder European integration. Russian-sponsored NGOs, even if unable to organize mass public events, are usually very vocal in the public space. They protest against pro-unionist demonstrations, show support for Russian military intervention in Georgia (2008), demand the renaming of streets (by reintroducing old names), distribute Russian symbols (e.g. St. George ribbons) and organize celebrations of Russian national holidays (e.g. Unity Day on November 4th). These actions are often perceived as provocative or insulting by the population, fueling an atmosphere that divides rather than unites society. Occasionally, Russian top officials get involved in identity entrepreneurship. For instance, during a meeting with the Moldovan Prime Minister, the Rus-

Russian Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Grigori Karasin qualified Moldova's parliament decision to ban the use of communist symbols for political purposes as 'sacrilegious if not mocking'.

sian President described the 1812 Peace of Bucharest, under the terms of which most of present-day Moldova (known at that time as Bessarabia) was annexed by the Russian Empire, as 'the first foundations for Moldovan statehood'.²⁷ Similar, Russian Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Grigori Karasin qualified Moldova's parliament decision to ban the use of communist symbols for political purposes as 'sacrilegious if not mocking'.²⁸ Both declarations serve to support certain versions of the identity discourse, feeding normative competition in Moldova.

The launch of the Eurasian Union initiative in Moscow had immediate spill over effects in Moldova. The Russian Center of Science and Culture in Chisinau organized a debate on the benefits Moldova could obtain by joining the CU. Russia tried to differentiate the immediate advantages of joining the CU from the promised and uncertain long-term benefits of

European integration. The Russian ambassador to Chisinau hinted that by joining the CU Moldova could get up to a 30% discount for oil and gas, as export duties are not applied to Russian energy resources exported within the CU. He also pointed out that Moldovan migrant workers would benefit from better conditions if Moldova joined the CU.²⁹

Russia supported the creation of the Eurasia-Inform Center, which aims to provide information about Moldova's integration into the Eurasian Union. The Center, with the support of Rossotrudnichestvo and the Center of Social-Conservative Politics affiliated with the 'United Russia' Party, organized a conference on Moldova's prospects in the Eurasian Union. To provide further support for the Eurasian Union theme, the Eurasia News Agency started to operate in Moldova in July 2012. At the same time, under the banner 'Fatherland-Eurasian Union' Russian MPs from the 'United Russia' Party launched an initiative to unite all pro-Russian organizations in Moldova and streamline their activities, a process not confined to Moldova.³⁰ Often CU-sympathizers in Moldova draw links between the CU, along with the creation of new jobs, investments and resolution of the Transnistria conflict, to Moldova's integration into Europe.³¹ This

27 Meeting with Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova Vladimir Filat, Sochi, 12 September 2012, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/4404>

28 Grigori Karasin, Interview, "Kommersant.Md", 30 July 2012, <http://kommersant.md/node/9350>

29 Russia Proposes Moldova Discount Prices for Gas, Noi.Md, 7 February 2012, http://www.noi.md/md/news_id/9915

30 *Izvestia*, *op.cit.*

31 *Moldova Voidiot v Sostav Edinoy Evropy, Buduchi Chiasitiu*

fits perfectly into Russia's vision of a Wider Europe from Lisbon to Vladivostok and the solution provided by the Kremlin to post-Soviet states, encapsulated by the formula 'together with Russia in Europe'.

Last but not least, in addition to besides being involved in electoral entrepreneurship in Moldova, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) has been used to obstruct Moldova's European integration. Given the public trust enjoyed by the Church in Moldova (81% according to opinion polls³²) the political use of the ROC's influence is not accidental. In an unprecedented move, the ROC publicly opposed the drafting of an equal opportunities law and later condemned its adoption, denouncing 'sexual orientation' formulation.³³ As the law was part of a road map for a visa-free regime with the European Union, the ROC, working closely with the Kremlin, hindered Moldova's European agenda by publicly supporting constituencies that were effectively militating against the law. The ROC's message was that prosperity should not be traded for moral and spiritual

decadence,³⁴ allegedly promoted by the EU in Moldova.

Conclusions

Russia has come a long way in the development and consolidation of its 'soft power' capacities. It has also strived to combine 'hard power' and 'soft power' resources in foreign policy activities. However, Russia is far from coming up with a viable formula for the complementary use of these two types of instruments. Too often, 'soft power' rhetoric aimed to cover up use of 'hard power' levers was undermined by resuscitation of traditional geopolitical discourse. This was seen in the 'humanitarian intervention' rhetoric which accompanied the Russian military campaign in Georgia (2008) and President's Medvedev later declarations in tune with *realpolitik* in 2011 concerning the utility of armed intervention in 2008 to prevent NATO's expansion to the East. Alternatively, 'soft power' resources are instrumental in spoiling tactics, which fuel suspicion towards Russia, as opposed to improving its image in the 'shared neighborhood'. For instance in Moldova, the Kremlin's spoiling tactics hardened rather than weakened central authorities' stance on European integration and compelled them to pursue closer relations with EU and its member states. Traditional realist thinking shapes

Tamozhenogo Soiyyza, i Mozhet Stati Liderom Etogo Protsessa, „Moldnews”, 12 September 2012, <http://www.moldnews.md/rus/news/51585>

32 Institutul de Politici Publice (IPP), Barometrul Opiniei Publice Republica of Moldova – Aprilie/Mai 2012, Chisinau, April-May 2012, http://www.ipp.md/public/files/Barometru/Brosura_BOP_05.2012.pdf

33 Declaration of Russian Orthodox Church on adoption of „Law on Equality of Chances” in Republic of Moldova, ROC, 7 June 2012, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/md/db/text/2270821.html>

34 Moscow Patriarchate Calls on Moldova not to Pass Law Recognizing Homosexuality as Normal, Interfax-Religion, 14 March 2012, <http://www.interfax-religion.com/?act=news&div=9150>

Russia's conception of 'soft power', which often differs from that of the West. The state's primacy in the development and management of 'soft power' resources confirms particularly utilitarian approach. Ultimately, Russia locates its problems in the packaging, rather than in the content, of its policies. As long as Russia sticks to this interpretation, the dividends from investments in 'soft power' resources in the 'shared neighborhood' will be below the Kremlin's expectations.