

## THE UK'S SOFT POWER AS A GEOPOLITICAL TOOL

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**Abstract.** In the world with great power countries who are focused in achieving military advantages to gain world influence, it is important to study countries that use soft power to attract other countries and gain their influence. And one of these countries with strong cultural and economic power, is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. UK has many soft power assets worldwide, as the widespread English language, BBC World Service, the British Council, and institutions of higher education and Commonwealth of Nations. Overall, it is evident that modern UK is no match to a former UK, which had global hegemony, in terms of hard and soft power. But, nowadays, it only remained its soft power influence, which is still a great achievement of UK's foreign policy, because it can be converted to a real actions and policies that are beneficial for the post-brexit UK. And this soft power capacity is already being converted to a real action, which can be observed in a new international initiative of the UK "Global Britain" that is aimed at increasing the influence of UK and its role in geopolitics. Therefore, because of the new stage of a cold war between U.S.A. and Russia – UK needs to re-establish its once power position in International Relations.

**Key words:** Soft Power, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, geopolitics.

### Basic provisions

In the twenty first century, United Kingdom (UK) is seen as a former global power, which had a massive military, economic and cultural influence all over the world. UK often portrayed by political experts and even usual citizens worldwide, as a "client state" of USA. According to the book "Guide to International Relations and Diplomacy" by Michael Graham Fry, "A client state is a state that is economically, politically, or militarily subordinate to another more powerful state in international affairs" (2004). These characteristics visible in UK-US relations, therefore, they believe that UK has no real impact to global politics nowadays. And moreover, it is fair to claim such statements, because of practical examples. One of which, can be observed in the invasion of Iraq in 2003 by the US.

### Introduction

UK was the first to enter the military coalition and actively participated in a ground skirmishes, despite the fact that this military invasion violated the international law [1]. In the meantime, other powerful European countries, Germany and France rejected to participate in this military operation.

However, the first sign of the loss of power of UK to USA was during the Suez Canal crisis in 1956, when naval forces of UK, supported by France and Israel, attempted to take control over the Suez Canal, because the government of Egypt decided to build a dam in Suez Canal, which could give them an ability to close the canal and stop shipments. Note that, this event was happening during the deterioration of Egypt's relation with Western countries, and improving relations with the Soviet Union. In this sense, there was a threat of a new global war. Hence, the American president on that moment, Eisenhower, threatened to destroy the pound on international money markets if UK wouldn't withdraw its forces [2].

On the other hand, other experts suggest that, the reason for diminishing role of UK in the world is largely self-inflicted. The country has become inward-looking, fretting over whether it's a country at all.

Overall, considering the above stated facts, it is relevant to assert that UK lost its dominant position. In this regard, it is important to identify the current role of UK in world politics, opportunities and challenges of modern UK, and to analyse the power and capacity of UK' soft power in the context of geopolitics, who recently left the European Union and who is: 1. actively promoting its own unions and associations; 2. trying to establish its own rules and orders in international relations nowadays.

### **Description of materials and methods**

Firstly, to understand the UK's goals in geopolitics, it is important to describe the term "soft power". According to the implementer of the term "soft power" Joseph Nye, it is an ability of a great power country to spread its influence through political, military, economic and cultural tools – to push small and medium power states to do something, which will be beneficial for a great power state. Soft power can be conducted in a three ways [3]. The first is to threaten by demonstrating military and economic power, but not to use them. The second is to invest money and resources to make other country dependent. The third is to attract for cooperation by using political values and peaceful foreign policy. And all of these three methods should be conducted along with a cultural reach, political values and military-economic strength. As a result, a great power state will achieve a "client state" who will be, willingly or unwillingly, in a zone of influence of a great power state, which will also protect from other powerful states and provide assistance [4]. Therefore, a cooperation that was built by using soft power can be equally beneficial in most cases.

Furthermore, the government of UK set a new international ambition after the Brexit from EU. The new goal called "Global Britain", as stated in the official report of the UK's government "Global Britain is about reinvesting in our relationships, championing the rules-based international order and demonstrating that the UK is open, outward-looking and confident on the world stage" [5]. The new initiative has an implementation framework, which consists from several plans/steps [6].

### **Results**

1. The first plan “Sustaining strategic advantage through science and technology”:

- making the UK a “Science and Technology superpower” until 2030;
- improving the competitiveness of the IT sector of UK worldwide;

2. Second “Shaping the open international order of the future”:

- protecting open societies and universal human rights worldwide;
- encouraging for open and adaptable global economy;
- promoting an open international order, that reflects democratic values and interests, to reduce the risk of conflict and limit malign activity

3. Third “Strengthening security and defence at home and overseas”:

- combatting external threats, “weapons of mass destruction”, “terrorism” etc.;
- fighting regional conflicts;
- addressing challenges in national and international security.

4. Fourth “Building resilience at home and overseas”:

- building national resilience;
- elimination environmental degradation;
- developing healthcare system.

Nowadays, the UK known as a “soft power superpower”, since it had and has massive impact on our world [7]. The English language is the most popular spoken language, it is used as the international communication language by usual civilians and high officials worldwide. Many English scientists and philosophers put their effort in building the world we know. UK had numerous colonial states all across the world by using its, for that moment, strong naval forces, and as a results, its cultural, political and military-economic influence zone became great. But, the main success of the British colonialism, is that London has managed to maintain a good relations with its former colonial states, despite the horrific actions that were done by the British Empire against colonies [8]. The government of UK created a “British Commonwealth of Nations” in 1931. The main purpose of this union is to maintain friendly cooperation and communication between UK and its former colonies, who also have to accept the British monarchy as a symbolic head of the association.

However, the UK didn’t to use this organization as their main and prior zone of influence, instead the British government were focused on the European region, specially EU. It tried to surpass France and Germany, and establish hegemony in Europe. But, after joining EU, the government of UK quickly lost its nationalist ideas, because they couldn’t compete with USA and USSR independently. Therefore, UK’s economic, military and political sectors began deeply integrating with other EU member states [9].

Furthermore, in 2020, the UK exited form the EU after the majority of citizens voted to leave, which was the result of nationalist campaign for independents of UK. This unleashed new challenges, but also, new opportunities [10].

The big challenge was in the fact that, after the exit from EU, the nationalist climate still remained, and citizens of Scotland and Northern Ireland demanded to stay in EU. This brought political dispute and tensions between citizens within the UK [11]. It showed the weak point of the government of UK, who previously swiftly

eliminated separatists and didn't let to address destructive messages targeting to destroy the unity of UK.

The next challenge appeared during the first covid-19 global pandemic. It revealed the importance of cooperation, yet the UK government were in wicked relations with EU member states. Hence, UK had to deepen the cooperation in healthcare sphere with EU states, specifically in making a vaccine and distributing it, in order to fight the new infectious disease and halt the spread [12]. This fact, reignited debate concerning the brexit.

### **Discussions**

Moreover, as it was stated above, brexit brought new opportunism too. The association of Commonwealth of Nations, which was unfairly disregarded by the British government received its full recognition and importance for the UK. The union, which consists from 54 sovereign states [13], became a primary partner for post-brexit UK's external affairs. The UK uses Commonwealth of Nations to advance its trade agenda, trade agreements and deepen ties with like-minded countries, since they have common history and language. The main aims of this organization are:

- economic development;
- democracy-building;
- free trade promotion;
- poverty reduction;
- health-care programs;
- cultural exchange [14].

Overall, it is noticeable that soft power is significant asset for UK's foreign policy. And it is being used to promote strategic goals of the government of UK. Thus, soft power is being converted into actions in international relations. Other soft power tools of the UK are visible in BBC World Service, the British Council, and institutions of higher education [15].

Finally, with regard to the above stated facts, it is justifiable to claim that UK lost its dominant position in international relations, because of the external reasons, as USA during the Suez Canal crisis and internal reasons, as separatist and nationalist movements, as well as the incompetence and lack of political will of high officials, who led to the decrease of UK's role in global politics.

### **Conclusion**

However, as it has been pointed out, currently, UK is trying to re-establish its dominance on the world stage by using its soft power assets, such as Commonwealth of Nations, BBC World Service, the British Council, and institutions of higher education.

Overall, it is evident that modern UK is no match to a former UK, which had global power, in terms of hard and soft power. But, nowadays, it only remained its soft power influence, which is still a great achievement of UK's foreign policy, because it can be converted to a real actions and policies that are beneficial for the post-brexit UK. And this soft power capacity is already being converted to a real

action, which can be observed in a new international initiative of the UK “Global Britain” that is aimed at increasing the influence of UK and its role in geopolitics.

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### ҰЛЫБРИТАНИЯНЫҢ ЖҰМСАҚ КҮШІ ГЕОПОЛИТИКАЛЫҚ ҚҰРАЛЫ РЕТІНДЕ

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**Аңдатпа.** Дамыған елдердің көпшілігінің сыртқы саясаты әлемдік аренадағы ықпалын арттыру. Сондықтан олар әскери күшін дамытуға тырысып жатыр. Алайда, тек жұмсақ күшті қолданатын елдер туралы да айту керек. Осындай елдердің бірі –

Ұлыбритания. Ұлыбританияның дүние жүзінде кең таралған ағылшын тілі, ВВС бұқаралық ақпарат құрал қызметі, Британдық Кеңес, сондай-ақ жоғары оқу орындары мен Ұлттар Достастығы сияқты көптеген жұмсақ қуат активтері бар. Жалпы, қазіргі Ұлыбританияның қатты және жұмсақ күші жағынан жаһандық гегемонияға ие болған бұрынғы Ұлыбританиямен салыстыруға келмейтіні анық. Өйткені, қазіргі Ұлыбританияда тек жұмсақ күш қалды, сонда да бұны әлі де британдық сыртқы саясаттың үлкен жетістігі деп санауға болады, өйткені оны Ұлыбритания үшін пайдалы нақты әрекеттерге айналдыруға болады. Сондықтан АҚШ пен Ресей арасындағы қырғи-қабақ соғыстың жаңа кезеңіне байланысты Ұлыбритания халықаралық қатынастардағы бұрынғы берік ұстанымын қалпына келтіруі керек.

**Тірек сөздер:** жұмсақ күш, Ұлыбритания, геосаясат.

## **МЯГКАЯ СИЛА ВЕЛИКОБРИТАНИИ КАК ГЕОПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЙ ИНСТРУМЕНТ**

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**Аннотация.** В мире где внешняя политика многих лидирующих стран, ориентирована на развитие военной мощи для усиления своего влияния на мировой арене, важно также говорить и о странах, которые используют только мягкую силу для привлечения других стран в свою зону влияния. И одной из таких стран с сильной культурной и экономической мощью является Соединенное Королевство Великобритании и Северной Ирландии. Великобритания обладает многими активами мягкой силы по всему миру, такими как широко распространенный английский язык, Всемирная служба ВВС, Британский совет, а также высшие учебные заведения и Содружество Наций. В целом очевидно, что современная Великобритания не может сравниться с бывшей Великобританией, которая имела глобальную гегемонию, с точки зрения жесткой и мягкой силы. Но в настоящее время от у Британии осталась только мягкая сила, что по-прежнему является большим достижением внешней политики Великобритании, поскольку его можно конвертировать в реальные действия, выгодные для Великобритании. И этот потенциал мягкой силы уже трансформируется в реальное действие, что можно наблюдать в новой международной инициативе Великобритании «Глобальная Британия», направленная на усиление влияния Великобритании и ее роли в геополитике. Поэтому из-за нового этапа холодной войны между США и Россией, Великобритании необходимо восстановить свои некогда сильные позиции в международных отношениях.

**Ключевые слова:** мягкая сила, Соединенное Королевство Великобритании и Северной Ирландии, геополитика.

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