

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21686/2410-7395-2025-4-62-75>

СТРАТЕГИИ ЖЕСТКОЙ И МЯГКОЙ СИЛЫ СОВРЕМЕННОЙ РОССИИ НА БЛИЖНЕМ ВОСТОКЕ

Р. Р. Асмятуллин, А. Р. Бяшарова

Российский экономический университет имени Г. В. Плеханова,
Москва, Россия

За последние десятилетия регион Ближнего Востока и Северной Африки (БВСА) претерпел глубокие преобразования, вызванные внешними и внутренними факторами, которые изменили его политическую, экономическую и социальную динамику. Ключевым элементом этой трансформации стала смена региональной власти, связанная с упадком США и появлением глобальных игроков, таких как Россия и Китай, которые стремились расширить сотрудничество со странами Ближнего востока и Северной Африки. Цель данной статьи – проанализировать присутствие России в регионе БВСА, исследуя ее стратегии жесткой и мягкой силы, а также исторические аспекты. Этот подход нашел отражение в стратегии России в Сирии. Он стал ярким примером жесткой силы, а в продвижении альтернативных ценностей на Западе – выражением мягкой силы. Украинский кризис усилил эту тенденцию, заставив многие страны региона БВСА сохранять нейтралитет или даже укреплять свои отношения с Россией, отчасти из-за ощущения, что Запад теряет способность поддерживать региональный порядок. В нынешних условиях Россия заняла более гибкую позицию, стремясь наладить связи как с исторически прозападными игроками, так и с традиционными союзниками США на Ближнем Востоке и в Северной Африке. Россия, целенаправленно применяя жесткую и мягкую силу, сумела укрепить свое влияние на Ближнем Востоке и в Северной Африке, которые, оставаясь одним из стратегических регионов ее внешней политики, претерпели существенные изменения в геополитическом балансе.

Ключевые слова: БВСА, международные отношения, энергетика, прагматический подход, экономические санкции.

CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA'S HARD AND SOFT POWER STRATEGIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Ravil R. Asmyatullin, Adilya R. Byasharova

Plekhanov Russian University of Economics,
Moscow, Russia

Over the past decades, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has undergone a profound transformation caused by external and internal factors that have changed its political, economic and social dynamics. A key element of this transformation has been the shift in regional power, with the decline of the United States and the emergence of global players such as Russia and China that have sought to enhance cooperation with MENA countries. This article aims to

analyze Russia's presence in the MENA region investigating its hard and soft power strategies and the historical aspects. This approach found expression in Russia's strategy in Syria. It has become a clear example of hard power and in the promotion of alternative values in the West as an expression of soft power. The Ukraine crisis has reinforced this trend, leading many countries in the MENA region to remain neutral or even strengthen their relations with Russia, in part because of the perception that the West is losing its ability to maintain regional order. In the current context, Russia has taken a more flexible position than in the past, seeking to build ties with both historically pro-Western players and traditional US allies in the Middle East and North Africa. Russia, through the targeted use of hard and soft power, has managed to confirm its influence in the Middle East and North Africa, which, while remaining one of the strategic regions of its foreign policy, has undergone significant changes in the geopolitical balance.

Keywords: MENA, International Relations, Energy, pragmatic approach, economic sanctions.

Introduction

In the last decades the Middle East has been experiencing a profound transformation due to various external and internal factors; this transformation involved political, economic and social spheres of the countries across the region. Moreover, power dynamics within MENA have significantly changed: Middle Eastern countries have acquired major autonomy while the influence of the US and the West in general has decreased leaving space for such global players as Russia and China interested in strengthening cooperation across the region.

Moscow has been historically involved in Middle Eastern affairs; while the Soviet Union's establishment was mainly focused on building cooperation with ideologically close countries and parties across the region, modern Russia's diplomacy opted for a more pragmatic approach that combines both hard and soft power elements.

Methodology & research design

This article represents a descriptive study of Hard and Soft Power strategies of Russia in the Middle East. First, it provides the context, describing the transformation MENA region has been experiencing in the last decades and evolution of the role of the West. Second, it covers the phenomenon of power in International Relations, focusing on the concepts of Hard and Soft Power. The last section represents an analysis of contemporary Russia's Hard and Soft power in the Middle East as well as an overview of the historical aspect. During the study, relevant academic articles as well as various online resources such as newspaper articles and reports were identified and analysed.

Middle East and the Global Change: Evolution of the Role of the West in the Region

Historically, MENA has often experienced significant *external* influence which defined some key development tendencies of the region [15. – P. 11].

In particular, the Middle East has been characterized by a certain degree of *dependence* on the West, conventionally present in MENA, and especially on the US which was dominating in Middle East affairs for many years [18. – P. 4]. Continuous conflicts often “triggered by external interventions” [18. – P. 2] and by internal issues within single countries, represent another crucial factor that has impeded the Middle Eastern countries from obtaining major degree of autonomy and independence and created rather unstable contexts. However, after the so-called Arab Spring, a series of uprisings that began in 2011 in different Arab-speaking countries across the Middle East, the region has experienced a profound “transformation” [15. – P. 3] and, therefore, an important “shift in power dynamics” [18. – P. 2]. The influence of the external players has decreased becoming more diversified, while Middle Eastern countries have acquired more independence.

Kostadinova identifies two main tendencies that characterize this transformation [15]. First, the influence of the West and especially of the US has decreased after the Arab Spring. In the Middle East the US is no longer seen as a prominent global player capable of maintaining the global order as it used to be in the near past [34]. Second tendency, the power shift created space for other major international players like Russia, China and even internal Middle East actors, to start enhancing their presence in MENA.

The Concept of Power

.... one could set up an endless parade of great names from Plato and Aristotle through Machiavelli and Hobbes to Pareto and Weber to demonstrate that a large number of seminal social theorists have devoted a good deal of attention to power... [11. – P. 201]

Power represents a fundamental yet very controversial concept in International Relations. It is hard to underestimate the importance of power while analyzing the IR processes and the never-ending disputes between the scholars on what power is confirm the centrality and contradictoriness of the topic. Drezner defines power a critical concept in the discipline of International Relations, however, he also acknowledges that there is no consensus about what power means [12]. As Ney argues, “no definition of power is accepted by all who use it” [Ney, 2021], and scholars’ choices of definition, first of all, reflect their interests and values. Due to its complexity and the continuous debate it provokes, the concept of power is defined as one of the most troublesome notions in the field of IR [12. – P. 31].

Being an all-encompassing phenomenon, power has always occupied minds of the IR scholars. Dahl [11. – P. 201] calls the concept of power “ancient and ubiquitous” emphasizing the importance of power throughout the human history; Laswell and Kaplan highlight the centrality of power in politics stating

that “any political process represents shaping, distribution and exercise of power”; Guzzini argues that power is “an explanatory concept nobody in IR can do without” [12. – P. 30].

Dahl’s definition where “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would otherwise not do” became one of the most cited definitions of power, nonetheless, it has been widely criticized by other scholars for being too limiting and not taking into consideration all the facets of the complex notion of power [12].

The concepts of Hard Power and Soft Power have become extremely mainstream in the discipline of International Relations. The notions of Hard and Soft Power have both their advantages and limitations. While Hard Power by definition is based on the exploitation of coercive means [14], Soft Power or co-optive power implies the creation of the conditions in which others tend to follow – the ideas, trends or values backed by an actor voluntarily.

The success of employing the Hard or Soft Power instruments depends on many factors, particularly on the accessibility of power resources the state has [32]. Obviously, large states with an elevated national income (Russia, United States, China etc.) have more resources to invest in the military sphere, therefore, hard power tools are available for them. On the contrary, smaller nations are less likely to have access to hard power tools and therefore tend to employ them less frequently [3]. Regarding the Soft Power instruments, the situation is different: accessibility of soft power tools depends on the size of a state to a lesser extent. The following sections provide an overview of Hard Power and Soft Power concepts.

Hard and Soft Power Concepts

In international politics, having “power” is having the ability to influence another to act in ways in which that entity would not have acted otherwise.

Hard power is the capacity to *coerce* them to do so [33. – P. 114]

As stated above, hard power strategies are represented by coercive means like military interventions, pressing diplomacy and economic sanctions that are implemented by different nations in order to enforce their national interests. As Wagner states, some actors use hard power means to compel the other actors (in case of International Relations – the states) to act in a way different from their usual behaviour involuntarily [32]. Even though hard power methods implementation requires less time as its resources are tangible, military or economic coercion usually has immediate but short-term output [18]. The strict repressive measures put onto Germany after the Great War provoked a deep sense of resentment in German society and led to the

II World War, which represents a very illustrative historical example of the how instruments of hard power can be extremely inefficient and even harmful in some cases.

As the tools of Hard Power are widely used and can be effective and even indispensable in some cases, they have significant limits; Wagner states that no successful foreign policy can be based exclusively on Hard Power [32]. For this reason, nowadays many nations tend to employ both Soft and Hard Power interacting with the other actors internationally.

On the contrary, the co-optive or Soft Power is a more indirect way of exercising power. An actor can be successful internationally by attracting other actors with its values, ideas, thriving economy, good education system, culture etc., which on the contrast with Hard Power, makes the others follow it voluntarily.

The concept of Soft Power was first introduced by Joseph Ney in the late 1980s, before it became extremely mainstream in International Relations. However, the very phenomenon of a non-coercive, soft power is not new. Of course, the importance of “attractive ideas, the ability to set the political agenda and determine the framework of debate in a way that shapes the others’ preferences” [23] cannot be underestimated in politics and international relations [25] and it has always been understood by the politicians and philosophers.

On contrast with Hard Power, developing the necessary instruments of Soft Power is a long-term investment of time and efforts [32]; however, these measures may guarantee a durable effect for an actor.

Russia’s interpretation of soft power is rather different from the Western one [6]; Moscow’s Soft Power strategies are mainly based on promotion of the opposite to the Western, more traditional values. Even though Russia’s approach to Soft Power is often criticized [5], it is also viewed as an alternative interpretation of the very concept of Soft Power. The concepts of Hard and Soft Power have become extremely popular in the discipline of International Relations. Both notions have some limitations and are often criticized by the scholars. For instance, Willson defines Soft Power proponents’ reasoning as “naive and institutionally weak”, while Hard Power advocates, according to him, struggle to see the manifestations of national power beyond the coercive measures [33. – P. 110]. Willson also highlights a need for a better conceptualization of the notions of Hard and Soft Power.

Russia’s Hard and Soft Power in the Middle East

Historical Overview: the Soviet Hard and Soft Power strategies in the Middle East

MENA region with all of its complexity has always played an important role for the Kremlin; historically Moscow was conducting active policies

among the Middle Eastern nations. This section covers the historical aspect of Moscow's presence in the Middle East, focusing on the Soviet Union period.

Building relations with the Middle East countries, likewise with the other regions with a colonial past, represented an important opportunity for the USSR to extend its influence in the Third World after the Second World War; for this reason, the Soviet Union adopted various Hard and Soft Power strategies aimed at attracting new nations emerging out of colonization [13. – P. 466] and making them appreciate the Soviet political, economic and social model [2].

The most fundamental elements of the Soviet Soft Power that facilitated the spread of the Kremlin's influence in the Global South and in particular in the Middle East [9. – P. 13] in the 50-60s were represented by the fast growth and development of the country after the Second World War as well as planning economy model. Among Arab-speaking Middle East countries, the Soviet Union managed to cultivate important partnerships with emerging but rather fragile postcolonial states, in particular Egypt, Syria and Iraq [13. – P. 466]. Partnership between the Soviet Union and Syria that defines as an "ideal-type example of a relationship between a super-power and its regional ally" [31. – P. 143] eventually became a long-term cooperation that maintained its importance through the decades and still remains crucial for Russia. In addition, the Soviet Union invested in organization of various trainings for the experts from ally countries, scholarships for talented students, financial aid in modernization and infrastructure development projects [13. – P. 466]. Of course, strong anti-colonial and anti-imperialistic sentiment in post-colonial countries was successfully instrumentalized by the Soviet Union in order to boost its influence among the new partners.

There were some important elements of Hard Power in the Soviet approach to the Middle East. In the 1950s, Moscow recognised the importance of Soviet military presence in the Mediterranean [7], by that time completely dominated by NATO. In July 1967, the Fifth Mediterranean Navy Squadron was officially put on duty, which allowed the Soviet Union to adopt the strategy of direct support of prosocialist countries (and not only) in the region and reinforce its presence in the Mediterranean.

The Fifth Mediterranean Navy Squadron navigating the Mediterranean "was an important precedent for the Soviet military base in Syria" [13. – P. 467]. In 1971 Soviet Union built a naval facility in the Syrian city of Tartus which was another step the USSR undertook in order to "to reassert its great power status in the Middle East" [31. – P. 151]. The naval base was built in order to provide all the necessary facilities for the Fifth Mediterranean Navy Squadron.

The Soviet Union also maintained relations with ideologically close parties, factions and groups across the region. For instance, it was supporting the Palestinian Liberation Front, a Palestinian political faction and the

transnational Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party. It was maintaining strong contacts with various Kurdish guerrilla groups in the Middle East. Spreading its influence across the Middle East allowed Moscow to conquer a position of an important international player in the region. However, active participation in the Middle Eastern political affairs was no longer a priority for the new Russian government in the 1990s, facing political, economic and social crisis after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Understanding Contemporary Russia's Middle Eastern Approach

Since Vladimir Putin came to power, he has sought to re-establish Russia's influence in the MENA. However, he adopted a new approach towards the region. Stronski claims that flexibility is a key notion for understanding modern Russian Eastern Mediterranean policy [30]; it is reflected in the multifaceted and unideological relationships developed by Moscow with the Middle Eastern countries, key regional powers and non-governmental actors. Moscow has used both its Hard Power, state and non-state infrastructure, such as paramilitary groups and Soft Power in order to re-establish its status in the region.

As stated above, Stronski also describes contemporary Russia's activities in the region as a return of the Soviet Union's approach to the region without, however, the strong ideological component, crucial in the Soviet Union's foreign policy strategies [30]. Therefore, while Soviet Union tended to maintain good relationships with anti-Western prosocialist regimes and parties in the Middle East and poor or neutral relations with pro-Western ones, Russia's strategic approach included establishing the relationships with the United States traditional allies in MENA as well. In addition, Russia has evidently managed to benefit the increased perception of some countries of the region that the United States, demotivated by operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, is getting disengaged in the Middle East.

There are several main reasons Russia has been seeking to spread its influence across MENA region. First of all, the aspiration to affirm its great power status is one of the key elements of modern Russia's foreign policy strategies, which involves the Middle East as well; second, after the beginning of the Ukraine crisis and due to the complexity of today's relations with the West, Russia has started seeking partnerships and strengthening cooperation beyond the West; last but not least, "genuine concerns" of Russia's establishment about the expansion of terrorism in the MENA region and its potential spread the post-Soviet countries of Central Asia motivate Russia to conduct active policies across the region. As Siddi states, Russia's aspirations to increase its influence and involvement in MENA region dynamics "added a new geographical dimension to the West-Russia security relationship and to Euro-Atlantic security" [28. – P. 166].

Syrian military operation & Russia's hard Power in the Middle East

After the beginning of the Arab Spring in 2010 in Tunis, the protests got spread across the Middle East, including such countries as Egypt and Yemen. In March 2011 large-scale protests started in Syria, *historically* a Soviet and then Russian ally in the Middle East. In September 2015, Russia entered the Syrian Civil War.

There were several reasons for Russia's direct participation in the conflict in Syria. First of all, it represented an opportunity for Russia to re-establish its military presence in the Mediterranean [10]. Second, Russia's participation in the Syrian conflict was a clear-cut "demonstration" of Russia's Hard Power capacity "outside its immediate neighborhood" [20. – P. 2] and proved its "renewed activism in the broader MENA region". Finally, another factor that explains Russia's active participation in the Civil War in Syria in support of Bashar al-Assad [20. – P. 2] is an evident interest to keep its strategic regional ally.

Russia's intervention in the conflict permitted to change the situation in Syria radically in a relatively brief period of time [26]. First of all, it allowed to keep Baathist regime in Damascus and "enabled Bashar al-Assad to remain in power" [13. – P. 474] by preventing the advance of the opposition, supported by the West, Turkey and the Gulf and significantly weakening it. Second, it evidently prepared the way for a more assertive Russia behavior in MENA [26] and served as a demonstration of Russia's Hard Power potential represented by "recently re-acquired military might" [20. – P. 2] strong enough to react "in accordance with its own interests and independently" [27]. Moreover, Russia's successful actions in the Syrian Civil War allowed it to gain the approval of other countries in the Middle East and even made them "seek improved relations with Moscow" [26].

Of course, support Russia gave to the Syrian official government and the reception of Bashar al-Assad in Russia after the change of power in December 2024 served as a clear demonstration to the leaders across the Middle East that Russia remains a reliable ally "willing to uphold its commitments" [20. – P. 2]. In addition, even though economic opportunities of this operation have not been that significant for the Russian economy, the political leverage that Russia acquired with its intervention in Syria opened the door to increased economic cooperation with other countries in the region.

Energy as a strategic dimension of Russia's policy in the Middle East

Beyond the shadow of a doubt, energy represents a crucial element of Russia's influence in the world, an important source of its Hard and Soft Power. Russia is one of the most important global energy producers [8] and, therefore, one of the biggest competitors of energy producers of the MENA region. As Nakhle claims, citing the BP Statistical Review of World Energy in

2018¹, Russia and the Middle East “produce half of the world’s oil and nearly 40% of its gas [21. – P. 29]; therefore, it’s difficult to overestimate the potential of conceivable cooperation between Russia and MENA countries in the energy field. However, Middle Eastern (and especially Gulf) countries have a major influence in OPEC, since “8 out of 14 OPEC members are from MENA countries, representing 83% of the organisation’s oil production and most of its spare capacity” [21. – P. 31]. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, a powerful organization of leading oil-producing countries that regulate oil production levels and, consequently, global prices; therefore Russia (not a member of OPEC) has a direct interest in strengthening collaboration with these countries.

Another important dimension of Russia’s energy strategies in the Middle East is Russia’s aspiration to participate and spread its influence in the contexts “where new energy developments are taking place” [28]. For instance, in 2017 Russia’s Rosneft acquired a 30 percent stake in the Zohr offshore gas field, a major gas-producing field in the Eastern Mediterranean, from Italy’s Eni in Egypt². Also in 2017, Novatek, the largest independent natural gas producer in Russia bought 20 percent of a gas-exploration joint venture in Lebanon³; Italy’s Eni and France’s Total own 40% stakes each. In Algeria, Gazprom, a Russian majority state-owned multinational energy corporation is involved in hydrocarbon exploration⁴. In addition, Russia has been historically present in Libya due to its close contact with Muammar Qaddafi’s regime; even now the support of General Khalifa Haftar has an important energy aspect as much as a strategic dimension for Russia [27].

However, the energetic dimension of Russia’s foreign policy may contain certain challenges, especially in the current environment; first of all, elevated dependency on energy income and usage of energy as political and economic instrument makes Russia more exposed to eventual risks caused by fluctuations in energy prices⁵. Second, the “coronavirus-induced recession”, spread of liquefied natural gas as well as global “green” tendencies are significantly “transforming energy markets worldwide”, leading to a decrease in demand for natural oil and gas worldwide. Nevertheless, energy has always

¹ BP Statistical Review of World Energy analyses data on world energy markets from a prior year.

² Rosneft closes the Deal to Acquire a 30% stake in Zohr Gas Field. – URL: <https://www.rosneft.com/press/releases/item/188045/> (accessed: 10.11.2024).

³ Rosneft Sets Up Oil Product Storage Firm in Lebanon. – URL: <https://interfax.com/newsroom/top-stories/68841/> (accessed: 10.11.2024).

⁴ Gazprom plans to start production of hydrocarbons in Alegria in 2026. – URL: <https://tass.com/economy/1652601>

⁵ Energy Strategy of Russia for the Period up to 2030. Approved by Decree N 1715-r of the Government of the Russian Federation, Moscow, 2010. – URL: http://www.energystrategy.ru/projects/docs/ES-2030_ (accessed: 10.11.2024).

been and remains one of the most important elements of Russia's presence both globally and in the MENA region, which will hardly change in the short term. Russia's energy strategies in foreign policy must adapt to constantly evolving political and economic contexts.

Special Military Operation in Ukraine and the reaction of the Middle Eastern countries

Russia's Special Military Operation in Ukraine is another key dimension to examine while analyzing the development of Russia's influence in the MENA region. The Special Military Operation in Ukraine which began on February 24, 2022, and the eventual reaction of different international players has confirmed the established polarity between the West and the rest of the world and especially the MENA countries [29]. Unlike the Western countries that immediately introduced severe sanctions against Russia after the beginning of Special Military Operation, the majority of Middle Eastern countries "have taken a relatively neutral position" and connections between Moscow and the Middle Eastern countries even increased in 2022-2023 [16]. As Liu outlines, generally, it confirms a significant "strategic autonomy" of the MENA countries and the ability to pursue "their own national interests" [18. – P. 4].

Only a few countries expressed a strong agreement or disagreement with Russia's actions in Ukraine. For instance, Russia received support from its historical ally in the region, Syria: Damascus voted against the UN resolution and allowed Russia to involve young Syrian citizens to participate in the Special Military Operation in Ukraine [13. – P. 479]. A relatively strong negative reaction had Kuwait, which opposed Russia's action in Ukraine [18. – P. 2]. However, the reactions of these two countries didn't have a significant impact.

Several factors defined the perception of Arab countries of the Ukraine conflict and their rather neutral position regarding the Special Military Operation. First of all, it's a certain pragmatism [16] of the Middle Eastern players and therefore [34. – P. 22] their unwillingness to take sides openly in the conflict they consider rather unrelated and distant from them. Second, the persisting perception of Western behavior as a double-standard undermines the US's positions in the region [4]. Third, as mentioned above, MENA countries no longer consider the US as a prominent actor able to maintain regional order due to its "disengagement" from the Middle East. In general, by diversifying their connection worldwide the Middle Eastern countries are also preparing for a *new reality* in which the role of the United States in the region will be reduced significantly. Finally, Kozhanov also acknowledges the success of the effort Russian diplomacy put to restore the connections with the Middle Eastern actors, including traditional US's allies of the US [16].

Since the beginning of the Special military Operation such Arab countries as Saudi Arabia and UAE, the traditional US partners in the region, have been under “direct continuous pressure” to join the sanctions against Russia [20]; however, as stated above, they adapted a strategy of “balancing the interests of the US and Russia”. For instance, they *refused* to increase oil production to curb the rapid rise of global oil prices as the US has asked several times and maintained previous production agreements with Russia and other major oil-producing countries [18. – P. 3].

In the present circumstances, Moscow will definitely opt for fostering collaboration with the countries that didn’t join the Western sanctions, creating closer relations with them; therefore, cooperation with Middle Eastern countries is becoming more and more important for Russia.

Russia’s Soft power in the Middle East: the role of information and communication

Historically [6], the spread of Russia’s influence worldwide has been associated with the utilization of Hard Power instruments. Moreover, as mentioned above, Russia’s Soft Power is often viewed suspiciously due to its dissimilarity with the “conventional” concept of Soft Power. In Russian interpretation, Soft Power strategies must be “ultimately pragmatic” and, therefore, must serve the accomplishment of certain goals. Another peculiarity, Russia’s Soft Power is an institutionalized government-led strategy “under strict government control” [1. – P. 126].

The Soft Power approach remains the main instrument of the Kremlin’s aspiration to spread its influence in MENA. In particular, in the Middle East, major efforts are focused on building and maintaining relations with the players across the region; this goal was mainly accomplished by the 2010s. In this way, Russia managed to re-establish its political, diplomatic, and economic influence in the region.

Russia is attempting to dominate the informational domain as well. Russia Today (RT), a Russian media outlet that was launched in 2005 is strongly represented across the Middle East which, of course, favours the spread of Russian informational influence.

Conclusion

In the last years Russia has started to re-evaluate the established partnerships worldwide; the Ukraine crisis and other important factors served as trigger for this tendency. MENA region, due to its geographic proximity and strategic importance has already been one of the priority destinations for Russia’s international aspirations, and after the above-mentioned events, this it has only intensified. Moscow is applying a series of Hard and Soft Power strategies across the Middle East, cultivating important partnerships with the

major players of the region. In the near future, the Middle East will remain a key destination for Russia's foreign policy especially on the diplomatic level and in energy-related fields.

References

1. Ageeva V. The Rise and Fall of Russia's Soft Power. *Russia in Global Affairs*, 2021, No. 1, pp. 118–145.
2. Amarasinghe P. Reminiscence of Soviet Soft Power and the Way it Influenced the Global South. Available at: <https://modern diplomacy.eu/2019/11/02/remembrance-of-soviet-soft-power-and-the-way-it-influenced-the-global-south/> (accessed: 30.09.2024).
3. Baldwin D. A. The Faces of Power Revisited. *Journal of Political Power*, 2021, Vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 85–96.
4. Bobkin N. N. Impact of the Ukrainian conflict on US relations with Countries in the Middle East. *Herald of the Russian Academy of Sciences*, 2022, Vol. 92, No. 15, pp. 1397–1404.
5. Borshchevskaya A. Russia's Soft Power in the Middle East. *Military Review*. 2021. November-December. Available at: <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-EditionArchives/November-December-2021/Borshchevskaya-Russia-Soft-Power/> (accessed: 29.10.2024).
6. Borshchevskaya A., Eljarh M. Russia in the Mediterranean: Strategies and Aspirations. *Mediterranean Dialogue*, 2018, No. 12, pp. 1–11.
7. Bregolat E. Russia in the Mediterranean and in Europe. *IEMed. Mediterranean Yearbook*, 2018, pp. 36–9.
8. Brookes P. Russia's Middle East resurgence: Here to Stay? Available at: <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/russias-middle-east-resurgence-here-to-stay/> (accessed: 15.10.2024).
9. Castiglioni C. From Enemy to "Good Neighbour". The Partnership Between Moscow and Teheran in the Age of Détente. *Dans Les Cahiers Irice*. 2019, Vol. 1, No. 10, pp. 13–24.
10. Cristiani D. Framing Russia's Mediterranean Return: Stages, Roots, and Logics. *IAI Commentaries*, 2020, Vol. 20, No. 59, pp. 1–5.
11. Dahl R. The Concept of Power. *Behavioral Science*, 1957, Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 201–215.
12. Drezner D. Power and International Relations: a Temporal View. *European Journal of International Relations*, 2021, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 29–52.
13. Gasimov Z. Russia under Putin in the Eastern Mediterranean: The Soviet Legacy, Flexibility, and New Dynamics. *Comparative Southeast European Studies*, 2022, Vol. 70, No. 3, pp. 462–485.
14. Guzzini S. The Limits of Neorealist Power Analysis. *International Organization*, 1993, Vol. 47, No. 3, pp. 443–478.

15. Kostadinova V. The Gulf Arab Countries' Foreign and Security Policies Post-Arab Uprisings: Toward Greater Regional Independence of the Middle East. *Gulf Research Center Cambridge*, 2015, pp. 1–26.

16. Kozhanov N. Russian Relations with the Middle East after Putin's invasion of Ukraine / Italian Institute for International Political Studies, 2023.

17. Lauer J. Methodology and Political Science: the Discipline Needs Three Fundamental Different Methodological Traditions. *SN Social Science*, 2021, No. 1, p. 43.

18. Liu Z., Shu M. The Russia-Ukraine Conflict and the Changing Geopolitical Landscape in the Middle East. *China International Strategy Review*. 2023, No. 4, pp. 1–14.

19. Merzan K., Talbot V. Evolving MENA Power Balance: What Is Next for US Engagement in the Region? Available at: <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/evolving-mena-power-balances-what-next-us-engagement-region-35686> (accessed: 11.12.2024).

20. Mühlberger W., Siddi M. In from the Cold: Russia's Agenda in the Middle East and Implications for the EU. *Euromesco Brief*, 2019, No. 91, pp. 1–11.

21. Nakhle C. Russia's Energy Diplomacy in the Middle East. *European Union Institute for Security Studies, Chaillot Papers*, 2018, No. 146, pp. 29–35.

22. Ney J. Get Smart. Combining Hard and Soft Power. *Foreign Affairs*, 2009, Vol. 88, No. 4, pp. 160–163.

23. Ney J. Soft Power. *Foreign Policy*, 1990, No. 80, pp. 153–171.

24. Ney J. Soft Power: the Evolution of a Concept. *Journal of Political Power*, 2021, Vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 196–208.

25. Ney J. The Changing Nature of Word Power. *Political Science Quarterly*, 1990, Vol. 105, No. 2, pp. 177–192.

26. Petkova M. What has Russia Gained from Five Years of Fighting in Syria? Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2020/10/1/what-has-russia-gained-from-five-years-of-fighting-in-syria> (accessed: 29.09.2024).

27. Pierini M. Russia's Posture in the Mediterranean: Implications for NATO and Europe. Available at: <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2021/06/08/russia-s-posture-in-mediterranean-implications-for-nato-and-europe-pub-84670> (accessed: 26.10.2024).

28. Siddi M. The Mediterranean Dimension of West-Russia Security Relations. In *Threats to Euro-Atlantic Security. New Security Challenges*, edited by. A. Futter. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, pp. 165–77.

29. Singh M. The Middle East in the Multipolar Era: Why America's Allies are Flirting with Russia and China. Available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/middle-east/middle-east-multipolar-era> December 7 (accessed: 11.12.2024).

30. Stronski P. A Difficult Balancing Act: Russia's Role in the Eastern Mediterranean. Available at: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/06/28/>

difficult-balancing-act-russia-s-role-in-eastern-mediterranean-pub-84847 (accessed: 03.12.2024).

31. Tudoroiu T. The reciprocal constitutive features of a Middle Eastern partnership: The Russian-Syrian bilateral relations. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*. 2015, Vol. 13, No. 2, pp. 143–153.

32. Wagner J. P. The Effectiveness of Soft & Hard Power in Contemporary International Relations. Available at: https://www.e-ir.info/2014/05/14/the-effectiveness-of-soft-hard-power-in-contemporary-international-relations/#google_vignette (accessed: 15.11.2024).

33. Willson E. J. III. Hard Power, Soft Power, Smart Power. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 2008, Vol. 616, No. 1, pp. 110–124.

34. Yahya M. The Arab World and the Ukraine conflict: The Quest for Nonalignment. Available at: <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/arab-world-and-ukraine-conflict-quest-nonalignment-35707> (accessed: 22.11.2024).

Поступила: 05.07.2025

Принята к печати: 13.10.2025

Сведения об авторах

Равиль Рамилевич Асмятуллин

кандидат экономических наук,
доцент кафедры мировой экономики
РЭУ им. Г. В. Плеханова.
Адрес: ФГБОУ ВО «Российский
экономический университет имени
Г. В. Плеханова», 115054, Москва,
Стремянный пер., д. 36.
ORCID: 0000-0001-6549-2040
E-mail: rav.asmyatullin@gmail.com

Адиля Рашидовна Бяшарова

кандидат экономических наук, доцент
кафедры мировой экономики
РЭУ им. Г. В. Плеханова.
Адрес: ФГБОУ ВО «Российский
экономический университет имени
Г. В. Плеханова», 109992, Москва,
Стремянный пер., д. 36.
ORCID: 0000-0003-3068-7109
E-mail: Byasharova.AR@rea.ru

Information about the authors

Ravil R. Asmyatullin

PhD, Associate Professor
of the Department of World Economy
of the PRUE.
Address: Plekhanov Russian
University of Economics, 36 Stremyanny
Lane, Moscow, 115054,
Russian Federation.
ORCID: 0000-0001-6549-2040
E-mail: rav.asmyatullin@gmail.com

Adilya R. Byasharova

PhD, Associate Professor
of the Department of World Economy
of the PRUE.
Address: Plekhanov Russian
University of Economics,
36 Stremyanny Lane, Moscow,
109992, Russian Federation.
ORCID: 0000-0003-3068-7109
E-mail: Byasharova.AR@rea.ru