

RUSSIA'S QUEST FOR SOFT POWER AND WESTERN RESPONSES, 1991-2015

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled “Russia’s Quest for Soft Power and Western Responses, 1991-2015” submitted by me for the award of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this university or any other university.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- **BBC**- British Broadcasting Corporation.
- **CIS**- Commonwealth of Independent States.
- **CELAC**- Community of Latin America and Caribbean countries.
- **FIFA**- The Federation Internationale de Football Association.
- **HSE**- Higher School of Economics.
- **KGB**- Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti (Russian), translated in English as Committee for State Security.
- **NEP**- New Economic Policy.
- **NTV**- Novoye (New), Nezavisimoye (Independent), Negosudarstvenoye (Non Governmental), Nashe (Our) Television.
- **ORT**- Obshchestvennoye Rossiyskoye Televideniye (Russian), translated in English as Public Russian Television.
- **ROMIR** - Rossiyskoye Obschestvennoye Mneniye i Isledovaniye Rynka (Russian), translated in English as Russian Public Opinion and Market Research.
- **SSR**- Soviet Socialist Republic.
- **START II**– Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty II.
- **USA/US**- United States of America/ United States.
- **USSR**- Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.
- **UK**- United Kingdom.
- **VOKS**- Vsesoiuznoe Obshchestvo Kul'turnoi Sviazi s zagranitsej (Russian), translated in English as All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries.

- **VGTRK**- Vserossiyskaya Gosudarstvennaya Televizionnaya i Radioveshchatelnaya Kompaniya (Russian) translated in English as All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company.
- **WWI**- World War 1.
- **WW II**- World War II.
- **WWE**- World Wrestling Entertainment.

Chapter I

Introduction

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND

International relations include a complex interplay of principles that are based on accepted knowledge and methods used to describe the events that occur within this system. The rapid changes occurring in the world and the failure of traditional theories of international relations to cope up with the changing times and problems call for a more broad way of looking at politics. International relations theory has been trying to focus its attention more on areas concerning conflict resolution, peace, international education, and environment. Although power will still be a dominant factor in the international relations, the changing times demand a more feasible way of using this political power. Political power can be described as the power that the government and its organs the police, bureaucracy and the law courts exercise. Realist and neo realist approach to international relations has been one of the dominant ways in understanding the relations between various countries.

Realist theory derives its set of principles from the seventeenth century philosophy of Thomas Hobbes. The Hobbesian understanding of political system explained in his work *Leviathan* (1651) involves an emphasis on the negative aspect of human nature which was “nasty, brutish and short”. Hobbes claimed that the root cause of socio-political problems and the obstacle to peace was “humanity’s naked self-interests” (Burke 2005). The traditional realist view does not regard the notion of inducement and allure with regard to power. The world today is certainly not a peaceful place. It is troubled by violence and crisis of all kinds. Whether it is the crisis in Syria, Iraq, Ukraine or instability in North Africa or Middle East or even the threat of North Korea, there is hunger for power, rise of religious fundamentalism and strategic issues concerning even the major global powers. Apart from the strategic and political issues, there is hunger, poverty, environment degradation and terrorism that are haunting the global population. While hard power remains a country’s essential mode of action and defence, such non-traditional threats to security needs more than just the work of hard power. It is here the

function of soft power comes in. Soft power of a country enables it to seek cooperation with other countries to fight such problems. It also is a means to fulfil its needs, and make a country attractive rather than be feared.

Power whether it is hard or soft, according to Nye (2011) is a concept that is widely used and is prevalent everywhere but it is very difficult to measure it. However he goes on to argue that anything that cannot be measured is not “meaningless”. Comparing power to other aspects of life shows that people have not understood the actual meaning of power. Nye states that comparing power in social science to energy or force in physics is baseless because physicists can measure relations of energy or force in relation to inanimate objects but power also involves transient human relationships. He states that power can neither be compared to money in economics. Money, he states can be used to buy a lot of things anywhere but power is not the same everywhere. What power achieves or produces in a particular place or situation may not be produced in another place or situation. Power then as such is very difficult to be defined as there can be different ways of looking at it. Nye therefore suggests that while understanding or defining it is important to keep “strategies” and “context” in mind. While ‘strategies’ can be used to make a perfect relationship between means and ends, combining hard power and soft power in various ‘contexts’ help in understanding the interplay of power and politics (Nye 2011).

1.2. UNDERSTANDING SOFT POWER

Joseph Nye is the one who has come up with the new idea of power in contrast to hard power strategies mostly based on military capability. This new concept of power therefore relies on sources such as culture, values and foreign policy. Since, soft power is the brain child of Joseph Nye, it is thus necessary to understand what he considers as soft power and what he does not. According to Nye soft power is the competency to convince others to agree to certain principles through attraction instead of coercion. Soft power therefore relies on culture, ideals and values. Nye believes that soft power does not deliver specific outcomes but is important for the country in the long run. He therefore clearly distinguishes soft power from hard power by describing the latter as ‘the ability to use “carrots” and “sticks” of economic and military might to make others follow your

will' (Nye 2003). In this argument by 'carrots' he actually means the concessions such as reduction of trade barriers or providing military protection and by "sticks" he means coercion and threats. He however believes that these are not totally independent of one another. A change in the hard strategies, for example the weakening of its military power might affect its soft power or its image globally. Nonetheless, soft power is completely different from hard power as its main focus is on a country's culture, its policies and values at home and how it reflects abroad. It therefore becomes interesting to know and understand Russian soft power, and how it has employed it in the past, as soft power of Joseph Nye is regarded as a 'western construct' and cannot be all encompassing.

While explaining the sources of soft power, Nye stresses a lot of importance on the culture of a country. If a country is rich in its culture and knows the right way to project it then it has a great reservoir for soft power. Nye states that culture can be of various types. High culture involves literature, art and education, and there is popular culture that involves tastes, practices and beliefs of certain groups regarding various aspects, influencing people at large. Nye goes on to state that if a country's culture appears attractive and acceptable to others and if it coincides with other cultures then the country generates soft power out of relationships created between it and other countries. The other important factor for the flourishing of soft power is values of a country. However he mostly refers to values in terms of the Western liberal values and mostly takes the examples of the Western countries as a standard for that. Nye also regards foreign as well as domestic policies as one of the chief sources of soft power but he goes on to state that if they are not handled properly or if they are hollow and degrading then they instead act as forces that destruct soft power (Nye 2004:11-12).

With globalisation the boundaries of the states have become quite permeable as compared to the past. The flow of information has become easier and the world seems to be connected in a network. It is easier for the countries to reach out to the governments and people of other countries. Through various social networks and mass media people of one country can get the feeling of living in a different one. While there are perks of such kind of communications and flow of information that the world is witnessing, it brings with itself the baggage of misrepresentation and confusion. Globalisation thus can have a

positive as well as negative impact on the powers of various countries. The information revolution creates additional channels of communications. The increasing channels of communications can further lead to a situation called “paradox of plenty” (Keohane and Nye 1998). The brimming over of information through various channels of communications such as the mass media, press and even social media can create an ambience of confusion making it difficult for people and states to decipher the genuine ones among the plenitude of information. This abundance of information also gives rise to scarcity of attention. The ones who are able to derive valuable information even while facing the problem of attention deficit will be able to achieve power over others (Ibid). Soft power of any given country can advance considerably if the country is able to use the fruits that globalisation has brought with it. However a country can also suffer at the hands of another if the same resources of communications are used by another to tarnish the image of that country.

Scholars have been moving away from the conventional ways of construing power and relations among various states. They are trying to understand events and relations by drawing out various possibilities and also analysing the effect of cultural aspects. In this regard we can consider the work of Francis Fukuyama who brought forth the idea of “end of history” when the Soviet Union was undergoing existential crisis in the aftermath of its disintegration. Fukuyama’s main argument was that there was no alternative to liberal democracy and capitalism and also that the rest of the world would also follow the same path in the years ahead. Samuel Huntington in his controversial book states that it is not the ideological conflict but the “clash of civilisations” that will alter the setting of world politics. He stressed on the fact that the dominating source of clash will be cultural in nature and was chiefly concerned about the clash between the Islamic and the Western/Christian civilisations (Harshe 2006).

The design of culture and power going hand in hand has also been of interest to liberal as well as Marxist (Gramscian) scholars. Joseph Nye’s notion of soft power explains the liberal understanding of the interplay of culture and power. The idea of soft power thus flourishes in the global information age where vast information communications technologies help to carry forward the desired goals. Scholars like Robert Cox, Stephen

Gill and Henk Overbeck make a connection between the rise in the power of US and hegemony as explained by Gramsci, an Italian Marxist. The Gramscian notion of hegemony tries to understand and compare the state-civil societies of different countries and then strives to make a perfect balance between consent and coercion. If the ruling class only relies on coercion then it will not establish hegemony but instead will establish a hegemonic order (Harshe 2006). Unlike the regular understanding of hegemony, Gramsci's hegemony takes into account the connotation of 'super structure' as well and not just the 'sub structure'. Thus culture and ideas also take part in the interplay of power and therefore not just relying on the economic aspect.

The importance of soft power cannot be overruled when the world needs diplomatic ways to deal with the international problems. Apart from the problems that a particular country faces, there are a number of global problems that require immediate attention. These problems require cooperation of countries. Too much reliance on hard power can act as a hindrance to the attainment of such kind of cooperation. Since the countries also need to fulfil their needs, safeguard their interests and exercise power whenever and wherever needed, the quest for power continues. However if a country is able to exert influence over others without the need to use coercive measures then the goal of world peace would not remain a distant dream. Soft power is one such way to get the desired outcomes and also creating a strong image in the world. In his 1990 book *Bound to Lead*, Joseph Nye introduced the concept of soft power (Kroenig *et al* 2007). It is not that soft power was not used by any country before but it was not realised as a form of power until Nye explained it as a power to make others want the outcomes that you want but without coercion. The need for such kind of approach towards international relations has urged the countries to spend their time as well as resources on it. There is also a rise in the level of interest shown by scholars of international relations on soft power and such interests should be directed towards developing corresponding theories of soft power.

However while there is no dearth of literature on soft power, it is mostly discussed theoretically and does not have much resemblance in practice. This is because scholars have discussed about the theoretical understanding of soft power but have not been able to come up with a proper practical guide to achieving it. The available literature does not

talk much about how soft power can be used by governments, especially in the case of countries like Russia and China where the influence of government or Party is very strong. The scholars of soft power have also not determined in details about the conditions suitable for soft power to burgeon (Liik 2013).

Since soft power is about getting the desired outcomes through attraction, there are other concepts that go hand in hand with it. Public diplomacy and nation branding can also be considered as important tools of soft power. Public diplomacy aims at making direct connection with people of foreign lands with the aim of promoting the values and ideas of one's country and eventually influencing the minds of the people and the government (Nisbet et al 2004:15). Joseph Nye also considers public diplomacy as the means for promoting soft power if it is able to mull on aspects such as "credibility, self-criticism and civil society". Nye believes that the sources of a country's soft power evolve if it gives importance to values that are respected not only in the country but also elsewhere. Other than that the internal as well as the foreign policies of the government, the action oriented principles should be attractive, and the country's culture should be well expressed. Nye states that Public diplomacy helps in the promotion of all these factors but it will not be productive if the values, policies are duplicitous or unlawful. In such a case no matter how public diplomacy is put into action it will not generate soft power. Nye opines that the US used public diplomacy profusely during the time of Cold War but it also kept in mind the questions concerning excessive government involvement and about considering the option of representing American culture in an independent manner. Nevertheless after the end of Cold War, the use of public diplomacy decreased as they preferred to focus on "budget savings" to being involved in the promotion of soft power (Nye 2008). The US no longer felt necessary to invest on attraction; the end of Cold War and the fall of communist ideology had already proved them victorious and attractive to the world.

According to Kroenig et al (2010), to view soft power as an instrument of diplomacy by the required countries three conditions should be kept in mind. Firstly, states should be able to reach to the precise objective through a running "marketplace of ideas"; Secondly, the approach of the specific aim should be focused on change and influence; Thirdly, the

outlook of the objective ought to make an “impact on the international politics outcomes” which will in turn promote the interests of the state that is endeavouring to spawn soft power (Kroenig et al 2010). Soft power of a country depends on its culture, political values and its foreign policy. In that way it can be said that culture in every era along with other factors has affected the international system. This can be seen in the context of Cold War, where the ideological rivalries concerning the socialist block led by Soviet Union and the capitalist block under the leadership of US “had almost set in motion a cultural paradigm of the so called bipolar world” that had a huge impact on the international relations. The two blocks blamed each other of being anti-democratic, imperialist and hegemonic on the basis of socio-cultural values (Harshe 2006:3947).

Similar to public diplomacy, the concept known as nation branding also acts as a soft power tool in that it tries to change the perception of the people regarding the country and thereby augment the status of the country (Yukaruc 2017). Whether it is public diplomacy or nation branding, countries have gradually understood the importance of winning the hearts of people for achieving their goals in the long run. Soft power thus stands important to save the country when even hard power fails. This is so because hard power will not win support, pacify relations, and foster cooperation but soft power is capable of doing that without generating a sense of fear. However, stressing on the importance of soft power does not ask for a country to underestimate the importance of hard power. Soft power is also a part of power and it ultimately is used to secure the goals of the country. Therefore there is another concept known as “Smart Power” and Joseph Nye goes forward to define it as, “the ability to combine the hard power of coercion or payment with the soft power of attraction into a successful strategy” (Nye 2010). Since the use and importance of hard power is known to almost all the countries in the world, there is the need to stress more on soft power so that some kind of balance is maintained, as in most of the countries the balance tilts more towards the hard aspects of power.

Soft power gives a country to get its desires fulfilled by making the countries of the world as well as its people to do things or to aspire what that country wants but without forcing them to do so. The countries follow the path of that country using its soft power through

the power of attraction. While public diplomacy is one of the ways of making the country generate its soft power, media acts as an important channel for public diplomacy to acquire the required goals. By acting as a medium of communication media also brings about cooperation between countries by bringing the countries together and instilling a feeling of community (Yukaruc 2017). Van Ham (2012) explains the role of media further by stating, “where culture is the glue keeping societies together, media offer the required infrastructure through which these social attachments are made and solidified” (Ham 2012:91).

The circulation of wealth, power and information is building a vigorously associated multi-polar world. Globalisation thus binds all the countries and its people together. Social media and other forms of globalisation make the countries of the world responsible and responsive to national as well as global public opinion. It is not just the countries but also the people that get connected through globalisation. Increase in people to people cultural connections makes the dissemination of information unstoppable. Countries thus, are showing their interest in enhancing or building their soft power which does not need tanks or economic embargo to impose their authority. Soft power permeates through boundaries and makes the country look attractive through the spread of its culture, education, language and values, and this indirectly derives consent out of others without coercion, through the power of persuasion.

Umut Yukaruc (2017) criticises soft power in three ways. First, he criticises soft power on the basis of measurement that there is no proper way of finding out in actual terms as to how much a country has improved or even regressed with regard to its soft power. This way one really does not understand as to which country is doing better than the other and in what measure. Second, he opines that soft power is not original in its approach and is similar to so many other concepts that have emerged earlier. For example in some respects it is close to Antonio Gramsci’s hegemony in that both ultimately look for garnering legitimacy which certainly involves consent. Third, he goes on to state that there is lack of clarity with regard to the agents or structures that are responsible for a country’s soft power and there is no difference between hard and soft power when it comes to the aims and objectives. He states that whether other factors other than states

have equal role to play, which of the agents have more and which ones have less contribution with regard to the attainment of soft power goals is not quite lucid (Yukaruc 2017).

However there is a requirement to recognize the fact that soft power is also seen to be transient in nature, that is to say that certain things that take years to build up can disappear gradually “if right institutions are undermined and the wrong decisions are made” (British Council 2015). It takes years to construct a positive picture of a given country but a wrong action taken can negatively affect the country’s image. However, soft power is the compelling solution to global problems. It also safeguards the national integrity of a country. If a country is successful in acquiring soft power then it will naturally create a suitable environment for business, education, tourism, thus improving its economic condition; as well as raises its stature in the eyes of the global population, and thus slowly supporting its hegemony over others. Generating closeness and considerate display of attitudes between people augments a state’s safekeeping and thus leading to peaceful coexistence. Soft power helps in reinforcing institutions and civil society, and revitalizing the economic affluence that is essential in carrying forth the task of development to weak countries (Ibid).

Highlighting the importance of soft power does not imply that a country can solely survive on it. Power is power whether it is hard or soft. It in the end serves the interest of the one using it. However while the traditional realists stress on the use of hard power as the outcomes are more visible and requires just the ability, of the one using power, to bring about the desired outcomes; in the long run the country using it will perish by the same power it so blatantly exercises. There is a need for a balance between hard and soft power. Soft power and hard power are on the opposite ends of the same continuum. Depending on what a situation demands a country needs to change the mode. While through centuries the importance of hard power has been highlighted, soft power has been working subtly behind the curtains of various countries making them sustainable. Every country understands the importance of hard power but there is a need to stress on the role of soft power for maintaining a perfect balance. For economically strong countries maintenance of hard power resources is easier and they use that power to put

pressure on other states to get the desired outcomes. However the ease of access of hard power resources may not be the same for smaller states. Soft power on the other hand can be utilized by any state irrespective of their size or strength but will depend on the correct way of using the already available resources and making it attractive to others.

According to Smith-Windsor (2000), the boundaries separating hard and soft power are not very clear and distinct. That is to say that hard power and soft power go hand in hand to bring about the desired results. He opines that even the armed forces can appear attractive if it is “called to participate in humanitarian and interposition peacemaking operations” (Smith-Windsor 2000). Therefore for Windsor, the use of armed forces in such an instance will shift from the hard power end to the soft power end of the same continuum. The combination of hard and soft power leading to the formation of “smart power” is an idea brought forth by Nye and Nossel. Smart power lays importance on both hard power and soft power. It does accentuate the importance of hard power but alongside it encourages “investments on alliances, partnerships and institutions” (Ibid).

Steinberg (2008) is of the opinion that sole reliance on hard power will be detrimental to any country in the long run. Steinberg states that an example of the ineffective use of foreign policy by laying more stress on hard power is the ‘invasion of Iraq’ in 2003. By doing so the Bush administration not only disregarded the USA’s dependence on its allies but also disregarded the global popular support and opinion altogether. It also didn’t give importance in providing the legitimacy of such a war. Overall, too much reliance on coercion overruled the significance of consent and thereby disregarding the soft power of US. The invasion of Iraq not only cost the popularity of Bush but also that of US in the international scenario (Steinberg 2008). According to Joseph Nye (2011), the use of smart power is neither to justify coercive power nor to lay more stress on hegemony but it is rather “about finding ways to combine resources into successful strategies in the new content of power diffusion and the ‘rise of the rest’” (Nye 2011). While the big countries can boast about their hard power resources, Nye states that the small ones are more proficient in the use of smart power. Singapore and Switzerland are examples of such countries displaying the use of smart power. Singapore has built its hard power resources strong enough to dissuade its enemies and larger states but at the same time it has focused

on diplomatic ties in the South Asian nations and used its “universities as hubs of networks of non-governmental activities in the region” (Ibid). Switzerland has also made use of its geographical location to safeguard its region as well as focused on compulsory military service thereby building its base for hard power. Alongside, it also focuses on the idea of making it appear attractive through, banking, tourism, commercial and other cultural networks (Nye 2011). Therefore countries like these show the importance of both hard as well as soft power. Reliance on smart power can strike a balance between the traditional realists and the liberals. Since the world is already aware about the importance of hard power and in a country like Russia there is enough emphasis on coercive power, there is a need for emphasising more on the importance of soft power for the betterment of not just a particular country but for the global community.

Despite the advantages of soft power, its role in foreign affairs of the world, and being a topic of discussions among a number of scholars, and leaders, it has evolved feebly in theory and has not got the acknowledgment it deserves. Whatever little is evolving in theory there are not many proofs in history about it being applied to a country in its genuine form (Gallarotti 2011). Even if the countries of the world claim to have soft power it is more of propaganda or a promotion. Of course they are important factors for a country to be recognised in the world but by solely relying on it, countries can only build a hollow power that looks like soft power but will crumble as soon as the realities come to the forefront. And, given the fact that it is the age of globalisation, a country really cannot hide its flaws or weaknesses for a long time; unless it keeps itself and its people cut off from the rest of the world which again only generates fear and negative conjecture. An image of a country is how a country is perceived by the others. Whether it is negative or positive depends on the actions of that country at home and abroad. By projecting its image to the world that does not correspond to its activities does not make a country attractive, and is also disconcerting for other countries that are trying hard to build an attractive image.

1.3. SOFT POWER IN THE CONTEXT OF RUSSIA

With Russia differing from the West in many aspects, it will be interesting to see how Russia defines its soft power. There is a need to understand Russia’s soft power through

the numerous transformations it has undergone. The earlier Tsarist state of Russia was replaced by the Russian Revolution leading to the formation of the first ever communist state in the world, in the form of the Soviet Union. However in 1991, the dissolution of the Soviet Union resulted in the formation of a new Russia. In every phase, there was the emergence of different images of the Russian state, which led to the creation of its soft power capabilities. The Revolution of Russia brought about a different turn in the history of Russia and it left the world shaken. However what shook the world again was the downfall of communism. The alternate reality to capitalism lost its ground and left new Russia lost and confused with series of challenges thrust upon it.

The reforms of 1991 and 1992 in Russia had a huge impact on not just the economy of Russia but also on the political, social and cultural aspects of life. Many cultural theorists and scholars have studied the changes that have occurred and come up with a variety of responses to the ideological alteration as well as confrontations to identity, resulting from the transition period. The effects of the transition period are still felt in Russia even though the country has come a long way in trying to achieve stability. Scholars however have now started to look at the ways Russia is trying to rise again and to establish itself as a strong power at par with the West. Its relationship with the West thus remains a complex one because of the past as well as the present where Russia still has not given up on its dreams and still tries to fight the hegemonic character of Western countries, especially the US. While Russia's focus on its defence and security has always been of interest to the scholars of international relations, its recent interest in fighting against its negative image is also starting to raise the curiosity of various scholars.

Vladimir Putin, President of post-Soviet Russia made the concept of soft power more pronounced in 2013, when he defined "soft power as a comprehensive toolkit for achieving various foreign policy objectives" (Putin 2012). This new vision to soft power is supposed to depend on the sources of "civil society potential, information, cultural and other methods and technologies alternative to traditional diplomacy" (Ibid). An organisation called "Rossotrudnichestvo" formed by then President Dmitry Medvedev on 6 September 2008, aspires to uphold the influence of Russia in the Commonwealth of

Independent States (CIS). Ruskiy Mir and Gorchakov Fund are similar organisations functioning on the cultural diplomacy aspect (Ibid).

Even though there is an attempt to increase Russian soft power abroad, it is seen to be thwarted by the presence of its negative stereotypes. The Western hostility against Russia increased with Russia's rise of interest in the European region, especially after its victory over Napoleon. Russian culture was perceived to be a barbaric one. Gradually there was a change in the Western perception of Russia. The Soviet period of modernisation was seen by the West in positive terms and the defeat of Fascism by Soviet Union also added to its increasing foreign policy influence. However with the start of Cold War, both Russia and the West especially USA started viewing each other with distrust and hence the Russian stereotypes continued, that had started in the early fifteenth and sixteenth century (Golubev 2013: 56-57). The Cold War period portrays the high level of distrust and detestation between Russia (Soviet Union) and United States of America.

With regard to the perception of Russia in the West and precisely in the United States, it can be said that it is very negative. The Russians from the onset have whined about the antagonism and apathy of the West to Russia and its culture. Russia claims that the West does not understand its culture and had often viewed it from afar. It has not tried to comprehend the Russian culture in depth like they do with their own. Instead, it has often judged Russian artists, writers and composers with stereotypes expecting the Russians to be 'Russians', that is to say their art is easily notable "by the use of folk theme, by onion domes and the sound of bells" (Figs 2002: xxxi). Russia's culture is additionally diverse and affluent, and is not restricted to the clichéd image of Russia made by the West.

However it is seen through Hollywood to Mc Donalds that the United States has become very popular and touched every aspect of people's life projecting the so-called "American dream" to the millions of people of the world. The Western countries also claim to have strong political values and represent themselves as models of democracy. The US is known throughout the world for its commercial, rather than state-sponsored culture. Imperialism and expansion are normally used terms by the West to build a negative image of Russia (Taras 2013:1). Valentina Feklyunina (2013) also talks about 'Russophobia' to explain Russia's identity in international relations and how this topic

has become considerably more pressing in the second period of Vladimir Putin's presidency. The murder in Moscow of a prominent critic of the Kremlin, journalist Anna Politkovskaya added to the negative image of Russia in the West and led to more criticism by the West on Russia (Feklyunina 2013: 615).

The Western mass media and particularly of the United States acts as a hindrance in Russia's road to soft power. The biasness of the United States media and press can be traced right from the period after the breakdown of the Soviet Union whereby the Western media projected the period to be a legitimate period where all the acts of Boris Yeltsin were justified in the name of transition from 'Communism to Democracy' (nsarchive.gwu.edu 2018). However on the other hand they portray the present period under Putin as illegitimate politics at home or abroad. The media has thus acted as a barrier in Russia's improvement of soft power image abroad because the United States hegemony is victorious in projecting a negative image of Russia, which is taken at face value by some countries. For instance in the case of Russian involvement in Syria, Georgia and the annexation of Crimea has been highlighted in a negative manner by the western media. Thus, the Western press and mass media have tried to obliterate the opportunity of Russia to improve its image and to promote its attractive culture. Nevertheless Russia's image in countries like China, India, few Central Asian and developing countries is quite positive despite the western attempts to neutralise Russia's efforts in these regions.

It is true that soft power of a country is dependent on its own culture, values and ideas; it is what makes the country attractive to others. However, soft power of a country is also influenced by the portrayal of a country's image in the world. Hence, when image is one of the determinants of soft power, it should be noted that a country's image (positive or negative) is created not just out of its own doings inside the country but also at the international level. At the international level, a country's image is also dependent on its relationship with other countries. Russia's relation with the West is not a recent one. The long history of their relationship therefore makes it more interesting to study the present relationship they share. One of the core past phases of their relationship is the 'Cold War' period, when the ideologies of the two super powers collided which did not lead to a war

literally but it in a way became the base/foundation of their present relationship. The disintegration and the transition period also become important as the world sees a different image of Russia after being used to the superpower status of its predecessor the Soviet Union. Russia in the 90s was therefore perceived by the world as a weak economy and distorted politically as well as socially. The West during this period has perceived Russia as a weakling that is dependent on it. This is because the US started to feel superior as it considered itself to have emerged victorious in the Cold War leading to the 'fall of the iron curtain, the collapse of communism and the disintegration of the Soviet Union'. Under Putin Russia again saw hope of rising at par with the Western countries. The reign of Putin has indeed been successful in raising Russia from the shambles of 90s but of course with major blemishes on its image. Russia is seen to be as the authoritarian state that does not fit into the standards of the Western liberal values. In its defence, Russia has come up with its own version of democracy, the Sovereign Democracy so as to counter the Western democratic liberal system that in a way serves as a yardstick to measure the democracies across the globe. Despite relying heavily on hard power strategies Russia's decision to pave its way towards attaining soft power has received many criticism from the West as according to them Russia is incapable of being a soft power nation. Like it has come up with its own notion of democracy as well as taken a firm stand against the unipolarity of the US, Russia dares to include soft power in its foreign policy. It therefore becomes interesting to study soft power of a country that otherwise is portrayed as being authoritarian by the Western mass media and press.

Russia's adoption of soft power in its foreign policy by Vladimir Putin is a significant step even though the journey towards being a country that is reliant on soft power will be long and a difficult one considering Russia's image in the world. Russia's use of soft power seeks to counter the hegemonic neo-liberal notions of western soft power. By doing so it generates its own adaptation of soft power that will take time to be accepted in the rest of the world, that mostly sees through the prism of Western centric soft power but it will definitely create a Russo-centric soft power in the post Soviet states (Hung Le 2016). However whether it is creating its own version of soft power or following the Western centric notions of it, the basic tenets of soft power remain the same; that it cannot be achieved without the consent of the target country or region or even its people.

Therefore Russia's quest for soft power will generate a lot of curiosity for the rest of the world and especially the Western countries that refuse to perceive it in the light of soft power and have constantly depicted Russia in a negative light.

Despite the fact that Nye being the proponent of soft power does not truly consider Russia as a soft power country, we cannot disregard the fact that Russia does have capabilities to attain its soft power goals. History is the greatest example witnessing the potential of Russia in having an attractive image and having a strong influence in many countries, which are essential features of soft power. Even Joseph Nye himself has not been able to deny the influence of Soviet Union and has stated that, "in terms of soft power, following World War II, communist ideology was attractive in Europe because of its resistance to fascism, and in the Third World because of its identification with the popular movement towards decolonisation" (Herpen 2016). Therefore it can be said that Russia's history has traces of soft power which cannot be ignored. Soviet Russia's space exploration and Yuri Gagarin as an individual himself has been a great source of soft power. However, the pool of soft power in Russia started to dry after the Soviet leadership decided to crush the Prague Spring.¹ This way the communist ideology that was spreading its roots across the world slowly started to shrink. According to Sergey Karaganov, a Russian analyst the reliance of Russia on hard power is due to the fact that it lives in a dangerous world where there is no safety for it. Hence it switches on its defensive style for which it relies chiefly on military abilities. It is also true because present day Russia's soft power is not strong enough to act as a shield to repel the attacks from various countries, organisations or groups. This is to say that Russia's soft power which mostly relies on social, cultural, political and economic factors lacks attractiveness which makes it rely more on hard power (Ibid).

The magnitude of Russia's positive image abroad will get highlighted with little more focus on soft power as it will make it ready and strong enough to face any form of setbacks and attacks. That is why soft power is a key to handling matters in a manner

¹ The Prague Spring marked the period of liberalization in Czechoslovakia during the time of its domination by Soviet Union. It was on 20 August 1968 that Soviet Union with its Warsaw troops invaded Czechoslovakia and crushed the reformist trends. While this action was successful in halting the movement, it cost the Communist their unity (Office of the Historian, Milestones).

where the policies of a country are seen attractive or legitimate in the eyes of the other and getting its work done without the help of coercion.

1.4. FACTORS EXPLAINING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RUSSIAN AND WESTERN SOFT POWER

TABLE 1.

THEMES :-	a. RUSSIA	b. WEST
1. Cultural Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mongol invasion (Tatar influence in Russian culture). - Missed the Enlightenment period and Renaissance. - Under the Romanovs: Russia highly tilted towards the European culture (esp. under Peter the Great). - Impact of Socialist culture after October Revolution (e.g. socialist realism). - Major role of religion (Orthodox Christianity) in the politics and society of Russia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Influence of ancient Western Philosophy (Greek and Roman). - Influence of the Renaissance and Reformation period. - Impact of Scientific Revolution. - Impact of Industrial Revolution. - Tradition of rationalism. - Role of Christianity.
2. Political Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stress on <i>silnaya ruka</i> (strong ruler). - Involvement of State in the various affairs of the country. - Weak Opposition. - Mass media and NGOs partially free. - Nationalism above human rights. - Challenge to Western Liberalism (Putinism, Sovereign Democracy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stress on individual liberty. - Limited role of the State. - Strong Opposition. - Freedom of speech and expression (including mass media and press). - Stress on human rights and liberty. - Champion of liberal democracy and neo liberalism (market reforms).
3. Foreign Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Champions of Third World countries in the past. - Tries to keep the US/Western Hegemony on check. - From policy of pragmatism (Primakov) to normalisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concentrates on the spread of liberal democracy. - Hegemonic in character; regards themselves as champions of democracy. - Foreign aid to developing countries.

	<p>of Russian foreign policy (under Putin).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aims to create an alternative discourse of power. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Includes themes such as war on terror and war on drugs. - Gives importance to public diplomacy.
4. Image abroad after Cold War	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Failure of communist ideology and thus Russia losing its super power status. - Crumbling of economy (Shock Therapy, its image as a corrupt and unstable country unsuitable for business and investment). - Rise of Putin and the gradual achievement of stability. - Image as a country aiming to be an energy superpower. - Various events however adding to its negative image (restraining of opposition voices, human rights). - Focus on hard power ambitions (annexation of Crimea and its portrayal by Western media). - Budding soft power balancing the negative image. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Victory of liberal democracy (world shifting towards unipolarity). - Appearing as champions of neo-liberal policy and market reforms. - Hegemony of the Western world (portraying their culture as superior). - Using democracy as a pretext to justify all their actions adding to the negative image of US and the other Western countries supporting such actions (e.g. the war on Iraq). - Rise of China to dominance challenging America's dominance in Asia. - Challenge to Western solidarity (e.g. Brexit).
5. Role of the leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong ruler (<i>silnaya ruka</i>, seen right from the very early periods of Russian history). - Putin as the main hero of Russia. Less room for public participation. - Excessive involvement of the flag bearers of the country in the affairs of the country (socio-political and economic) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emphasis on strong but charismatic personality. - Democracy as the main hero in the Western countries. - Emphasis on people's participation in the affairs of the State. - Gap between ideal and real behaviour. -Strong opposition keeps the leadership on check.
6. Span of influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mostly concentrated in the CIS region. - Influence elsewhere- mostly thwarted by its image portrayed by Western mass media and press. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Huge influence of Western hegemony (especially through its mass media and press). - Tries to reach out to almost all the countries of the world through the power of

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Influence in regions other than CIS - mainly based on its supply of defence related matter and energy resources. - It shares strong cultural ties with India (mostly focused on past ties rather than present). 	<p>attraction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gives heavy importance to Track II diplomacy for reaching out to its audience.
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In the table above, we can see that six themes are taken under consideration to understand the difference between Russia and the West.

1. Cultural background: The cultural background shows that Russia unlike the West has missed the Renaissance and Enlightenment period as it was under the Mongol yolk and was cut off from the rest of the world. While Russia did lose out on the period of great reforms, it developed its own unique culture that had the influence of Tatar culture in its own Slavic culture. Russia's culture was also influenced by the Western culture especially under the Romanovs and later it had the influence of socialist culture; all of it making its culture an exclusive one. This also makes Russia's culture different from the Western one.

2. Political values: Russia's socio cultural background plays a major role in shaping its political values. From the very beginning of Russian history, Russia has sought help of a strong ruler or "*silnaya ruka*" (Sixsmith 2011), who in turn proved to deliver success in bringing stability which the Russians have always sought. This trend can be seen as a reliance of Russians on a particular leader or the State in general. It shows the trust they have in their capabilities. Whether it was in the time of the earlier Tsars, Lenin, Stalin or even Putin, Russia has always seen the involvement of its leader or State in its socio-political and economic affairs.

However the scenario is different in the Western countries. Despite many of the Western countries having a history of a monarchical rule, these countries have slowly, under the influence of various reform movements, moved towards rationality and individual liberty. Liberalism paved its way into the Western soil, demanding for liberty and democracy. The Russians believe that the Western liberal democracy is not suitable for every country

and they came up with their own version of ‘Sovereign Democracy’.² The term ‘sovereign democracy’ claims that Russia is a democratic country and that this claim is final. It stands as a warning to other countries especially the Western ones, that any kind of attempt to “verify” it or question it will be regarded as “meddling in Russia’s domestic affairs” and will not be tolerated (Lipman 2006). Russia uses this term in an attempt to explain that it is not absolutely correct to treat Western liberal democracy as a yardstick in understanding democracy in the world and that there can be many versions of democracy depending upon their history and present situation. Therefore Russia regards the Western attempt to “democratise the world” as a threat to the countries’ sovereignty (Polyakov 2007).

3. Foreign policy: It is one of the important sources of soft power. Russia’s gradual evolution of foreign policy is quite interesting to study. Whether as a champion of the Third World during the Soviet period or following the policy of pragmatism and multilateralism after the disintegration, Russia’s foreign policy has tried to challenge Western hegemony in every stage. Challenging Western hegemony means increasing the hostility of the Western countries towards Russia. The West sees itself as the champion of democracy and seeks to spread their version of liberal democracy. The countries that do not fall under the umbrella of Western values come under the attack of Western mass media and press, and Russia continues to feature as a threat in the Western foreign policy.

The West continues to include themes such as ‘war on terror’ and ‘war on drugs’ in its foreign policy and portrays its image as fighting for peace and human rights. The West heavily relies on the art of public diplomacy and track II diplomacy, which the Russians are yet to master.

4. Image abroad after Cold War: Certainly, the image of Russia in the world, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union was not quite impressive. The fall of socialist ideology was seen by the West as the decline of the ‘communist’ ideology as a whole, which posed a threat to the Western values of liberal democracy. With the fall of Soviet Union, the

² ‘Sovereign Democracy’ is a term coined by Vladislav Surkhov in the year 2006 in a gathering of Russia’s United Party. Thereafter it has been used by various political leaders including President Putin to differentiate their form of democracy especially from the Western one.

West led by the US appeared stronger and more stable. However gradually Russia regained its stability but as done in the past, it was once again done by a strong ruler. While Russia came back in the international scene, it displayed a very strong hard power image. Recent events in the international showground have again brought both Russia and the West back in the Cold War like situation, where both are hostile towards each other and both sides have been trying to tarnish the image of each other.

5. Role of leader: One of the main differences between Russian and Western soft power can be understood in terms of the involvement of state or a leader in the affairs of the country and its people. While the West boasts about liberty and people's participation and regards state as just as an instrument for the protection of people's liberty, Russia believes in a strong ruler and a strong state that can not only act as a custodian of individual rights but also as one that is steering the wheel of the country. In the West too there may be a huge gap between theory and practice but the opposition is strong to check the government or the leader in power which is not quite true in the case of Russia.

6. Span of influence: Although soft power is difficult to measure but often it has been measured by looking at the span of influence of a country. Russia's soft power ambitions are mostly confined to its 'Near Abroad' whereas that of West's appears to be widespread. Through the help of its mass media and by focusing its attention on track II diplomacy, the West has managed to portray its positive image in the world, at least in terms of market, where it has been selling its way of life through movies, commercials and social media. However it is only a half-hearted way of judging a country's soft power capabilities. Russia has been gradually releasing its soft power ambitions and its influence is seen in most of the CIS region. The effort is sometimes negated by its big-brotherly act.

Both Russia and the West have their own way of looking at the international scenario. Various factors mentioned above play an important role in explaining their behaviour. Therefore there should be different ways of understanding soft power. International actors play complex roles and share complex relationships with each other and that is why their ways of understanding power dynamics is also quite complex. As long as the basic tenets of soft power is fulfilled, such as relying on attraction rather than coercion to

get an intended task done, it should not matter whether it is according to the Western standard or not. Power is power whether hard or soft; in the end they fulfil the motives of a particular country. However relying on soft power would involve lesser risk and danger to the entire world.

1.5. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

With the above backdrop in mind, we can discuss the literature that help us in understanding the complexities of Russia's quest for soft power and the complex relationship it shares with the West. The review of literature can be divided into four parts. The first deals with the theoretical understanding of Soft Power as seen by Joseph Nye, the various other views on soft power and its applications and its limits. The second theme deals with Russia's policy in building its soft power abroad, the third deals with the image of Russia in the West.

Theoretical framework of Soft Power

Firstly, there is a need to understand what soft power is as understood by different scholars. The idea of soft power needs to be broadened from its traditional understanding. Although 'Soft Power' was coined by Joseph Nye, it bears resemblance to 'hegemony', that is understood through 'rule through consent. This is present in Zahran and Ramos's (2010) argument which gives a Gramscian angle on soft power and detects prominent semblance between soft power and hegemony. However, they state that Nye overlooks certain facet of Gramscian hegemony, thus weakening his own concept. He does not identify intrinsic coercive mechanisms within consent, struggle over ideas and institutions in the international system, distinction between spheres of political and civil society and complex relation of behaviours, resources and strategy.

Soft power has largely been western centric in approach and its often understood in terms of certain values and ideas that the Western countries uphold. This is why Joseph Nye does not believe that countries like Russia and China are in a position to build soft power because according to him they do not understand its basic ideas. It is a much tapered view of soft power and excludes countries who do not share the same view as the West from its purview. In this context, Yelena Osipova (2013) brings forth an appealing point about

the different nations sharing different world view, yet wanting to share the benefits that “soft power” offers in the present world, Russia being one of these countries. The author believes that Russia too has a diverse way of looking at various issues; hence its way of dealing with soft power also may not be the same as any other Western country for that matter. On the other hand, Giulio M. Gallaroti (2011) tries to understand the complexities of soft power and also tries to situate it in international relations. The prime argument of his article according to our understanding is that soft power is basically an invention of “globalisation” because of which there has been flow of information and each nation trying to imitate the other but through cooperation.

In some cases soft power has also been analysed as being totally ineffective as they do not believe in the role played by individuals and society in the decision making process of the State and for some soft power without hard power is insignificant. Such views take away the eccentricity of soft power making it look unproductive. Therefore they believe in broadening the definition of soft power in order to prevent it from becoming ‘too soft’ in its approach. Christopher Layne (2010) thus problematises the definition and the causal mechanism of soft power. The definition of soft power has expanded to include even a carrot and stick philosophy, especially in the realm of policy-making. Besides, bureaucratic decision-making process of a state can never be influenced by individual preferences, especially those of the civil society (relative autonomy). That portrays soft power totally ineffective. Similarly even a much more balance viewpoint by Ernest Wilson fails to do justice to soft power. Ernest Wilson (2008) argues that embracing “Smart power”, that is the combination of both soft and hard power becomes a necessity for security purposes and for a more balanced and realistic foreign policy objectives. However by trying to bring about a more balance viewpoint and by stressing on smart power, Wilson does not focus much on the strengths and importance of soft power and its contribution to the well being of the nation.

We should understand that Soft power is not measurable as hard power but it is also true that this cannot be denied as it does play a major role in international relations which the Realists would find it hard to accept. However for Realists the concept of soft power will look vague and confusing as they believe that soft power does not provide direct results

and is not concrete. Moreover for the realists the state is of primal importance which in the case of soft power is seen to be quite absent. This is emphasised by Ying Fan (2008) who questions the whole notion of soft power as being very ambiguous and perplexing. She states that the basic connection between 'attraction' and 'influence' creates problems of lack of clarity as to which particular group would find a particular aspect attractive. Moreover if soft power does not quite belong to the State or government, Fan argues 'who' possesses it. By arguing that soft power may be appealing to just some people in a certain context, Fan gives a criticism of the structural aspects of soft power. The criticisms of Fan can be regarded as fair as Nye gives a very blur view of soft power. It is also true that by taking soft power away from State or government it totally disregards countries such as the former Soviet Union and present Russia to some extent, where State or government despite being a strong authority, these countries still had or has soft power which Nye fails to acknowledge. However it should also be noted that Fan also gives a very Realist argument as she sees the relationship between 'attraction' and 'influence' as a confusing phenomenon.

While most scholars today do not stress more on hard power, it is also true that they find Nye's notion of soft power problematic as it has some loose ends which pulls it down. Through its lack of clarity, it makes one difficult to understand as what exactly makes soft power. Despite the various criticisms on Nye's concept of soft power the fact still remains that it was Nye who gave a new bend to the Realist way of depending more on hard power resources. It was his analysis that "attraction" can gain more outcomes that may take time but are genuine in the sense that they include the consent of the receiver. In this regard it can be said that scholars Pinar Bilgin and Berivan Elis (2008) view power both hard and soft from a very complex viewpoint and state that power cannot be restricted to just one dimension. They state that the realists stress too much on hard power that focuses on just one aspect of power and neglect the multiple sources of power that are both visible and non visible. With regard to soft power they describe it to be too shallow and unclear especially with regard to its expression of 'attraction'.

With globalisation and the shrinking of the world, borders have become porous therefore making the role of States irrelevant. This is also said to be true with regard to soft power

and consequently Keohane and Nye (1998) discuss how soft power can burgeon in the information age. They also state that in the coming days there will be broad array of such technology communication and information flow. Keohane and Nye thus totally disqualify the role of State or the government in the formation of soft power. This would again make it more complicated when applied to countries such as Russia or former Soviet Union as it appears to be more Western centric in approach. The flow of information which they talked about did make it easy for the countries to use their soft power in achieving the desired results but the information age has also unleashed chaos in the global world. Joseph Nye (2018) in his recent article talks about it by referring to the term 'Sharp power'.³

He opines that through the use of sharp power, the use of information for menacing reasons falls under the grouping of hard power. However his work also highlights the fact that it is complicated to make a distinction between soft power and sharp power, although they are very different in their goals. His article shows us that soft power is neither good nor bad in its own. It is just a means to accomplish the desired results through desirability and not force but all that comes through attraction is not soft power as attraction can also happen through deception and in the information age sharp power can easily harm other countries. Nye therefore shows the Western countries as victims at the hands of authoritarian countries like Russia and China.

Russia's policy in building its soft power abroad

It is true that Russia has not achieved great success with regard to its soft power image abroad or at least in terms of the "Western" idea of soft power as propounded by Joseph Nye. However the New Foreign Policy Concept of Russia in the year 2012 included soft power as "necessary toolkit" to further Russia's image abroad (Putin 2012). In this regard there are many writings that focus on the efforts made by Russia to enhance its

³ It is a term coined by Christopher Walker and Jessica Ludwig of the National Endowment for Democracy, and the term refers to the information warfare that is being launched by authoritarian countries such as Russia and China. They contrast sharp power with soft power and state that the former is more to do with 'piercing, penetrating and perforating the political and information environment in the targeted countries' and the latter is about increasing the strength of a country through culture and values (Nye 2018).

soft power, and many which contradict the same idea and focus rather on Russia's failure to build its soft power image abroad.

Understanding Russia's strategies for soft power and how it is different from the West calls for understanding through the journey backwards to its rich cultural and political history. History of Russia makes us understand why it behaves or reacts in a certain way to a particular given issue. If we try to look at Russia through its historical background it becomes easy to understand its present. Orlando Figes and Martin Sixsmith bring to surface the history of Russia in an intriguing manner, highlighting those parts that make the reader understand why Russia is seen as a mysterious country. The work of Figes and Sixsmith also help us comprehend the contribution of the very early periods as well as the Tsarist period and the Soviet period to Russia's art, literature, lifestyle, as well as the whole societal and political structure of Russia.

Orlando Figes (2002) focuses on the cultural history of Russia. He brings to picture different faces of Russia, its European side as well as a uniquely Russian side and explain how the two are so different yet have been amalgamated beautifully in the course of Russian history. His work also highlights the Soviet culture, which is altogether a different phase of Russia. His work while touching the nitty-gritty details of cultural lives of those who have shaped Russia's culture also brings to light those aspects of Russian culture which explain why Russia is a uniquely rich cultural country. Martin Sixsmith's (2012) work involves an in-depth research and interviews that help us in tracing the legacy of Russia's culture and politics. It mostly deals in making the reader realise why Russia has been a country of extremes and 'contradictions' where the culture is seen to be vehemently rich, refined and sophisticated at one point of time and then in the other the culture is about work, struggle, labour and rights. Through history he tries to show why Russia has a strong affinity towards a 'strong ruler'. Overall the works of Figes and Sixsmith serve as a background to any research based on Russia's culture and politics.

There are many scholars who have written about the Soviet era, looking up to it as a great model for different countries while many are critical about its policies, the state control and the presence of a strong one party state which they feel does not give the Soviet period to be a democratic one. In this regard Randhir Singh (1992) highlights the

greatness of Socialism. His basic argument lies in the fact that Soviet Union was great because in a single decade it turned itself into the world's second largest industrial power. Its tenacity to uproot the ills of capitalism along with the defeat of Fascism, and the very way it acted in building socialism as its ideology acted as an instrument of Soviet attraction. Most importantly what he says about Soviet Union's attraction is that the Russian Revolution itself was an inspiration for many anti-capitalist revolutionary movements everywhere.

We see that Singh's basic argument in favour of Soviet Union was through its ideology and he believed that Soviet Union indeed made an honest attempt in building Socialism, bringing about various changes. However Tom Casier (1999) sees Soviet ideology as a pillar of power through which the Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU) established its monopoly, acquiring a central image. The loyalty of the masses was with the ideology and hence became incapable of forming their own opinions. Fyodor Lukyanov (2013) believes that the Soviet model was quite attractive compared to present Russia, as the former was based on social progress and justice and it had its ideology as an instrument for attraction. However, he also feels that solely reviving the old Soviet practices won't make it attractive anymore. This makes it clear that Soviet Union had an attractive image, hence a better soft power strategy.

The attractiveness of the USSR to the Third World nations is further explained by arguments of Mark N. Katz and Lewis Siegelbaum. Siegelbaum brings out a clear picture of Soviet Russia as a saviour and a friend of Third World countries, with examples such as the Cuban revolution and the close ties that existed with the Castro Government, brokering peace between India and Pakistan in 1966 and building up of University of Friendship of People on the outskirts of Moscow. Katz (1986) on the other hand talks about the difficulties to be faced by the Soviet Union while dealing with the third world countries. One such difficulty was the insurgencies of the guerrillas in these regions, facilitated by the West. Thus, we see that both the scholars accept the influence that the USSR had on these countries, of course with some caveats present.

However with regard to Russia after the fall of Soviet Union, Richard Pipes (1997), states that it is difficult for it to overcome all obstacles due to many reasons. He believes that

for a country like Russia, an easy transition is very difficult and that “the road to civil society” is a difficult one because Russia not only had to overcome the Communist legacy but also prior to that the Tsar legacy and the role of the profoundly attached Orthodox Church. He emphasises on the negative aspects of Russia’s past and fails to acknowledge what Russia can learn from the successes of the past. Similarly, Peter J.S. Duncan (2005) adds on to the same view and states that the experience of empire in both the Tsarist and Soviet periods gave Russians a weak sense of nationhood.

Dmitri Trenin (2009) looks into the details of how Russia’s foreign policy emerged gradually in its new shape. By bringing into light the state of Russia in the 1990s, he shows how Russia’s foreign policy under Putin slowly started to take a U-turn from the West, that neglected it during its most troubled times. However he expresses concern over the fact that Russia’s foreign policy under Putin also could not take it to directions that would be better for the country in the long run. He states that Russia needs to overcome its economic, social and political backwardness, and for that it can use its foreign policy as a tool which will be used for the betterment of the national interest and ‘soft power’ being an essential part of its foreign policy. While accordingly ‘soft power as a comprehensive toolkit’ for achieving Russia’s foreign policy objectives has been mentioned in its Concept of Foreign Policy for Russian Federation 2013, Andrey Makarychev (2011) believes that Russia views soft power merely as a ‘Western construct’ and this makes its initial steps into the world of soft power very ‘imitative’ as well as ‘reactive’. While Russia has been trying to build its soft power, Makarychev is of the opinion that Russia’s sceptical attitude towards issues like ‘human security’ as well as disinterest in ‘economic transparency and financial accountability’ hinders its growth further.

However Russia’s leadership is viewed by some as a factor that helps in building Russia’s into a stable country and thus improving its image abroad. In this light, Stephen Sestanovich (2000) tries to give a balanced view explaining Russia’s relations with the West to achieve a positive soft power image. He states that if Putin would go forward with the process of integration, it would lead to lifting of the economy, rise in relative political calm and even his image as an interpreter of Russia’s interests. In this regard,

Guerman Diligensky and Sergei Chugrov (2000) believe that Russian nationalism and consciousness is highly sensitive and vulnerable to the responses from West. They go on to state that Russia's isolation from the Western world would become a source of new tension and threats but Russia's modernisation and strengthening partnership with the West could contribute to a more stable globalised world order. It can be said that all these authors/scholars have tried to project Russia as being capable of improvements but treat it like a 'bear' that has to be trained by the West.

To understand Russia only in terms of its relationship with the West would be a half-hearted judgement as it has the right to be different from the West and their standards. Natalia Burlinova (2015) is quite optimistic about the rise of Russia's soft power. The author strongly believes that the history of Russia has shown that its attractiveness in West increases when Russia is seen to be weakening. However, Burlinova argues that when Russia occupies a strong position in the world, the West brings about a negative portrayal to the world. Therefore in defence she states that despite the fact that many Western experts view 'RT channel' as a mere propaganda tool of Kremlin, it has achieved enormous success. Thus it can be said that for Burlinova Russia's efforts to build its soft power has often been disregarded as propaganda especially because of the 'information war' between them. She however is very optimistic about the future of Russia's soft power.

It should be noted that Russia's soft power is also very much focussed on the former Soviet regions rather than other countries in the world, which can act in its favour but efforts should also be made to go beyond those borders to improve its soft power image. However James Sherr (2013) believes that Russia giving importance and key roles to the State should not be viewed negatively as the State is definitely an important player in Russia, especially with regard to matters related to diplomacy but he states there are other group of actors too that are equally important. He mentions that Putin has undertaken the task of opening up many new institutions, agency and foundations that are responsible for Russia's culture and language- 'Rossotrudnichestvo' being one such example that would help in promoting Russia's soft power abroad. Adding on to that view Dolinsky (2013)

states that with untiring effort put by this agency and the support provided by Putin, Russia can achieve great success in maintaining a strong cultural image abroad.

To understand Russia's policies in building its soft power it becomes imperative to understand how it views the concept of soft power. Iaroslav Kozak (2015) talks about soft power, the Russian way and mentions that on account of 'recognisability' the Russian place in the world is in itself a source of soft power. He states that the way Russia has stood independently by following or employing concepts such as 'sovereign democracy, traditional values, Russian World, multi-polar world and Eurasian integration' makes Russia a unique place in the 'global ideological landscape'. While one may disagree with Kozak, it also is necessary to understand that all such concepts may not be quite attractive in the eyes of the modern day world but it does give Russia an independent stand and acting as a counter to the Western ideas. Russia he states views soft power as being incompetent without the use of hard power. That is to say that it believes in the combination of both hard power and soft power. Kozak's reference to this combination of soft and hard power brings to light the importance of 'Smart power'.⁴ Kozak also mentions that within Russia there are voices that try to oppose/ criticise the 'conservative' view of soft power that counters American or Western notions of realism and calls for a multi-polar world order. However he believes that 'soft power' is a relatively new concept and because of its American origin, the American soft power thus becomes a yardstick for other countries. Viewing a country's soft power performance that is quite different from the US or even the West makes soft power a limited concept.

To understand further as to how Russia views soft power Yulia Kiselava (2015) states that it is necessary to understand how Russia sees the West. Kiseleva is of the opinion that the US and the West acting as hegemonic powers make the other countries position themselves in the global scenario in relation to and in interaction with the Western powers. Likewise Russian soft power can be understood not only in reference to the hegemonic Western counterpart but also as Russia's significant 'other'. Kiseleva explains

⁴ Smart power is a concept originally coined by Joseph Nye and has henceforth been used by many scholars refers to the use of soft as well as hard power strategies. It has been defined by Centre for Strategic and International Studies as being an 'integrated strategy, resource base and toolkit to achieve American objectives, drawing on both hard and soft power'.

the complex relationship between Russia's soft power and the way it perceives the West as the 'other'. Russia's inability to seek acceptance from the West makes its discourse on soft power very restrictive and competitive. She states that the 'love-hate' relationship that Russia has with the West makes the Russian soft power dual in nature that is by adopting soft power as well as rejecting it with the pretext that it's related to the Western hegemonic standards. However Kiseleva also states that this 'duality' in itself stands as a unique source of soft power.

Russia's connection with the former Soviet States can act as a blessing as well as a curse. Russian Diasporas in these regions after the breakup of the union can act in its favour due to their need to belong to Russia. However it is also true that Russia should not be overbearing on them. It should instead help these regions in overcoming their problems rather than being a problem to them. Jaroslave Cwiek-Karpowicz (2012) argues that Russia however does have great soft power potential and actually enjoys a very advantageous position in the former Soviet regions. Numerous factors like their common nostalgia for their lost Soviet world as well as the language that keeps them somehow together and of course its energy potential and its popular culture are attractive. However his basic argument is that Russia instead of attracting those who do not share similar views; it tries to please those who already agree with them. Only by changing Russia internally, by building on its economic potential can it really attract the former Soviet regions. On a similar note we can mention the opinion of Xuan Hung Le (2016) who is critical of Russia's soft power in its 'Near abroad' and states that it creates its own versions of soft power. It therefore counters the neo-liberal interpretation of soft power which leads to the formation of Russo-centric hegemony in the post-Soviet space. Russia's soft power in this area is based on "unresolved territorial conflicts" that act as an obstacle in forming an effective cooperation with these countries, which is actually necessary for building a strong foundation of soft power.

On the other hand there are scholars like Fiona Hill, Andrei P. Tsygankov and Kristina Liik, who provide us with a more balanced view. Kristina Liik's basic argument focuses on the role played by Putin and states that many opinion polls show Putin as the most trusted politician. While dealing with countries, Moldova and Armenia, her research

suggests both affinities towards Russia as well as repulsion to the “brotherly” act of Russia. While Tsygankov’s (2006) main argument lies in Russia’s economic potentialities which in a way gives us the idea that Russia’s soft power in these former regions lies in its stable economy, when he states that Russia’s economy is being pretty attractive to foreign labour from Caucasus. He too brings out a positive role in building Russia’s stable image in these regions. While Kristina Liik (2013) focuses more on culture, Tsygankov relies on Russia’s economy for its soft power in these regions. Fiona Hill (2006) too believes that Russia’s soft power potential lies in its “oil and gas” strategies and it can lead to its earlier superpower status at least as an energy superpower. We, therefore see that some scholars are highly optimistic about Russia’s soft power in the former Soviet areas, especially through its economic potential and the leadership of Vladimir Putin. However, they have not talked much about whether the economic attraction will be beneficial for the former Soviet regions too and whether by relying more on economic potential will lead to more dependence of these countries on Russia. As some have mentioned about the various policies that the government has been planning to undertake there is no mention about the application of such policies on these regions and its implications

Image of Russia in the West

There are many articles written by various scholars about Russia’s image in the West. Aleksander V. Golubev, Valentina Feklyunina and Vladimir Rukavishikov have tried to understand the various aspects of Russia’s global image. Aleksander Golubev (2013) tries to bring about various notions of Russia’s image and how it was formed, which according to him is mostly negative. He shows Russia under Communist rule lacked proper freedom of thought or expression. He also talks about forced modernization during the Soviet time, especially under Stalin which was impressive to some countries but in the long run, it did prove harmful for the consciousness of the masses. This is however one way of understanding the negative image of Russia in the West. Here, it is unclear for us to come to a conclusion that either Russia itself was responsible for its negative image or the blame resting with the West for that.

Valentina Feklyunina (2013) refers to the concept of “Russophobia”. Feklyunina shows us that the negative image of Russia has been constructed, is not only the product of the Western way of looking at Russia but also to a greater extent deals with the Russians looking at themselves. As the author says when the Russians see the West as being Russophobic, it tells a lot about how the country views itself. This attitude of the Russians towards the Western criticism only makes it take a tougher stand, which in as the author says is “a securitizing move”, whereby every criticism of Russia is viewed as being a threat to the country.

Hence, what we can understand is that Feklyunina is not focussing on “whether it is wrong or right” or even providing solutions to any problem, because the author does not point out any problem. Vladimir Rukavishikov (2012) is highly impressed by President Vladimir Putin’s contribution to the process of building Russia’s image globally. Improving its internal or domestic problems is the prime focus of Rukavishikov as he points out at various problems of Russia like lack of proper democratic practices and increasing corruption. The matter of concern then for Russia is to improve not just its foreign policy but also to work on its internal domestic policies too which does contribute in making a country attractive.

In understanding Russia’s image, we need to consider the negative connotations that are tagged to its image especially by the West which to a certain extent can be due to viewing or judging it though the Western perspective. However, we should also keep in mind that, Russia’s image has been quite positive in some of the former Soviet regions, again with some caveats. Yelina Osipova (2013) believes that soft power is very Western in its approach and therefore tries to show that Russia’s approach is very different, for example, there is not much difference between soft power and public diplomacy in Russia. The author is trying to raise a fact that since Russia has its own distinct set of principles, its history and its present working ways or world view, there should be a different kind of theory guiding its ways, which uses different parameters for looking at Russia’s progress or failure in achieving success.

Therefore it can be said that there are many views with regard to the relationship that Russia and the West shares and how they perceive each other. These views also try to

make us understand why a particular country thinks in a particular way about the other country, especially with regard to their negative perceptions. Richard Sakwa (1999) brings out a balanced view with regard to the relationship between Russia and the West and argues that Russia trying to emerge as the 'New West' and its inability to integrate into the existing core shows the country's dilemmas with regard to the West. Simultaneously the West, he argues lacks a convincing idea within which it can understand or try to understand Russia's problems and concerns.

It is also interesting to study how Russia has been represented by the West in its media especially through Hollywood of America or through the news channels of the various western countries. It is interesting because these tools of the West and Hollywood in particular have been one of the main sources of their soft power abroad. Raymond Williams (1974) tries to highlight the role of communication technology in modern culture and argues that television and texts or novels contribute to our social construction of society. He also believes that behind the broadcast technology there have always been political and economic goals. Therefore it is motivating to understand the ways in which western mass media constructs the idea of Russia.

While there are many like Tom Brook (2014), and Elizaveta Vereykina (2015), who are of the opinion that the representation of Russia in Hollywood has been quite negative and that it affects Russia's image abroad; Sofia Raevskaya(2012) does not see such attempts by the West as a serious threat to Russia. Tom Brook mentions about various films such as 'The Avengers' and 'A Good Day to Die Hard' to name a few that have no dearth of Russian villains in the form of earlier KGB operative or simply Russian evil doers. He states that even the end of Cold war did not bring an end to Russian villains onscreen. He argues that although Russia represents the seventh biggest movie market in the world, the Hollywood and American studios risk push away one of its customers. Similarly, Elizaveta Vereykina (2015) states that Soviet and Russian characters have been portrayed in the character of enemies in dozens of American movies, with their exhibition of 'bold Russian accents, emotionless demeanour and cruel behaviour'.

For Sofya Raevskaya (2012) stereotypes of Russians in American films may not be a bad thing. She states that the way Hollywood films depict Russia can turn a thriller into a

comedy for the Russian viewer. She believe that despite such negative and stereotypical image of Russia by such movies, Russia has recently become an important market for Hollywood products and that even celebrities like ‘Tom Cruise’ and ‘Megan Fox’ have often come to promote their films. To support her view she brings forth the opinion of Viktor Alisov, a Russian film producer who also does not think that Hollywood directors should be blamed for distorting the images of Russians but he however blames other aspects of media that can affect Russia’s image abroad. Samuel F. Smith (2011) differs from this view as he argues that mass media can have a deep impact on the minds of the people and the way they perceive others. Through the examples of his own life he states that due to the stereotypical image of Russians in Hollywood movies and western media, he also had a negative image of Russia until he studies Russian culture closely. He states that such perception about other countries show lack of knowledge about the culture of Russia in America and also because of the role played by western media and press. Hence, now it has become a kind of trend and continues to reflect Russia in negative light.

Tony Shaw (2007) tries to explain the reasons behind such negative portrayal of Russians in Hollywood movies and therefore argues that Hollywood’s structure is more centralised than that of media or press and also because of country’s television service, cinema led the way in establishing the American media’s aggressive approach towards the Soviet Union. Therefore Shaw tries to explain that America has resorted to Hollywood to portray Russia in negative light right from Cold war period because of its effectiveness and according to Shaw, America believed that private organisation and individuals often conveyed propaganda messages with ‘greater flexibility and credibility’.

With regard to Russia’s portrayal in other media outlets such as news, Mihai Muscovici (2007) by studying three of the largest global news agencies- The Associated Press (AP), BBC, and Deutsche (DW), try to understand Russia’s portrayal in news stories produced in the year 2007. He states that his research showed that while the Russian public has a significantly more positive view of the rise of the United States power, the American public is hostile to an increase of Russian power. To this regard, the author believes that there is a high possibility of Western media playing an important role in cultivating such

perceptions about Russia. He therefore highlights the role played by media in negating a country's image.

David Halpin (2014), also writes on the similar line and states that western media has indeed tried to 'demonize' Russia and especially with regard to the recent Ukraine issue. He takes a subjective stand and says that the Russian annexation of Crimea, as called by the West, was done "without a single death". His views therefore clearly stand in favour of Russia.

On the same 'Ukraine' issue, Oleg Sukhov (2014) however argues that there has been "a tug of war between western media and pro-Kremlin media". He states that even Russian media has been accused of resorting to half-truths, distortions and even direct lies in their description of the Ukrainian authorities and protestors. His argument reflects that both the countries have used media as a weapon to 'demonise' each other and to justify their acts.

1.6. RATIONALE AND SCOPE OF STUDY

This study, 'Russia's quest for Soft Power and Western responses, 1991-2015' looks into Russia's efforts in building a positive image in the world and thus increasing its soft power. The study further examines how Russia's efforts in doing so are being affected by the portrayal of Russia by Western mass media and Western diplomacy. With regard to Russia and West's relation, this study will not look into the other aspects of power but will only focus on matters related to soft power because this study will try to understand how Russian modes of increasing its soft power standing in the world is thwarted by Western portrayal of Russia.

The study in trying to examine the ways in which Russia's soft power building efforts have been thwarted by the West will also analyse the history of their relationship. It will try to question the issues that the Western countries have with regard to Russia and its soft power. It will therefore try to understand whether the West's concerns over Russia is because it still sees Russia as creating an alternative discourse with regard to power and hence focuses on ways to demonize it.

However the study will also look into numerous areas where Russia might have been positively portrayed by the West. This study will also take in to consideration numerous avenues through which a more positive image of Russia is formed in the West by western based institutions. There will also be an attempt to study the impact of Russian mass media and the press in the post Soviet states where Russian language is still popular. There will also be a study of Russian press and media's portrayal of the West in these countries as well as inside Russia.

One of the main aims of this study is to see if Russia's perception of soft power is different from that of the West. Joseph Nye has time and again openly remarked on Russia and China's take on soft power and how according to him it is very far from the concept of soft power formulated by him. Through the chapters we will find out the ways in which Russia's soft power is different from that of the West and why is that so. By understanding this basic factor, it becomes easier to decode the responses of the West towards Russia's soft power ambitions, and how and why they perceive Russia in a negative light.

The review of literature shows us that most of the Western literature have been written from the Western perspective of soft power and therefore project a narrow understanding of Russian soft power. However the trend that is seen in most of the Western and Russian literature that have been referred to for this study is that they have tried to project an unbiased view. The understanding may have been narrow due to many constraints but the researchers have tried to view their matter from an objective point of view. Such an objective view has helped in undertaking this research in objective manner too. The Russian literature that have been refereed for this study give a fair understanding of Russia's history and its relationship with the West as well as the former Soviet States; all of which help in understanding the present day take on Russia's soft power. The Russian literatures are helpful in a way that the writers have the privilege of knowing the country inside out and understand the main sources of Russia's soft power as well as the challenges faced by it.

International relations although undergoing various changes has not been able to reach a level whereby it can come out of its narrow constraints of traditional realism that deals

mostly with political, economic, diplomatic and security factors. Other factors involving culture that also make huge impacts on the functioning of international relations has not been taken into account. There is a dearth of such cultural as well as non traditional angle of research been undertaken by the scholars of international relations.

Soft power although following the same path of realism, as it involves the play of power, takes into account the cultural aspect too which otherwise is not given much attention in the realist notion of international relations. Culture plays an important role in influencing the nature of social identities but it is unquantifiable making it difficult for the pioneers of international relations to understand its effect fully in degrees. Hence, concrete evidence to suggest the increase or decrease of soft power of any particular country is difficult to find in the literary sources.

Soft power is a Western centric theory and it is also difficult to be measured. Hence, it's difficult for us to understand whether countries like Russia has been working towards its soft power goals as it has its own history and the present world view also differs in some degrees. Hence, it may not be completely following Nye's way as then it will be unfair to look at the outcome of Russia's soft power in terms of the Western scale.

There is quite a lot of literature focussing on Russia's negative image in the West and all of which highlight mostly the role played by Russia's policies of imperialism or "controlled" ways for such an image of Russia. A gap now can be seen from the perspective of a one sided analysis, where a country is put to test in terms of "western liberal Democracy" or Western ideals but if viewed from the angle of the other country's ideals, there might be a different outcome than what has been emerging. A vast array of literature on the Soviet period focuses on the role of ideology and the CPSU. Although these two features are essential to understand Russia's soft power image, there are not many literature that focuses on its culture. Even if there are literatures on its culture, there is not many through the prism of soft power.

With regard to Russia's efforts in building its soft power, the available literature seems to mostly highlight what the Government or the leader has decided to do, but not on what has already been done and where have they lacked or progressed. A gap is also seen in

terms of its economic potential. Many literatures highlight the role of Russia's booming economy in achieving its soft power image but what has been missing is the fact that whether such focus on economic potential can lead Russia again to its "Hard power" strategies of "giving concessions" which is similar to Nye's "carrot and stick" method. There is also not much of a study done on Western based institutions and mechanisms that have tried to provide a different prospective on Russia.

There have been many work and studies conducted on the relationship between Russia and the West and few also on their image and how they perceive each other. However there is not much work done that directly consider the question of the soft power of Russia in terms of the relationship between Russia and the West. Therefore the significance of the study lies in the understanding the 'role' played by another country in the 'making and unmaking' of Russia's soft power. Nevertheless the work that have been done on the relationship between them and the literature that have been reviewed will form the base for this study and will therefore help in undertaking this research.

The thesis tries to argue that there are different ways of looking at soft power depending upon the historical background of that country, the present situation and the relationship it has with the 'hegemon' and other countries. It brings forth the idea that as long as a country is projecting an attractive image without the use of coercion, it possesses soft power even if it is different from that of Nye's notion of soft power. Another important narrative that the thesis has tried to highlight is that history is an important factor in understanding the present take of a country on soft power. Russia's history, the way it has evolved as a country, its relationship with the West has a significant role to play in understanding Russia's conception of soft power.

However the inability of the researcher to study and read materials in Russian language acts as a big limitation to this study. The research will also become challenging because of Russia's attachment with 'hard power' and also because the available matters on soft power are mostly written from the western perspective and makes it difficult to conduct research in a balanced way. This study on the other hand will maintain the objectivity of the researcher. It should however be noted that although 'soft power' is the brainchild of

Joseph Nye, the study will divert from Nye's concept of soft power wherever the need arises.

The time frame for this study is 1991-2015. The former, that is the year 1991, remains important as it marks the demise of the Soviet Union and the Cold War had also come to an end by then; and it marks what controversially Francis Fukuyama terms "the end of history". Hence the downfall of a superpower in the form of Soviet Russia also led to a change in the perception of Russia in Western countries. While the timeframe of the study is till 2015, the thesis will include developments that have taken place in the global world post 2015 also in order to keep the thesis updated but the findings post 2015 will not be considered in the analysis and testing of hypotheses. The developments and findings after 2015 will solely be for the purpose of clarity and keeping the thesis up to date till the time of submission of the thesis.

Gaps in the literature

International relations although undergoing various changes has not been able to reach a level whereby it can come out of its narrow constraints of traditional realism that deals mostly with political, economic, diplomatic and security factors. Other factors involving culture that also make huge impacts on the functioning of international relations has not been taken into account. There is a dearth of such cultural as well as non traditional angle of research undertaken by the scholars of international relations.

Soft power although following the same path of realism, as it involves the play of power, takes into account the cultural aspect too which otherwise is not given much attention in the realist notion of international relations, thereby showing some traits of liberal tradition. Culture plays an important role in influencing the nature of social identities but it is unquantifiable making it difficult for the pioneers of international relations to understand its effect fully in degrees. Hence, concrete evidence to suggest the increase or decrease of soft power of any particular country is difficult to find in the literary sources.

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1.7. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary research questions that have been answered in the thesis are as follows: -

1. What are the ways in which the Russian soft power strategies differ from Joseph Nye's concept of soft power and in what ways is it similar?
2. How does the western media portray Russia?
3. Has there been any change in the way the West perceives Russia in the recent period compared to past relationship?

4. What are the ways in which Russia tries to improve its soft power and its image in the 'Near abroad' and the rest of the world?
5. Is Russia's negative portrayal in western press and media really affecting its soft power and image abroad?

1.8. HYPOTHESES

This thesis tests three hypotheses which are as follows:-

1. Russia's soft power is more dependent on involvement of state as well as historical and cultural legacy in the neighbourhood compared to the Western one which is more universal in nature.
2. After the disintegration of Soviet Union and the decline of its ideology, the West continues to portray Russia in the negative light, especially through its mass media and diplomacy, thus partially negating its soft power.
3. While Russia's efforts and policies in promoting its cultural affinity through language and religion has to some extent helped to create its positive image in its 'Near Abroad'; thus improving its soft power, Russia's emphasis on other aspects of culture such as cinema, ballet, cuisine, education exchange programmes and acceptance of civil liberties and human rights builds its soft power in the rest of the world.

1.9. RESEARCH METHODS

The thesis is based on Joseph Nye's theory of soft power. It starts with the general concept of soft power and proceeds to Western responses in the portrayal of Russia's image abroad and arrives at conclusions about Russia's soft power. However it also highlights the fact that some modifications should be present in the theory when it comes to non-Western country like Russia. For this, I have taken help of both primary and secondary sources. The former includes government papers, documents, statements and data such as the concept notes of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation, Putin's speech, official reports from the official website of President of Russian

Federation (en.kremlin.ru) and from the official website of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly. This study has also taken into account various programmes and projects that have been undertaken by Russia to enhance its soft power by Rossotrudnichestvo and Russkiy Mir Foundation. The data available from their official websites form a chief source of primary data for this thesis. The researcher has also studied various 'Hollywood' movies and western primary sources such as various reports, Bills and resolution concerning Russia from official websites of the Library of Congress, USA as well as statements, official documents and press reports highlighting the relations between Russia and the West from various official websites of the concerned countries. The secondary sources include books, news articles, articles from journals and empirical study reports.

The Research methods mostly deal with analysing the documents, records as well as observations. This analysis of data helps in understanding the underlying reasons and opinions with regard to Russia's quest for soft power as well as the way the West views it. This thesis is based on qualitative research and hence it provides deeper insights into the research problem through the help of hypotheses and analyses the thoughts and opinions regarding the concerned matter. This thesis deals with matters that cannot be fully quantified. Since a structured analysis is difficult in a qualitative research, the thesis seeks to analyse data through the process of qualitative coding.⁵ Therefore through the process of coding, all the similar data have been segregated into various categories. All the categories compiled together form a code structure.

The code structure has acted as a guide and helped in pursuing the research. However the process of coding continues throughout the thesis and new themes have emerged while analysing the data, for example- the data collected in the form of a text has been read in general at first and then read again to identify concepts related to the research questions provided in this chapter. After re-reading the text the focus has been shifted on the concepts and categories thus identified previously. The concepts that are now under various themes based on the similarities and differences have been analysed and further

⁵ "Coding is a process of identifying a passage in the text or other data tem, searching and identifying concepts and finding relations between them...It is a linking of data to the research idea and back to the data (Cessda Training, cessda.eu).

divided into sub themes. This standard method of coding and forming a code structure has thus been followed for all the data including the interviews conducted. The data has therefore been analysed in this manner in all the chapters of the thesis, keeping in mind the research objectives and the hypotheses. Since the thesis starts with a preliminary notion of soft power in general and is also based on codes or themes drawn from various topics of inquiry and existing literature, the research is somewhat deductive in nature. The thesis also is comparative in its approach in that it not only concerns with the comparison of the Western and Russian soft power but also the whole thesis is based on constant comparison of themes and sub themes arising out of the process of coding.

The thesis is both descriptive and analytical in nature. It is descriptive because it mentions about the features of soft power in both Russia and the West. It has also described the historical and present nature of the social and political system of both Russia and the West. It is analytical in that it has applied a theory of International Politics (soft power) in analysing Russia's soft power. It has therefore analysed how far the theory of soft power is applicable in the case of Russia. Therefore, such descriptive as well as analytical approach to this study has helped in arguing that Russia's soft power cannot be understood merely through Western standards. The causes leading to distinction between Russian and Western soft power seeks for a new framework to understand Russia's soft power, which would keep in mind Russia's socio-political as well as economic background and not judged by mere Western standards.

During the course of field trip to Moscow, Russia, some relevant data were collected from Lenin State Library as well as through the interviews conducted with various eminent scholars, professors of Institute of Oriental Studies of Russian Academy of Sciences, Higher School of Economic and few correspondents from *Rossiia Segodnya* (Russia Today). The process of coding has been applied while analysing the interview as well. Here, the actual words of the interviewed persons have been first carefully and thoroughly read and re-read and important concepts relevant to the study were selected. Furthermore, other examples of similar concepts have been analysed and compared with concepts identified in the interview, in order to find similarities and differences, if any.

The independent variables in this research are basically that which influence Russia's soft power. Russia's soft power, its image in the world and the efforts to do so, all form the dependent variables as they depend on the independent variables which involve various factors that affect it either positively or negatively. Therefore the independent variables of this study are the role played by the state/government of Russia, the role of both Western and Russian mass media and the role of cultural and social factors such as language and religion in the case of former Soviet regions and promotion of its popular culture and values in other parts of the world. The variation of these independent variables alters the dependent variables which in this case is Russia's soft power and its image in the world. Therefore it becomes interesting to see how and whether the above mentioned hypotheses stand true or are falsified that are highlighted in the chapters of the thesis.

1.10. CHAPTERISATION

The thesis altogether has four core chapters followed by a conclusion. It starts with Russia's history which will serve as a background to the study. It then gives a brief understanding of the relationship between Russia and the West which is essential for understanding how and why the West perceives it in the way it does. After understanding a brief history as well as the current status of the relationship between Russia and the West, the study moves ahead to explain its approach to soft power and how it differs from that of the West. The thesis then towards the end explains whether or not the image of Russia abroad is affected due to its negative portrayal by the Western mass media as often proclaimed by the West. Lastly it makes an assessment of all the above and comes to a conclusion. The flow in the chapters keeps it connected and also tests the hypotheses throughout. However the thesis does not follow a chronological pattern and moves back and forth as and where the explanation of certain aspects is needed.

In the second chapter 'Tracing Russia's soft power: a historical background' various ways through which Russia has been attractive to other countries through its rich culture, in the pre-Soviet and Soviet period have been discussed. It thus tries to find the traces of soft power in those periods even though the term was coined later by Joseph Nye in 1990.

The third chapter 'Russia and the West: A study of cultural and political interactions', looks into the relationship between Russia and the West from the Soviet period, with special reference to the Cold war period till the current period, and try to understand the present state of affairs between them. Although it briefly looks into the various aspects of their relationships, it will mostly focus on the cultural and ideological part. It traces the relationship they have shared and whether it has changed, improved or worsened with changing time and especially after the break-up of the Soviet Union and the fall of Communism.

In the fourth chapter 'Russia's soft power: approaches and strategies, the focus is on the various factors that are shaping Russia's soft power image abroad. It discusses how Russia's soft power has been managing to rise against the hostility of the West and other countries. It also focuses on how Russia uses its media and press to portray its positive picture against the western media that portray Russia in negative light. Hence, there is also a proper assessment and understanding of Russia's soft power efforts.

The fifth chapter 'Western efforts in counteracting Russia's soft power' is a very important chapter. It examines the role of the West in Russia's soft power and its image abroad through various means and especially through its diplomacy and mass media. It also briefly highlights how the Russian press and mass media differs from the western ones and how they contribute in building Russia's soft power and a positive image abroad.

Finally in the conclusion, findings of the study have been summarised and an assessment has been made of the hypotheses that have been tested in all the chapters. After looking into the details of Russia's history, its relationship with the West and its soft power ambitions, there is an assessment of how it is pursuing its soft power ambitions and how it is being received by the West. It also tries to come to a conclusion as to how exactly the West responds to Russia's soft power and the reasons behind such a response.

Chapter II

Tracing Russia's Soft Power: A Historical Background

CHAPTER 2

TRACING RUSSIA'S SOFT POWER: A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. INTRODUCTION

To understand Russia's soft power in the present day, we must first dwell into its past that encompasses a series of historical events woven together by the threads of its rich culture. Russia therefore becomes a product of the making and unmaking of many great events that took place from early times. Each phase that it underwent has added a different turn in its history. It has different layers that it acquired over time and to study each layer as well as to reach to its core becomes all the more interesting. Russia's history is one of strong diversity. From the earliest times it has witnessed the formation of arts that served as a showground for politics, philosophy and religion. The diversity of Russia can be seen in its culture, geography, politics and society which altogether made it too complex for a single culture to be regarded as its idea of nationality. Russia's cultural movements involved some major groups that together made nationhood. Firstly, there were the Slavophiles, who considered a "truly Russian way of life" as an alternative to the European way of life, secondly, there were the Westernisers, who tried to rebuild Russia in European lines, thirdly, there were the Populists, who mostly believed in the "village structures" as a model for building a new society and finally the Scythians who saw Russia's culture emanating from Asia and mostly believed in the unity of art, life, man and nature (Figes 2002: xxv-xxx). Russia's culture is diverse indeed but is also unique and rich in its own ways, forming a deep foundation for Russia's soft power capabilities.

Under Peter the Great, Russia's aim was to move towards a more Europeanized way of life. He hated the Muscovy way of life, its outdated culture and parochialism, its irrational fear and dislike for the West. Therefore St. Petersburg as the new capital would bring Russia close to a more western way of life. St Petersburg became an epithet of a European way of life for the Russians; it became alien and acted as a threat to the Russian

way of life. It also affected Russia's art and culture for a long time. However what he did not realize is that even if he tried masking the Russians with European culture, deep within the made surface, laid the old Russia ready to show up anytime. After 1812, there was again a yearning for the national and a more Russian way of life and therefore the European dream faded to the background and St. Petersburg started to be seen as a foreign civilization. The Muscovites were believed to be more hospitable and relaxed as compared to the cold and formal people of St. Petersburg. However many would argue that Russia's backwardness lay in the fact that Russia was cut off from the rest of the Western Europe and missed the renaissance period. It had been in a state of frenzy due to the constant fear of obliteration and invasions (ibid). Nonetheless this also proves the fact Russia is different from the West and therefore has its own source of culture and attraction.

Entering into the Soviet Union phase was like entering a different world all together. Socialism was the hallmark of Soviet Union and the torchbearers of this movement promised the people to free them from the Tsarist rule and united all the workers in Russia to help them in forming a socialist nation. Thus, the cry of "Workers of the world unite, we have nothing to lose but chains" (Marx and Engels 1848, marxist.org) flourished and people became ready to see new beginnings in their life through revolution that would not have been successful without the support of the people and especially the workers.⁶ The period of Soviet Union lasting for 69 years created history that the whole world remembers. Whether it was the unity and liberation of workers and women or the imposition of Soviet culture in the everyday life of the people to the war on religion and all the ideas related to capitalism; the victory over fascism or the purges of its own people, bureaucratisation and State control to Cold War and its disintegration, the Soviet Union has created history which will intrigue the mind of all the future generations of researchers and scholars.

In Soviet Russia, there was no independent movement of women but women joined hands with the male belonging to the proletarian class. They struggled together in the movement to establish and consolidate the dictatorship of the Proletariat and to build a

⁶ This was one of the most popular slogans in the Communist Manifesto written by Marx and Engels.

new society of working class that would be free from the bondage of capitalist class. According to Orlando Figes (2002), the ideology of the Soviet Union fostering the idea of “war against all privileges, owed less to Marx (whose works were hardly known by the semi-literate masses) and more to the egalitarian culture” (Figes 2002:437). The rich cultural history of Russia rooted in literature, ballet, painting, classical music, and Soviet socialist culture forms the foundations for Russia’s soft power. Being the largest country with various ethnic groups and their diverse culture, and once even a superpower, there is a lot that can be learnt about Russia’s approach to soft power and how it is different from the Western notion, by dwelling in its past. This in turn helps in understanding the present day take of Russia’s soft power.

2.2. SHAPING OF RUSSIA’S CULTURE- FROM RUSSIAN EMPIRE TO SOVIET UNION

Russia’s history commenced with the East Slavs, who were identified as a grouping in Europe from the 3rd to 8th centuries AD. The medieval state of *Rus* arose in the ninth century founded and ruled by *Varagian* warrior elite and their descendants (Curtis 1996). The Russian Primary Chronicle records of events in ninth century Novgorod gives an early hint of peace-making as instead of civil war occurring among the tribes, the population chose to unite under the leadership of a neutral ruler Rurik summoned from outside (Sixsmith 2012: 3). The narrative of coming of Rurik is what the Russians have heard since their birth. Although there are disagreements among many regarding the details, the people at large unite on the fact that in 862 Rurik supposedly arrived to found the Rus-ian nation. The interesting fact about Russia is the amalgamation of real history with a romanticised version to form the myths that have formed the national identity (Ibid: 3-4). In 988 Russia accepted Orthodox Christianity arising from the Byzantine Empire thus leading to the amalgamation of Byzantine and Slavic cultures that became an integral part of the Russian culture for many years (Curtis 1996).

The invasion of Russia by the Mongols is a major junction in the history of Russia with many believing that it led to the downfall of Russia in that it led to the destruction of Kievan Rus, fragmentation of Russian nationality and also earning the image of “oriental despotism”. It was also almost cut off from the rest of the world. There have been many

debates regarding the impact of Mongol invasion on Russia. However it added another dimension to Russia's culture and thus emerged as a unique one. The effect of the Mongol incursion on the terrain of Kievan Rus was irregular. While centres like Kiev certainly did not recuperate from the desolation of the preliminary assault, the Republic of Novgorod unrelentingly prospered and the city of Moscow started to thrive (Ibid).

The West believes that Russia suffered a great deal due to Mongol invasion because it was detached from Europe during the Mongol rule and led to the creation of an empire that was unfamiliar to the European standards.⁷ Even traditional Russians are of the opinion that Mongols only brought destruction to Russia. The Mongol rule had a huge impact on the people of Russia. They were filled with insecurities leading to the increase in defensive attitude towards each other. This in a way led to the development of "military dictatorship" tendency among them. The Mongol rule lacked the institution of private property and independent nobility which would have kept the powers of the rulers on check and therefore the rulers were drunk with overflow of powers and the Russian people learnt further to remain under such despotic rulers. The Russian under Mongols were obliged to take orders, pay taxes and to supply soldiers whenever the need arose. These characteristics were so entrenched in Russian people that later they became perfect subject of utilization for future Tsars (Cicek 2016).

Russia's history has a lot of answers for its present inexplicable characteristics. Although it is true that the Mongols changed the course of Russia's story and made it both fiscally and politically weak, it is also not evidently true that Mongols had a sole purpose of weakening Russia; and so is the case with the Russians on the other hand, that it would not be fully correct to state that the Russians made use of every opportunity to rebel in order to throw off the 'Mongol yoke' as some scholars would have us believe (Waugh 2009). The Mongol rule had a huge impact on Russia's culture. As they reigned over Russia and its people, its own culture and practices also touched many aspects of Russian lives. Russian language borrowed many words from Mongolian. It was in the "second half of the Mongol rule in the mid fourteenth century that Russian iconography and

⁷ The Tartar invasion, which recommenced in 1237 and lasted more than 250 years, ripped Russia away from the West (Cicek 2016).

fresco painting” started to burgeon. They also added to the field of music and epic songs of old folk myths. The founder of the ‘Russian music school’ ‘Balakriev’ was of Tatar pedigree and he took pride in it. Russian culture of hospitality also had its lineage in the culture of the Mongol Khans, as for the latter hospitality was one of the most respected virtues. Mongols also influenced Russia’s lifestyle including food habits and clothing (Cicek 2016). Even after the defeat of Mongols and them being expelled from Russia, the impact it had on Russia cannot go unnoticed. It got deeply ingrained in Russia and its people. The amalgamation of Mongol legacy and the existing Russian culture brought to the fore a unique culture which was new to not just the Europeans but to Russians as well.

Culture has always been an integral part of Russia and it was especially in the case of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Russia where, religion and autocracy went hand in hand. This was unlike Western Europe where religion was receding if not disappearing from the political culture. The triad of ‘Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality’ in the reign of Tsar Nicholas I confirms the enlistment of religious culture along with autocracy thus garnering legitimacy (Read 2014).

The assassination of Alexander II, the reformist Tsar in the year 1881 was a major turning point in the late imperial policies towards reform and revolution. This resulted in the formation of a set of “Temporary Regulations” that withdrew the pre 1881 political concessions⁸ (Read 2014). It also led to the policy of ‘Russification’. However the concept of ‘Russification’ was more about religious affiliation and less about citizenship as such. In this regard, anybody who would possess a certificate of baptism from the Orthodox Church was sufficient to be accepted as a Russian. Russification was also an attempt to glorify Russia’s past in various forms, especially music and art. A very palpable example of it is the vast array of operas that were conducted highlighting Russia’s past and its achievements. Some of the most eternal examples of such operas are *Boris Godunov*, *Khovanshchina*, *Prince Igor*, *A Bride for the Tsar*, and *Sadlko*. Not all the examples of Russification were limited to performing arts. Another great example of

⁸ Tsar Alexander II was a great reformer and apart from what he is known for, that is freeing of 23 million Russian slaves, he also brought about great progress and reforms in Russia. He reformed the Russian justice system, the army and various other aspects of the government (Radzinsky 2005).

cultural policy during that time was the establishment of the Russian Museum. It was opened on 7 March 1898 in the Mikailovskii Palace in St. Petersburg. It consisted of Russian paintings, sculpture, and other fine arts since the early iron painters. It still stands as an exemplar of Russia's cultural richness and ingenuity (Ibid).

According to Christopher Read (2014), both the Tsarist and Bolshevik Russia failed to win the hearts of its people. The Tsarist Russia's policy of Russification failed to be inclusive in its nature and did not take into account the presence of its minority nationalities. He believes that although Soviet cultural construction scored a little more than that of the Tsarist period, it did lag behind in winning over the population and this he feels was one reason behind the crumple of the Soviet framework. This he affirms is in connection to the fact that neither Tsarist nor Soviet Russia could tolerate diversity leading to the control of cultural life of the country by them. Read also mentions that barring the period of Revolution of 1905 and 1917, censorship has been present in both Tsarist and Soviet Russia.

Russia's culture has been an important element in bringing about positive changes. The reign of Peter the Great has a wide array of examples showing the importance of culture in the social, economic and political development of Russia. Peter's period of influence has been a topic of debate, especially with regard to its impact of Russia's development. While some view Peter's role in drawing Russia from a backward state to a modern European world as phenomenal, some would just regard it just as effort to imitate the western world. Cultural norms of the elite under Peter the Great also got altered as he insisted on the Europeanization of education, cultural forms and gender roles (Stevens 2015). Peter's reforms are debatable in the sense that although his reforms brought about an improvement in the lives of people and also modernised the administrative structure and the military but it was done at the cost of the peasantry who were bonded by the chains of serfdom. After Peter the Great's death in the year 1725, Russia lacked a strong and determined ruler until the reign of Catherine the Great, who carried forward Peter's incomplete vision of modernising Russia on European and Western lines.

The reign of Catherine the Great witnessed Russia going towards great heights. By continuing the reforms of Peter the Great, Catherine was successful in making Russia a

great European power. Russia's control in European associations and also its area in Eastern and Central Europe were enlarged and extended. It was during Catherine's rule, there was further increasing central control over the provinces as compared to the time of Peters. Culture flourished under her rule as she proved to be a great patron of arts. She constructed the Hermitage Museum, launched academics, journals, and libraries, and soon there were buildings all over Russia. She even communicated with the French Encyclopaedists, including Voltaire. However with the onset of French Revolution she became firm in her policies and was not open to criticisms and thus from the end of 1789 till her death she moved away from her liberal policies (History and Culture of Russia, geographia).

Russia under the Romanovs was thus seen to have a more European character. This was because of the frequent inter-marriages with European royalties; and especially after Catherine the Great the Romanovs had "just a few drops of Russian blood" (Aruntunyan 2010). The contribution of the Romanovs although debatable cannot be brushed aside altogether. Peter the Great was one such Romanovs who gave his best to develop Russia. Besides building the city of St Petersburg, he also drove the Turks out of Azov, built a fleet and advocated a callous form of state capitalism and free trade. Nevertheless the reforms of the Romanovs did follow a top down modernisation that appeared unpopular and violent at times. A political commentator at RIA Novosti, also added to this point by stating, "The idea that only the head of the state can solve your personal problem is genetically ingrained" (Ibid).

The October Revolution led by Lenin and Trotsky had the vision of "world communism" or "permanent revolution" that is the global spread of Communism, a view that Trotsky strongly believed in. However Stalin later disregarded it and stressed more on the principle of "Communism in one country"(Satanovsky 2012) The impact of Russian Revolution and the October Revolution in particular was quite strong and it was attractive to many regions across the world, raising concerns of the United States losing to communism of Russia or later to the USSR. Adding to their fear, the Bolsheviks further accelerated their influence and in March 1919, Lenin established the '*Comintern*', the

Third Communist International. Its command was to organize universal communist activity through the verdict from Moscow (Ibid).

The year 1922 also witnessed the election of Stalin as the General Secretary to the Central Committee and also the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic or the USSR. This was followed by the death of Lenin in 1924 and he was succeeded by Stalin. The death of Lenin and the rise of Stalin indeed brought a turn to the earlier path of 'communism abroad' as he deviated from what Trotsky believed, and his idea of "socialism in one country" then was upheld. However this did not mean that the influence that the October Revolution had had in the world came to a halt. It was being spread and countries like China and Cuba were continued to be inspired by it (Wolfe 2013). The fact that even America was affected and influenced illustrates the intensity of its influence. There are many who believe that the movement was indeed a success not just in overthrowing the Tsarist rule in Russia but also elsewhere. The Communist Party had wide appeal to the poor, the downtrodden and the lower classes of society. On March 7, 1975, the American Negro Labour Congress is organised by the American Communist Party, with aid from Moscow to promote civil rights and communist policies (Ibid). Thus, America had real reasons to be feared by the spread of communism. Wolfe (2013) also quotes from the book, *'Red Scared! The Commie Menace in Propaganda and Popular Culture'*, a 2001 book written by Michael Barson and Steven Heller, "These same leaders forged secret alliance with racist, jingoist and other American fanatics in spreading anti-Communist propaganda throughout the nation. In turn, they succeeded in coming a mass of Americans that their lives were threatened by Communists who were nestled among the immigrants entering the United States" (Ibid).

The October Revolution therefore made Russia and the Soviet Union attractive to other regions, particularly to those who were struggling against the exploitive and unfair rule. This revolution consequently becomes that important part of their history which they can boast of, and hence also proved that the socialist ideology was indeed attractive and added to the soft power of the Soviet Union. Even in the later years, the October revolution survived to be a source of constant inspiration for the anti-capitalist revolutionary movements elsewhere. It also gave the significance of Marxism to the

subjugated and oppressed in the farthest areas of the world. It was with this that the ‘Leninist’ summon to militant revolutionary politics, which have since moved vast masses of people to become effective actors in political life, to bring about their own more or less thriving revolution in China, Cuba, Vietnam and elsewhere (Singh 2014) and (Singh 1992:1623-1627).

Lenin had taken cultural construction seriously and even believed that “communist society” would not come true if there was illiteracy in the country. In the 1920s, the Soviet Union’s primary, secondary and tertiary education underwent a vast growth (Zhang 2010: 118-119). Even under the leadership of Stalin, education and culture as a whole were also given equal importance but it was now totally under the State, hence the term ‘socialist realism’, had evolved, whereby education, literature, cinema and all such things associated to culture had to follow a certain theme, fulfilling the goals of the State. Political authority completely occupied the cultural field during Stalin’s reign and cultural development and innovation suffered harsh repression. The Soviet Party’s decision to purge even the intellectual class only led to its own uprooting of their own ruling (ibid).

During Lenin’s rule, under Commisar Anatoliy Lunacharsky, education penetrated into the stage of trial based on planned theories of learning. The state also expanded the primary and secondary school system and also went ahead to open night schools for working adult. However the admission policies were such that preference for higher education was given to those from the proletarian background rather than from bourgeois backgrounds not considering the applicant’s qualifications. Another progress in the life of the people was that the state legalised abortions and divorce was made easier to obtain. Under Stalin Soviet culture was highly state-controlled which included the government designed model of culture- socialist realism. In spite of strict control over arts and culture of the society, the Soviet society during this time did see some great changes and improvements. The Soviet people benefitted from social liberation of various kinds that included greater equality of education, social roles for women, free and improved health care and other social benefits. The women also obtained same rights as men and were

eligible for same education as men and at least legally received the same rights as men even in the workplace (Boundles, world history).

Although the status of women in general has been that of subjection and helplessness during the early eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in most parts of the world but the position of women in Russia differed from that in Europe and America because of disparate political situations. The women were underpaid and there were “hardships and sexual dangers” as well as the condition of work was quite exploitative even so women could at least earn an independent wage, she could become a factory worker, domestic servant, physician, midwives, telegraph worker and a teacher (Mulhallen 2012). Some women under the Tsarist rule could afford luxury, could dress more fashionably, buy books and attend dance halls, pleasure gardens and theatres. Some even had the opportunity for acquiring education (Ibid). Women were at a disadvantage in an agrarian society and so was the case with Russian peasants. Serf women were like a commodity at the hands of the lords who were used as a means of reproduction and to increase revenue. The treatment of women serfs resembled that of the treatment of Africans by the Americans (Rvi-Diaz, Guilded History).

In the nineteenth century, it was only in Switzerland that the women could obtain higher education. In 1865, 152 foreign females studies in the University of Zurich in which almost 145 were Russian women. The longing for education shown by the various sections of the population including the women forced the Russian government to set up a variety of educational establishments for women. Thus the programme to formulate social education led to the creation of the systems of middle and higher education as a whole and education of women in particular (Tevlina 2008).

However pre-Revolution Russia remained a very backward country that was far behind in industrialisation and politics and it was only after the revolution that the roles of women started to change considerably. The great October Revolution and the transfer of power to the working class opened doors for the women liberation. The opening up of a new era for women gave them political and civil liberties. Thus women enjoyed fairness in about each field of work and life. The freedom of women in work made them reach great heights and some hardworking women were given important posts in the newly formed

Soviet state apparatus and were appointed as commissars. They could even attend the Council of People's Commissars. The First All-Russia Congress of Women Workers and Peasants was convened in Moscow in November 1918 which was initiated by a group of communist women and the support of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party. It was attended by over a thousand women delegates elected at women workers and peasants' meetings (Kollantai 1984). The significance of the Congress lies in the fact that it was for the first time an initiative was taken to create a special apparatus for attracting the female population into the construction of a republic of working people. The inclusion of women in the struggle for communism received official recognition in this congress and it marks as a big step forward towards progress and liberation for the female population (Ibid).

While the Communist Party welcomed the women even in the political sphere and also made sure that the law provided them every opportunity to participate in the work of the Soviets so that they could be equal contributors in the remaking of their life and living conditions, many women were sceptical of their plans and looked them with fear. They could not trust the Soviet leaders as they appeared to be destroyers of the fundamental order including the ancient traditions which was so intensely entrenched in the lives and society of the people. They feared the new power made up of communists as they were atheist and they aimed at taking the faith of the people away and separated the church and the state. Women devoted themselves to the task of erasing illiteracy. The Communist Party departments of women workers made sure that a lot of women were engaged in undertaking this task. Gradually courses for children's nurses, kindergarten teacher, women crèche organisers started and women workers were sent to attend those (Ibid).

The Communist Party even tried to bring about certain changes in the lives of the people. In the year 1918 the Party tried to weaken the institution of marriage and family so as to create a unified society that would be focused on the revolution and country more than its private life. Feminist Alexandra Kollantai saw this as great opportunity to raise the status of women in the Russian society, as she saw no future in the family structure. However as it was stated that this rule to weaken the marriage would bring women to equal footing with men, it didn't materialise quite well in practice. In fact along with the state related

work, women had to engage in household chores and were expected to perform their domestic duties whole-heartedly (Molly Wolansky, Guided History).

Despite the principle of “equal pay for equal work”, the fact is that women were underpaid compared to their male counterparts. The Communist Party justified this by stating that most of the women were under qualified and hence belonged to category of lower-paid workers. In fact even though they talked about protection of motherhood, there was dearth of healthy conditions at work and the sanitation and hygiene was very low and often the working environment was not good for the women (Kollantai 1984). However, Under Stalin’s rule, even though quite restrictive and conservative some of the urban women were first to give birth in hospitals that had access to even prenatal care (Boundless.com, world history). Although women enjoyed the privilege of equality of job, in reality many employers preferred male workers to female in some fields but they also preferred female workers over men for construction works because according to them because women took lesser breaks from work.

The modes of instruction educational institutions were to be in Russian language and this acted as an impediment in the learning process of the non Russians who did not know the language. In 1914 the number of higher education institutions in the whole of Russian empire, were 105 with 127,423 students. Amongst these, over 99 schools with 121,686 students were in the present region of the Russian Federation and the Ukraine. And among the rest of the remaining six, four were in Estonia, one in Latvia, and one in Georgia. More than half of the schools were located in Moscow and Petrograd. These cities were far from the centres of minority population. This acted as a discouragement to the minority students and this in a way makes clear the reason for their low level of attendance too (Ibid:312).

Understanding Russia’s social policy during the early eighteenth period requires a further consideration of the fact that its rulers were not so aware of the society and the rules to regulate it, especially when it came to the rural society. It was not until the 1840s when various detailed empirical studies were undertaken by officials, that the governance began to understand how rural society worked. Russia’s social policy under the eighteenth century rulers attempted to regulate every aspect of people’s life, not in an

attempt to bring about positive changes in the life of an individual but more as a cause for the greater good of the state as a whole (Dixon 1999).

The peasants of Russia had a different lifestyle compared to their Western counterparts. The relationship of peasants with the Orthodox Church was not very impactful. Apart from the fact that they carried out certain rituals like observing fasts; the peasants were illiterate and merely superstitious and not actually religious as such (Rvi-Diaz, Guided History). Apart from Alexander II, it was Catherine the Great who had taken great interest in promoting reformist ideas. She had distaste for serfdom like Alexander II. Catherine focused on developing and modernising Russia on the lines of Western European ideas. However the military and economy conscription continued to depend upon serfdom. Therefore despite her aversion to serfdom, she could not do away with it completely. The State and private landowners continued to rely on serfs for their work. Over dependence on serfs led too much pressure on them and led to various uprisings. One of the prominent uprisings was *Pugachev's Rebellion of Cossacks and Peasants* (Rvi-Diaz, Guided History).⁹

Prior to the emancipation of serfs, the serfs were hardly mentioned in the legislation. This further raised their chances of being exploited at the hands of their landlords and owners to whom they were bonded. It was not until the eighteenth century that the legislators began to think of them as human beings. Alexander I had also made a move to bring about a change in the way serfdom functioned. He issued the Free Agriculturalists Law of February 1803, allowing serfs to buy their freedom as well as land, of course with the consent of their lords. However, by then serfdom had been deeply entrenched in the society that despite its umbrage by the ruler himself, nothing much could be done and it was retained because of the fear of giving rise to civil unrest (Dixon 1999: 80-81).

⁹ Under Catherine the Great, Russia was speedily modernizing following the West which led to rise in the standard of living of the landlords. In order to maintain their standard of living, the landlords started to tax the serfs profoundly. This led to mass protests and rebellions by the peasants. The years 1762 to 1772 witnessed around 160 popular uprisings. As the squandering classes were unprepared for such peasant discontent, this ignited Pugachev Rebellion from 1773 to 1775 led by Emilian Pugachev. He was a Cossack who had gained popularity among the non Russians and his army consisted mainly of Tatars, Bashirs and Kalmyks who had begrudged Catherine II's command for compulsory conversion to Christianity.

It was in 1861 that Alexander II abolished serfdom in Russia. Before the abolishment of serfdom, the conditions of serfs were miserable; they were in a bonded labour with their masters. The emancipation of serfs by Alexander II is seen as a great turning point in the history of Russia. It gave new meaning to humanity. However it was much more than just a regular reform brought about to rectify a minute problem. It was a bold decision taken by him; acknowledging the fact that the state and private enterprises and the economy at large depended upon the serfs. The fact that he understood development not only in terms of economic growth but rather in terms of greater good is worth appreciating; especially at a time when serfs were not even counted as humans but just as a means to attain something.

The abolishment of serfdom in some way opened the “floodgates” to the events leading to 1917, and its consequences, giving peasants more freedom to be well thought-out (Rvi-Diaz, *Guilded History*). The episode of serfdom in the history of Russia helps in understanding the socio, economic and political culture not only of those times, but also gives us an idea of the course of events that adds to the making of present day culture of Russia. Serfdom was not always central to Russia; it took almost two hundred years to preserve it in law. Although Muscovy was thinly populated and this served as a perfect reason to make serfs out of the peasants at large, it should be noted that it was only during period of crisis, and especially to fulfil state’s military interest in the seventeenth century that relevant legislation was enacted to sustain serfdom (Dixon 1999).

There are various elements in the history of Russia that show us a different picture of Russian society than how it is usually perceived by majority of the people. Through the experience of various individuals who have witnessed those periods of Russian history we get a fair idea of the ways in which this country set an example of equality and welfare, and at the same time how and where it lacked to win the hearts and minds of the people in and outside Russia. Gendrik Vartanyan, is one such person, who currently resides in Sharman Oaks but lived most of his life under the Communist rule, shares how life was under it. By sharing his life experiences he not only gives us the idea of what life of ordinary Russians felt like but also helps us in understanding the social and political situation under Soviet Union. He states that there was equality of work between men and

women and that there was no sexism in workplace but the workers were recognised by their work, good or bad. With regard to schooling in Soviet Union, he states that the schools were free but mandatory and they were excellent in quality. In fact Soviet schools were considered to be among the top schools in the world. He remembers that good students received government money to help with their everyday lives. Private business did not exist as even a shoemaker had to go to the factory to do his work. Tailors who wanted to work at home had to pay taxes. The prices of everyday items in the market were very cheap, for example items like bread, sugar, vegetables were extremely cheap but the luxury items like TVs, furniture and car were very expensive. He states that people had to sign and wait for years to buy cars. With regard to the political life, he states that many leaders changed while he was there but Stalin was the strongest. He stated that elections were democratically held but the leaders were pre-decided. Every parade and carnival had to have the picture of the leader to acknowledge his presence. In town squares, huge statues of the leaders were built. With regard to information available to them, he states that everything was supposed to be in the favour of the state. He recalls the name of few newspapers like Communist, Social Armenia and Avanguard but even the newspapers had to follow the Soviet code (Vartanyan, clarkhumanities.com).

It can be seen that the Soviet culture centred on the state. The state dictated the standards of not just the political but also the social and economic life. People could enjoy the benefits that the state provided them as long as they did not go against the state ideals. The state was determined to create people who would be ready to do anything in the name of revolution and their country. In order to do so the state designed a social life for them that would be in tune with the proletarian movement. The *Prolekult* or the Proletarian culture movement was dedicated to the idea of artist creating a new form of social life. The movement has its roots in the 1900s when the Forward group of social Democrats such as Maxim Gorky, Bogdanov and Lunacharsky has set up schools in Italy for workers who had been smuggled out of Russia. The members of the *Prolekult* believed in the idea of pure Soviet civilisation. The Soviet culture thus according to them was internationalists, collectivist and proletarian arts (Figes 2002).

Culture played an imperative role not only in Tsarist Russia but also during the Bolshevik rule. Although there were grave differences in philosophies of the Bolsheviks and Tsarist rule, the fact remained that for both “culture was not the icing on the cake, it was the cake itself” (Read 2014).

By going back to history we get a brief idea of what Russia and its society was in the past. It helps us in understanding whether or not the claims made by the Western world—that Russia is unsuitable for being a soft power country is baseless or not. We see that there have been many instances where Russia has taken progressive steps even during conservative times. The image of Russia as seen through Western eyes overlooks all the events which show that Russia even during ‘pre-soft power times’ had capabilities of being an attractive country. However due to various events as well as the way Russia has evolved we get to see that it differs from the Western way of life, which does not mean that it cannot be a soft power nation in the present world. By dwelling in the past episodes of Russia we get to understand Russia’s present way of looking at foreign affairs and even approach to soft power. Except for some events and programmes undertaken by the rulers and governments, most of them have gone unrecognised by the world. Nonetheless, looking at the past from the present angle helps in understanding the fact that Russia too had an attractive side and it certainly has the capability to generate soft power if right ideas and institutions flourish. The next section helps us in understanding the historical events from the point of view of soft power even though the concept had not evolved then. Therefore it is not to state that these events created soft power for Tsarist or Soviet Russia but just to understand Russia’s soft power capabilities with the help of its history.

2.3. UNDERSTANDING RUSSIA’S SOFT POWER CAPABILITIES

By going through the journey of Russia’s socio, economic and political culture, we get a brief idea of how Russia has been formed. It helps us in understanding the way Russia functioned or functions in a certain way. It also helps in understanding both the achievements and failures of Russia in the world scenario. Lastly, the background of Russia guides us in unwrapping Russia’s soft power capabilities. Russia has a huge potential of being a major power both in terms of hard and soft power. The traces of its

soft power can be found in both the Tsarist and Soviet period. Russia's great achievements bear testimony to the fact that it could not only emerge as a super power in terms of economic or military capabilities but also in terms of its soft power. Some of Russia's past accomplishments give us traces of Russia's soft power. While we all are aware of the way Tsarist and Soviet rule functioned and that we remember its accomplishments mostly in terms of hard power, looking at the lesser noticed parts show us the softer side of Russia.

Under the Tsarist rule

By dwelling deep into Russia's history we get to know that it had some lesser mentioned elements that would help us in understanding a different picture of Russia. Despite the autocratic temperament of the Tsarist period there were few factors that give some form of breathing space to its people. The fact that even Tsarist Russia had the potential of understanding the value of education and shows that it had the intention of heading towards progress. The step towards democratising the studies of science and learning had their origins in the 'era of Great Reforms' during the 1860s in the form of free associations and societies; a time when extraordinary state approved public discussions of government policy, issues relating to local conditions and handling projects of national rejuvenation took place. The study of free association especially in an autocratic Tsarist Russia highlights the relationship between the State and civil society; but like in any authoritarian rule, the state was in stronger position acting upon a weak and fragmented civil society. Joseph Bradley (2002) opines that it was a strong state and weak society that made the whole system uniquely vulnerable to revolutionary actions. This autocratic political culture, he believes turns into an explanation of the Russian Revolution (Bradley 2002).

However he is also of the opinion that if studies are focused only on Russia's strong autocratic state and comparatively weaker civil society, it would only look into the differences between Russia and the West. Therefore by coming across the lesser explored areas of Russia's civil society; a different image of Russia is seen regardless of the autocratic rule there was the rise of free societies. These free societies not only aimed in

assisting the state in gaining progress but in doing so, they also unleashed the ways that could limit the scope of state power (Ibid).

The nineteenth and the late nineteenth century Russia saw the rise in the promotion of science and education. Although the endorsement of science and education was ultimately going to be beneficial for the government in the longer run, it did encourage a healthy functioning of the civil society. It was after two decades of Russia's humble presence at the Crystal Palace Exhibitions of 1851 in London, the Moscow Society of Friends of Natural History, Anthropology and Ethnography marshalled the possessions of the imperial family, government ministries, the city council, other voluntary association, and the business community in order to put on a major exposition of science and industry. For the betterment of Russia, the exposition helped in promoting science, education and industry, besides endorsing a feeling of patriotism and Russian national identity. Such kind of exhibition was not only with the help of the government but more as a result of the efforts of private associations. The Ethnographic Exposition in 1867, the Polytechnical Exposition of 1872 and the creation of the spectacular science museum, the Moscow Polytechnical Museum were such examples of the initiative taken by private associations (Ibid).

The private proposal to bring about the growth of certain sectors of the society was achievable even under autocracy as such an initiative was embedded in the expression of patriotic service to Russia. It was not only the Polytechnical Exposition of 1872 in which private initiative could be seen; the newly formed Free Economic Society in St Petersburg and the Moscow Agricultural Society were one of the chief medium of mobilisation and organization of private inventiveness in accepted edification. Along with one of the important branches of local administration like *zemstvos*, these literacy committees dispersed and printed books, stored books in rural libraries and aided in endorsing education throughout the empire (Bradley 2008). In 1867 *zemstvo* Councils were authorised to open separate medical assistant schools. In 1872 the Council's statutes were ratified and they developed programmes for these educational institutes. By 1905 medical assistant schools had been opened under the authority of 21 *zemstvo* councils, and around 2600 students enrolled during that time. Other than such schools there were

zemstvo teachers's seminars that were founded between 1869 and 1873 and their number reached to around 45 by 1910. These councils prepared around 45000 teachers for a period longer than 45 years (Tevlina 2008:313).

It was in 1861 that the Free Economic Society created an autonomous division known as the Literacy Committee which became the nation's most prominent association involved in primary education. Its main aim was to spread literacy among the peasants. Accordingly they distributed free government approved books and materials to these schools and libraries between 1861 and 1895. The funds for such activities came mostly from Russia's business class (Bradley 2002).

It was in the 1750s and 1760s that a few governmental officials like Nikita Panin began emphasising on improving the Russian agriculture and focusing on a more humane economic and political system with the curtailment of abuses of serfdom. Although Catherine the Great's intentions regarding the reforms related to serfdom is doubtful, it is worth noting that she tried to strike a balance between the serfs and the nobles. She did want to bring about certain reforms but by neither raising the expectations of the serfs nor upsetting the nobles. She wanted to create a "climate of opinion" and for that to take place there was the creation of a body that would study agriculture. Thus in 1765, Russia's first association, the 'Free Economic Society' was born (Bradley 2002) The society had very interesting features especially under an autocracy. Although the laws of the Charter of the association had to be approved by the government, its laws were drawn up by the society itself. The membership of the Society was voluntary and the society was made of its own structure of authority. Another interesting feature is that it did not need government consent for all its activities. And finally, after 1862, all erudite societies were free from pre-publication censorship. This privilege was an important one as the capricious despotism otherwise often fettered the intellectual life through censorship. These features of the Society made it an influential aspect of the "public sphere" everywhere (Ibid). This removal of legal limitation of private and public organisations through new legislation gave freedom to the social organisations to start their activity with just the submission of a petition to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Tevlina 2008).

In 1866, the Russian Technical Society (RTO) was formed by a group of engineers. The prime function of this society was to promote the development of technology and industry. To fulfil their endeavour, the society members ran vocational schools and classes for factory workers and their children. The society also indulged public readings and lectures (Bradley 2008). According to one of the articles of the new government Charter of 1863, the universities were granted more autonomy and the permission to organise their own learned societies under the guidance of the university rectors and trustees. These new societies then discussed new ideas and developments and even initiated projects. The Russian youth held the view that the study of science was the key towards attaining success. This era therefore presented the youth with new opportunities for achieving progress and to mobilise resource for the quest for public science (Ibid).

It is worth appreciation that the Russian private societies and non-governmental organisations utilised the Charters that empowered them and were able to plan solutions to various problems, emphasise on change and progress, and muster talents from various sections, independently under autocracy. In the nineteenth century Europe, associations played an important role in bringing about reforms and “cultural stewardship”. They basically helped in shaping the middle class identities and strengthening the hierarchies of value, receptivity and cultural aspirations that were more or less prevalent already. However what is interesting and different in the case of Russia is that in the absence of disseminated bourgeois wealth and various individual philanthropists, the Russian free associations had a greater role and significance than their Western counterpart as they can be seen as the instigator of cultural stewardship and public outreach (Bradley 2002).

It was by the end of nineteenth century that things began to take a different turn. The understanding that was shared between the government and the free associations started becoming politicised and strained. The Literacy Committee used public education in the form of lectures and reading materials as a medium of spreading anti-governmental propaganda. Thus in the 1890s the Free Economic Society received orders from the government to curtail its public activities as they were crossing the limits that were agreed upon. Compared to the Western countries the network of these associations were

way smaller in number but judging the time during which they flourished in Russia it is too important to be ignored (Ibid).

Despite the inconvenience that occurred in the performance of these associations, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the efforts taken by them remains a notable one. These associations were “self-defined”, “self-organised” and “self-managed” bodies and in a way promoting “democratisation of knowledge”. It should also be noted that despite the problems later, a great degree of collaboration and cooperation existed between the Russian state and these associations. To a certain extent the credit goes to the Russian state in creating a civil society by sanctioning the creation and operation of these free associations. By emphasising change and progress, associations and the projects they undertook brought about public awareness of “a changing world”. The Charter of the associations acted like a micro constitution at a time of autocracy. It helped in giving a meaning to civil society and also in making Russian citizens out of mere subjects (Ibid).

The development of industry followed by the rise in urban population and capitalism in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century led to the migration of rural population in urban areas thereby altering the social stratification of society. This in turn called for the need to have a proper decentralisation of welfare work. The government was not fully trusted to undertake such work due to their failure in the past to bring about reforms or to aid the poor. The mission of modernising the social system was possible only through the help of self-help organisations and their donations. Even Tsar Alexander the II and their successors, Alexander the III and Nicholas II were forced to identify the social magnitude of charitable work and finally accepted a compromise with charitable movement. In the year 1861 only eight public charitable organisations existed but by 1990 the number increased and reached more than 17000. In the personal documents of Tsarina Maria Fedorovna (wife of Alexander III) and Alexandra Fedorovna (wife of Nicholas II), there were many accounts and reports of the medical, social and practical instructive activities of the Red Cross, the institution of the Department of Empress Maria and other philanthropic organisations, in which these women participated (Tevlina 2008:303).

An important institution in the quest of educating expert social workers was the Orphanage of Great Princess Alexandra Nikolaevna, named in the memory of the youngest daughter of Nicholas I. In the orphanage, programmes and study plans were developed for specialising them further in various fields. The Imperial Philanthropic Society established in 1816 consisted of various social institutions that dedicated themselves to the task of taking care of sick persons, providing shelters for the homeless, help to the mentally challenged and providing free and reasonable house to certain sections of the population. The Society at large required a huge budget of more than one million roubles by 1855. Established in the year 1867, the Russian Society for the Care of Injured and Sick War Veterans received a special place among other charitable institutions. In 1876 it was renamed as the Russian Red Cross Society (Ibid).

At the starting of 1900s, Russia began entering into an international community that dealt with the matters of social welfare. Russia participated and even attempted to accomplish a range of resolutions in various international congresses that begun at the end of 1880s. At five international forums held between 1889 and 1911, Russia and other European countries as well as America, talked about various issues of public and private social care. These countries came together at the inter-governmental level and attempted to look for ways to fight adolescent delinquency, infant mortality, prostitution and poverty. They also worked to aid the underprivileged foreigners and lonely widows in those countries and discussed issues relating to public as well as private social care (Ibid). The above mentioned instances show that Russia was conscious about various issues and the ways to deal with them. The participation of Russia in international congresses shows the interest of the ruling class for improving the social conditions of its people. The various policies of Tsarist Russia discussed so far and the efforts taken to improve the social condition through the help of various associations, organisations and also the spread of education can be regarded as a major step towards progress. This depicts the values of Russia during that period which despite being under the authoritative regime had the scope for improvement in the days ahead.

However it should be kept in mind that while the West was under the umbrella of humanistic and renaissance movements, Russia was not even close to it. During the

fourteenth century when the study of philosophy, politics and science was revived in the West and were treated as the basis of classical sources, Russia was still fighting the setbacks of the Tartar conquest which was imposed on them since 1240. Russia remained far from the influence of such reformist and humanist movement even during the second half of the fourteenth century when the German universities were inspired by new craving for knowledge and culture. In fact the elements of knowledge and culture that the West experienced were introduced in Russia only in the eighteenth century as an element of the literary model and tradition. Russia also did not come under the influence of the Protestant Reformation (Roucek 1958).

All the features such as the continuation of classical culture in the middle ages, humanism and renaissance and the Protestant Reformation that were present in the Western world remained absent in Russia's intellectual history until the reign of Peter the Great when he imposed upon Russia the Western culture during the eighteenth century (Ibid). Such humanistic touch in the West through renaissance and reformation had a great impact on the Western civil society foundations. Although Russia missed out on that part, there have been traces of its efforts toward the development of Russian civil society. It can be seen during Catherine the Great's reforms that gave rise to a number of organisations related arts, science, literature and charitable activities. Some of the prominent ones are the Russian Geographical Society, the Free Economic Society, Moscow Agricultural Society and the Pirogov Association of Russian Doctors. These societies helped in bringing about important social and legal reforms. Under Alexander II, the foundations of a civil society could be seen through his Great Reforms in 1860s including the abolishment of Serfdom, establishment of basic civil rights and steps taken to create local self government. The extension of railway system from Siberia to Pacific can be seen as a great step towards urbanisation and industrialisation. However such reforms and changes were mainly to do with economic changes and did not quite focus on the political changes. This led to rise in people's movements that ultimately led to 1905 revolution (Buxton and Konovalova 2012).

Religion formed a chief part of Russian society. The Christian characteristics of Russia were derived from the Byzantium.¹⁰ The Eastern Orthodox Church and the Western Roman Catholic Church went their separate ways in 1054, known as the East-West Schism or the Great Schism, due to their ecclesiastical and theological disputes and differences. However the Russian Church could never brag of scholarly philosophy which the Western Roman Catholic Church possessed. Russia thus could not produce independent thinkers like Wycliff, Huss, Luther and Zwingli that the West produced and the Church could not act as a source of culture like that in the West. Nevertheless the Byzantine culture had its own significant influence in the world. Under this culture or system the autocratic rulers enjoyed the status of God on earth and therefore this to a certain extent explains the unprecedented powers enjoyed by all the Tsars and Stalin later. The Byzantine art and architecture have also had a long-lasting impact into modern times (Roucek 1958).

Religion also played an important role in the formation of education in Russia. The early Christian Kievan Princes were interested in education but the basis of education during the eleventh century was mostly for gaining literacy to be able to read Psalms, Gospels and other religious scriptures. Although the motive was to make the people religious, it did become an effort towards attaining education. However during the Tatar rule education related practices went to the background and slowly departed. Even the clergy and princes were illiterate during their reign. It was by the end of fifteenth century that the training of clergy started gaining grounds again by the Greek and South Slavic schools who had immigrated to Russia to escape Turkish domination. During the reign of Ivan the III, there was a scholarship for the clericals that adopted foreign techniques to train and raise the standards of the priests and intellectuals (Roucek 1958:38-39).

It should be noted that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, even though education was budding, intellectual expansion was confined to the aristocracy but gradually Western influences in education started to enter again. It was about the same

¹⁰ The Byzantine Empire was the continuation of the Roman Empire in the East during the middle ages. The Empire started establishing relations with Kievan Rus between 850 and 1100. The relations between the two strengthened with the wedlock between the then ruler of Kievan Rus Vladimir the Great and Anna Porphyrogenita, daughter of Byzantine Empire Romanos II. This event led to the Christianisation of Rus.

time that Ukraine was exposed to Polish colonisation and culture pressures. To neutralize such influences the Orthodox clergy of Kiev opened schools that instructed in the late Renaissance style on which the Poles themselves were fed. The result of such efforts was the formations of a college at Kiev in 1622 by Peter Mogita, the great Orthodox Bishop of Kiev. Simeon Polotski was a graduate from that college and he later became the first advocator of Renaissance Scholarship at Moscow. So, when Ukraine was transferred to Russia from Poland, the effects of Western influence on Russia through Kiev became stronger (Ibid 1958:39). Therefore whether it was in the name of religion or even counteracting the western influence, education did find its way through to Russia even though it was mostly confined to the higher classes during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Nevertheless it did act as a stepping stone towards the spread of education to the masses too.

The accomplishments of Peter the Great have been a great source of attraction for the people of the world. The foundation of the city of St Petersburg by Peter the Great has been one of his greatest and most visible accomplishments. It was established on 27 May 1703 and the city allowed Russia to secure its presence in the Baltic. It also became Russia's capital and remained so until just after the demise of the Empire in 1917. He focused on political reforms in order to establish a strong state. He is also credited for building a strong military and its armies were drawn together whenever needed from villagers too. However Russia's first proper standing army was formed in 1699 and was properly trained. Taxes were needed to support the new state and the military; hence a poll tax was introduced, increasing government revenues by 600 percent between the years 1680 and 1724. For Peter, modernisation of Russia went hand in hand with 'Westernisation'. On a 'Grand Embassy' tour in 1697 and 1698, Peter the Great visited Western European countries including France, Austria and England. However he knew deep within that his endeavour would not bear fruits and sustain the reforms unless it was able to generate ideas of its own. Therefore he placed great emphasis on education; opening various schools and even Russia's first State newspaper- the *Vedomosli* published its first edition (History of Russia).

Peter the Great (1682-1725) understood the value of education although he himself was of poor education. He undertook great measures to make sure that people under him got well educated and could make best use of their knowledge. Peter not only made Russia a European power but also made it emerge as a strong Eastern power. His centralising policies crystallised the structures of Russia so firmly that it stood strong till the 1917. For the needs of sailors, Peter the Great opened the famous 'counting' schools that taught reading, writing and mathematics. On 14 January 1701, the School of Mathematics and Navigational Sciences at Moscow was established by Peter. He appointed the graduate of the Royal Mathematical School of Christ's Hospital in London and an astronomer from Aberdeen as the first professors of the School. The school was later replaced by Naval Academy in 1715. After the death of Peter the Great in 1725, the Academy of Sciences was started. Since no Russian was qualified for a teaching appointment, seventeen German scientists in the year 1726 were imported to deliver lectures in Latin and special arrangements were made for Russian students to learn Latin too (Roucek 1958:40). It should be noted that Peter the Great was the first Tsar to sponsor education on secular lines. The translation of books from Western European languages was actively promoted and Russians were given consent to go abroad for education (Anirudh 2016).

Russia's affirmative changes and accomplishments with regard to its modernisation are mostly associated with Peter the Great. He brought forth the hidden potential that Russia possessed and gave world the idea that Russia too has enormous sources of soft power which when properly utilised have given outstanding outcomes. Some of the accomplishments of Peter the Great brought significant changes in the way Russia functioned earlier. He introduced the system of "Table of ranks" that gave a chance to any commoner to walk her/his way up the bureaucratic hierarchy with adequate hard work and skill (Ibid). In 1699, Peter released the people from the subjugation of military governors of their provinces and allowed them to elect municipalities of their own. His administrative reforms fixed various deficiencies that existed in the system. He established nine colleges or boards of government covering various areas like commerce, justice, foreign affairs. Peter the Great's achievements have indeed been great and transformed Russia inside out in various way. However some of his policies were bizarre at times, for example his "Beard Tax" in 1698 when men with beard were required to pay

an annual beard tax of one hundred roubles (Ibid). This move of Peter the Great can also be seen as a step towards westernising the Russians; a measure to make them more refined and cultured.

It was not just Peter the Great who focused his attention in raising the standard of Russia by modernising it and bringing about various reforms. Many followed his way and some went their own path in trying out various ways to transform Russia into a great power. Not all have succeeded equally but their efforts should also be taken into account while understanding Russia's history of having a great potential to stand as an example for many countries. Catherine II, the Great (1762-1796) has also devoted her efforts in following the footsteps of Peter the Great in undertaking various reforms and especially with regard to the educational sector. Catherine was influenced by the eighteenth century French philosophers and was able to successfully apply their thoughts in Russia through many ways (Roucek 1958). She established Western schools for upper classes and openly agreed that education of the peasantry was not in her program. Her most influential work was the founding of the first school system in Russia. Despite her sincere efforts she could not do much due to the ignorance of the masses. However the Russian school system could be successful with the help of a Serbian lawyer, Jankovic of Marijev. The result of the system was poor and resulted in poor student turnout. After Catherine the Great, the educational situation in Russia faced a backlash and started becoming an autocratic system instead. The process of 'Russification' began and gradually all demands of numerous minorities were suppressed. In general the diversity that was present started fading away (Ibid).

Russia's educational system under Alexander I (1801-1825) went through various changes. Six universities were ordered to be located in the main cities: Petrograd, Moscow, Kazan, Charkov, Warsaw and Wilno but only a few schools were actually established and many even ceased to exist. However the foundation of the Ministry of Enlightenment in 1817 was noteworthy and later became the ministry of Spiritual and National Education. Under Nicholas I (1825-1855), tyranny made a comeback. He suppressed rebellions as and when needed, severe censorships happened, there was a rise in secret police and religious prosecutions too. Nicholas I wanted to make the school

system purely Russian in character and to be the limb of the government. Alexander II brought various reforms and one of the most outstanding reforms in the history of Russia has been the ‘Emancipation of Serfs’ (Ibid).

In 1861, he passed a ‘*ukase*’, the Emancipation Law, which had tremendous effect, freeing 23,000,000 peasants from serfdom. It was emancipation that allowed the freed serfs to move to cities, thus freeing Russia’s masses for their later industrial and political revolution. During the time of Nicholas II (1894-1917), social and economic changes started taking place and along with that, the defeat in the Russo-Japanese war highlighted the value of education which led to a number of discussions by the government on such matters that continued later on with the provincial governments and some of the petitions were accepted by the Soviet government (Roucek 1958).

The contribution of literature to the Russian society during the Tsarist period has been a great source of soft power till date. The importance of literature began to grow after the age of enlightenment and accordingly Russian literature also reached its great heights that reflected in its literature of poetry, drama and prose. Great talents started to come to the forefront including Vasily Zhukovsky and Alexander Pushkin and Nikolai Gogol. Writers such as Dostoevsky and Leo Tolstoy had huge impacts even beyond Russia. Another renowned writer who earned a great name is Anton Chekhov who mastered the art of writing short stories. Together they contributed to the ‘golden age’ in Russian literature.

According to Andrei Malaev-Babel, assistant professor of theatre of Florida State University, the writers of Russia through their great literary work made a huge impact in the society of Russia. They were not just writers who wrote about the Russian society but also felt them and understood it. They were attached to the people and the society and were dedicated in bringing about change in the society through their work as well as by getting involved in the betterment of the society which is way more evident compared to other societies. Babel (2011) mentions about various writers of Russia but specifically mentions about the contributions of Anton Chekhov who touched the lives of Russians through generations. Chekhov belonged to the first generation of family of freed serfs and therefore he understood the importance of “inner freedom” more than political or social freedom. What Chekhov wanted the Russians to learn was how to be self reliant on

making any kind of choices and moral dilemma. Chekhov's writings reflected the reality of the Russian society and this was one fact that keeps the readers connected to him till date. After his trip to Sakhalin Island in the summer and autumn of 1890, Chekhov wrote a book called the *Sakhalin Island*. While his stay there, as doctor he treated many prisoners and settlers as well as interviewed them. All his travel notes therefore combined to form this book. Through his book the Russia society was exposed to the terrible conditions of the prisoners surviving in that island. Apart from being a great writer, he was also a philanthropist and continued to help the underprivileged by building schools and hospitals and also encouraged education for those sections (Dresen 2011).

Russia's 'Golden Age' of literature and poetry shows us that Russia was filled with talents that make Russian literature so eccentric and priceless in the world till date. While discussing this period it becomes imperative to mention the work of the great poet Pushkin. His writings can be compared to that of Dante of Italy or Goethe of Germany. He can be claimed as the father of Russian literature. The modern Russian language evolves from his work (Russia IC.com 2008). The influence of work is so widespread that the name 'Pushkin' itself brings a great honour to Russia and its people. To honour him Russia established the 'Pushkin prize', to those who attain the highest standard of literary excellence. Pushkin is revered by not only Russians but by admirers of art and poetry across the globe. In Scotland there is a special prize in the name of Pushkin, organised by a charity trust, given to those students and teachers who are winners of a writing competition. It includes participation of every secondary school of Scotland as well as students from the English speaking schools of St Petersburg, which is Pushkin's hometown too (pushkinprizes.net).¹¹ Some of his most famous works include *Eugene Onegin*, the novel *The Captain's Daughter*, *The Tales of the Late Ivan Petrovich Belkin*, *The Queen of Spades*, *The Little Tragedies* and *Boris Godunov*. One of the minor planets (Minor Planet 2208) is named after him (Russia IC.com 2008).

¹¹ The Pushkin Prize began when some of the descendants of Pushkin as well as the lovers of his work gathered in 1987 to mark his 150th death anniversary. One of the descendants in order to honor Pushkin started a pilot project in the form of a writing competition in the Scottish Secondary schools in Tayside in the year 1988. The success of the project led to the formation of a charitable trust in the year 1992 and since then the competition has been throughout Scotland that involves a five-day creative writing course (pushkinprizes.net).

The Golden Age of Russian literature is venerated till today in many different ways. One such way is my remembering the great work of that period through exhibitions held in various parts of the world. One such exhibition was conducted by Russian TV channel 'ARTIST-TV' and 'Bilingual Program and Research Corporation' and Sunflower Language Centre in Europe and Asia which met with huge success. The exhibition displayed the work of great writers of the nineteenth century such as Alexander Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov, Leo Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Nikolai Gogol, who belonged to the Golden Age of literature in Russia (RBTH 2015).

Russian literature had great influence around the world. Many writers and activists have been influenced by the writings of Russian authors. The modernist English writer Virginia Woolf was highly inspired by Leo Tolstoy. She went on to call him the 'greatest of all novelists' in her essay, 'The Russian Point of View', where she looked at the intensity of the work of Russian writers, adding her able elucidation to it. Phrases such as, "powerful, accurate and well nourished" were used by Woolf to describe Tolstoy. Some of the works of Woolf such as 'Mrs Dalloway' and 'To the Lighthouse' highlight the influence of Tolstoy's style especially used in his, 'War and Peace' and 'Anna Karenina' (Kamalakaran 2016). The uniqueness of Tolstoy's work is that it brought out a direct approach to the readers. The truthfulness of life, his straightforwardness, raw depiction of social problems in Russian society and his touch with reality attracted not only the Russian readers but many readers who loved the simplicity yet complex depiction of reality in his work. Most of the oriental writers have been a great follower of his work. Asia was exposed to his work at the beginning of the twentieth century when the freedom movements were gaining grounds. Tolstoy touched the religious and social aspects of Russia's life. What attracted the Asian writers was not so much to do with his religious views but because he took a stand against orthodoxy, hypocrisy of the clergy as well his constant struggle against the autocratic church (Chelyshev 2014).

Tolstoy also had a great impact on the leader of the Indian Independence Movement, Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi was inspired by the simplicity and purity in Tolstoy's writings. Leo Tolstoy's book "The Kingdom of God is Within You" and his essay on 'Christianity and Patriotism' influenced Gandhi. Gandhi's principles of non violence based on 'love

for entire mankind' were also an influence from Tolstoy's work. The work 'The Kingdom of God' made Gandhi a strong believer of *Ahimsa* or non violence. Gandhi even recalled about 'The Kingdom of God' during his speech at Sabarmati Ashram on 10 September 1928 to mark the birth anniversary of Tolstoy and stated, "The title means that God's Kingdom is in our heart, that if we search for it outside, we shall find it nowhere. I read the book 40 years ago. At that time, I was sceptical about many things and sometimes entertained aesthetic idea. When I went to England, I was a votary of violence. After I read this book that lack of faith in non-violence vanished" (Axinia 2014). The fact that Gandhi's principle of non violence that guided India's freedom struggle was highly inspired by Tolstoy shows the literary power of Leo Tolstoy.

Gandhi was one of the first to translate his works in Gujarati. Apart from Gandhi, other Indian writers such as Premchand, Subramania Bharati, Banarasidas Chaturvedi, Mulk Raj Anand and Faiz Ahmed Faiz have notably translated Tolstoy's work in Indian languages. Tolstoy's focus on personal moral responsibility attracted many different writers. This was even highlighted in his novel 'Resurrection'. This theme of personal moral responsibility can be found in many of the works of the Asian writers. An example of such a work is Amritlal Nagar's 'A Drop in the Ocean'. What has also kept the Asian writers attracted to his work is Tolstoy's depiction of life from the viewpoint of the peasants. According to Telugu writer Shatavahan, the influence of Tolstoy is strongly felt in Telugu literature especially because of the touch of peasantry class in his writings. Mahmud Teimur, an Egyptian writer, mentioning about the influence of Tolstoy's writings stated, "The heroes of Tolstoy novels are close to the spirit of the people of the East that only their names are different" (Chelyshev 2014).

Fyodor Dostoevsky is another famous Russian writer whose work had a great influence around the world. Orhan Pamuk, the Turkish Nobel laureate was vastly inspired by Dostoevsky's work and even stated, "Dostoevsky is an author with whom I tend to identify, I have learned a lot from him" (Orhan Pamuk 2008). Even Anton Chekhov's work received huge popularity and it is said that the works of William Faulkner, the Nobel Prize novelist from Mississippi, such as 'A Rose for Emily' which in a way feels like a tribute to Chekhov's 'The Lady with the little dog' (Kamalakaran 2016). Russian

literature explored the depth of history, values, reality, vision and even mystery forming a great source of Russia's culture at home and its influence abroad.

Apart from literature, promotion and gradual improvement in the field of science was one of the main achievements of Russia. Right from the enlightenment period after the founding of Russian Academy of Sciences and Saint Petersburg University by Peter the Great and Moscow State University by Mikhail Lomonosov, there has been groundbreaking accomplishments made in the field of science in Russia. Science therefore was the source of attraction for Russia not only during the Tsarist and Soviet Russia but it also continues to attract many even today as it has created a criterion for innovation and edification for others. The Russian Academy of Sciences had a very promising beginning with great academicians and scholars exploring science in its various forms. It was fully supported by the State leading to smooth beginnings. The "more than generous" salaries complementing the liberal scientific atmosphere of the Academy attracted "highest calibre scholars". However when Mikhail Lomonosov arrived at the academy, the situation was quite different. The Academy was facing financial problems and the aim of educating Russians was mostly deserted. Mikhail Lomonosov fought hard to change the situations at the Academy. He tried to empower the Russian students by increasing the number of scientific publications and lectures in Russian more than Latin or German. He also ensured that more and more Russian students and interns joined the Academy (Shiltsev 2012).¹²

The achievements and contributions of Mikhail Lomonosov to Russia's science and education are beyond comprehension. He was one of the first persons to confirm experimentally the law of conservation of matter, which helped in understanding the fact that metals gain weight when expanded. This fact is now known to us as being occurred due to the phenomena called oxidation. Lomonosov also designed a machine that is a prototype of helicopter that "rotated in opposite directions to balance out the torque" (Ibid). As early as 1756, Lomonosov wrote 127 notes on the theory of light and

¹² Mikhail Lomonosov, a Russian polymath, scientist and writer, made great contributions in the field of science and literature. He belonged to a peasant family. His skills and talents made path for his academic journey and received education at Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences. He founded the Moscow State University in the year 1755 which was later named as Lomonosov University in 1940. He can also be credited for creating the basis for modern Russian literacy language (Markov 2017).

electricity. He even presented his paper on the nature of light and the new theory of colours that constitute light (Ibid).

Lomonosov was also known for his dedication for educating the Russians. He wanted the Russians to reach great heights in various fields and set an example for others. He made significant contributions to the philological study of Russian language and went further in developing a scientific vocabulary. Such efforts bore fruits in the form of modern literacy in Russian language. Likewise he inscribed Russian grammar and espoused “tonic verification” leading to the alteration of the character of Russian prosody. He has also made significant contributions in the field of art. He restored the ancient art of mosaics. It was in the year 1753 that Lomonosov founded the first mosaic factory that produced coloured beads and glass in Russia. His great piece of art has been the portrait of “Peter the Great and the Battle of Poltava” that measures 4.8x 6.4 metres. The system of higher education in Russia is indebted to the contributions of Lomonosov. The founding of Moscow State University remains one of his greatest contributions to Russia. The university is one of the most prestigious institutions of higher learning today (Markov 2017).

Another person who has made Russia and Russians proud is Dmitry Mendeleev. He gave great magnitude to Russia’s scientific quest and contributed heavily to science in general. He brought about great scientific discoveries to Europe and the rest of the world. After working in various institutions for great positions and performing stupendous research in the field of chemistry, in the year 1870 he was successful in transforming St Petersburg into a specialised centre for scientific research. One of the greatest achievements of Mendeleev is his formulation of periodic law giving way to a visionary side of periodic table of elements. His version can be regarded as the early archetype on which the table is based today. It was Mendeleev who in the year 1990 identified how the noble gases perfectly fit into his system thus giving them place between halogens and alkalis. Another noteworthy contribution made by him to Russia is his research on the composition of oil thus leading the way for major industrial developments and thus laying the foundation for first oil refinery in Russia (Conroy 2017). Discoveries and contributions of such great figures in the field of science, art or literature bring forth a different picture of Russia.

Contrary to the stereotypical image of Russia, by diving deep into Russia's history we get to see a different side of it; a side that is less spoken of by Western media and less known to the world. History of Russia stands as an example for not just the Western world but also to the rest of the world and even present day Russia. The achievements of the country in the past stands as a motivation for Russians today to make their country known to the world for matters other than the hard aspects of its power.

It can be said that despite the authoritative temperament of the Tsarist period, the Tsarist government did allow a great degree of "intellectual freedom" in the field of science. The prestige enjoyed by both the Academy of Sciences and Academy of humanitarian studies was higher than the European countries. Peter the Great indeed had a great vision for modern Russia when he initiated such programmes and especially in the field of science and technology. Apart from Lomonosov and Mendeleev, other experts in the field of science during the Tsarist period brought great esteem to the country. K.A Timiryazev was a biologist whose research assisted agronomy in Russia. Nikolai Pirogov was regarded as the father of modern field surgery as he was one of the first few physicians who used anaesthetics in surgery. Sofia Kovalevskaya was regarded among the budding scientists for her groundbreaking development in Mathematics. Lastly Ivan Mechnikov deserves a mention here as he was the one who discovered "phagocytosis" which is a process wherein human immune system isolates foreign bacteria. This discovery "furthered the science of immunology". He even received the Nobel prize in 1908 (Moulik 2017).

The culture of dance in Russia especially in the form of ballet has been of a great significance in creating a Russian identity, and also playing an important role in cultural development till date. This culture has helped in influencing the Western view of Russian society. With Peter the Great's quest to modernise his country after his return from the 'great tour' in the West, influence of Western culture started to spread. Even Catherine the Great who was a great patron of arts encouraged the opening of ballet school. However in 1801, Charles Didelot ignited the first grand period of ballet. The production

of his ballet was seen at the St Petersburg Bolshoi Theatre (Andros 1993).¹³ Russian ballet is world famous and is a great source of Russia's culture even though ballet as such did not originate in Russia. In the beginning most of the performers were from poor background but later the Tsars started to show interest and brought even foreign talents to teach as well as perform at ballet schools, both in St Petersburg and Moscow. Russia soon started to develop its own style of ballet, different from opera. For young generation ballet became like a "route to international fame and glory" and thus started displaying great interest in it. Sergei Radchenko, former principal of the Bolshoi Ballet, decided to capitalise on the immense Russian talent and created the 'Moscow Festival Ballet', an independent company. It has performed full length ballet such as "Cinderella, Romeo and Juliet and Legend of Love" in their tour to Europe and America (King 2016).

Analysis: Tsarist Russia despite its autocratic tendencies had periods of great cultural promotion and appreciation. It was chiefly after Peter the Great that Russia took a path towards modernisation in all spheres of life. There was more openness and expression in the forms of art, architecture, literary writing and music. In the cultural sphere it was especially art and architecture that mostly flourished under the reign as of Peter the Great as well as the period following his reign. Art was therefore a very rewarding profession. The State as well as the court and private investors provided successful artists with handsome income while the Sovereign bequeathed such artists with jewels, annual pensions as well as offering them entry into the nobility. Therefore it can be said that status of the artist was directly proportional to the quality of the work. The State made great efforts to encourage young talents in the field of art and thus the Academy of Fine Arts provided the needed platform for the students to further explore their competence. One of the most encouraging steps undertaken by the authorities was the Statute of 1764 which was granted six years after the opening of the Academy. Under this Statute, the students graduating from the Academy were free citizens; meaning they were free from military recruitment and even paying poll tax (Perkins 1991).

¹³ Charles Didelot was a French choreographer and dancer. He was invited by the director of Imperial Theatre in St Petersburg in the year 1801. It was Didelot who led Russian ballet to great heights and was a key figure in the development of Russian national ballet (St Petersburg.com).

Such kind of opportunities and facilities provided to the artists especially under Tsarist rule can be regarded as a progressive step. It allowed some kind of freedom of expression as the artists could express their thoughts and feelings through their work. The facilities provided to the students studying in the Academy were one of the great steps to encourage lower estate people to come forth and explore their talents. The Statute of 1764 by exempting the graduates from poll tax and military recruitment thus provided opportunities to the underprivileged sections of the population. Parents belonging to the lower estates fascinated by the perks of graduating from the Academy of Fine Arts placed their sons in the Academy in significant numbers from 1764 to 1799 (Ibid). The mobility and freedom to express, enjoyed by the artists during that period produced finest art that received great appreciation. Russia's rich culture especially highlighted in the form of art was a great source of soft power under Tsarist Russia. The mobility seen in the art profession amidst the autocratic image of Tsarist Russia shows a different dimension of Russia and also increased the legitimacy of the state.

The flexibility enjoyed by artists under Peter the Great showed that if the state shows interest in its people and its culture then the outcome of it is bound to be great. Although Peter's major concern was to strengthen the military and navy of the country he understood the importance and power of culture and did not fail to give a boost to make stronger the culture of Russia. What makes the efforts of Peter the Great stand out is that he added Western ideas to the traditional Russian culture and made it unique. The art under Peter was a depiction of secular as well religious ideas and this showed the initial steps of moving away from earlier rigidities with regard to ways of expressing Russia's culture.

However after 1816, the freedom previously enjoyed by the lower estates and serfs to attend the Academy was restricted to the condition where the owners would agree to free the serfs. Even if the serfs were freed they could hardly make it to the top level and thus fail to achieve the facilities that earlier lured them to practice art and join the Academy (Perkins 1991). Thus, the mobility and flexibility enjoyed by the artists or the students of art was gradually coming to an end. The period of Peter the Great had brought about reforms that were necessary to change the conservative nature of the Russian state and

society and acted like the candle in darkness for so many sections of the population; giving people hope that there is much more to gain and much more to learn, that progress rather than stagnation will be the motif of Russians. However with his death the hope of Russia's reforms started to wane. The fact that Peter was open to amalgamation of ideas and not being constrained to its old rigidities made the perception of Russia quite positive in the West. It was not just the fact that Peter began the process of Westernisation of Russia that made Russia attractive to the Western eyes but it was also the openness and progress he brought with his reforms that made Russia's image quite positive.

With the Decembrist Revolt in 1825¹⁴, the social mobility earlier enjoyed by the people started to fade away and restricted measures started replacing the more progressive ones during that period under Nicholas I. The candle in the darkness started taking the form of candle in the wind. Thus, in the year 1830 the Academy of Fine Arts was among the various institutions that received the statute which brought about many regressive changes. The program of the Academy was divided into six courses and the period of study was fixed at six years. It raised the age of entry from nine to fourteen and established new entrance requirements. Between 1758 and 1799, 43.52 per cent of the Academy of Fine Arts' students were from the lower estates, while less than one quarter came from the upper states. Between 1800 and 1830, the percentage of students from lower estate was 31 percent while the percentage of upper estate students was 42.66. Therefore it is clearly seen that there was greater mobility for students from the lower estates in the eighteenth century (Ibid). However the fact remains that art was given preference in the Tsarist period although it differed from one century to another. It shows that other than focusing on the hard aspect of power like the military, navy or even economy the Tsarist period enjoyed the finesse of art and culture and even promoted it.

Anthony Swift (2002) is of the opinion that it was from the time of Catherine that Russian high culture began to get the taste of social as well as political significance and therefore gradually it encouraged debates and criticisms on such issues. Judging by the

¹⁴ The Decembrist Revolt was staged by a group of military officials against Tsar Nicholas I in December 1825 in St Petersburg Russia. These rebels were liberals who felt threatened by the conservative views of the new ruler. The Tsar's forces however were successful in defeating the rebels. As a result of this revolt Tsar Nicholas I started implementing a variety of new regulations to prevent the spread of the liberal movement (The Web Chronology Project).

fact that there were not many outlets for the frustration of the masses, such an environment for debate and discussion can be seen as a great sign of progress under the autocratic rule. However even though there was some kind of cultural freedom, up until the nineteenth century it was quite restrictive in that the cultural authority mostly resided with a thin layer of educated society known as the intelligentsia. This intelligentsia during the nineteenth century served the role of representing the masses and in particular being the voice of the unheard like the serfs, illiterates and those who lacked the ability or were not allowed to speak for themselves. However with the spread of education, the term intelligentsia was rather used to describe a small group of more educated people who had formed their own elite culture. Accordingly, by the turn of the century there arose a significant group of people actually representing the subordinate class.¹⁵ They also started reading elite literature as well as involving themselves in writing poetry and enacting or being audience to theatre shows (Swift 2002).

The reforms of Peter the Great created a kind of divide between the westernised intelligentsia and the *narod*, who were basically Russians, untouched by the Western charm as well as a divide between the educated class and the common masses who could not enjoy such privileges. However there are many instances where the intelligentsia has felt indebted to the masses and their hard work, their labour that made their education possible. Hence, after the emancipation of serfs, there were great attempts to spread the knowledge among the common masses and serfs who had been recently freed, to enlighten them and guide them and thus bridging

If we try to trace Tsarist Russia's soft power in culture we find out that other than literature, ballet and various forms of art and architecture, the lesser acclaimed features of the then society also heavily contribute to Russia's attraction during that time. As we have discussed earlier, one such aspect of Tsarist Russia's culture that aimed at creating its positive image is presence of numerous voluntary associations. The associations included learned societies, small-town charitable and agricultural societies, and clubs for recreation and sport. Russia had the largest number of cooperative societies in the world

¹⁵ Terms such as *narodnaia* (People's) intelligentsia and *rabochaia* (workers') intelligentsia were quite popular (Swift 2002).

on the eve of World War I. Due to the rapid growth of such associations in the second half of the nineteenth century Russia underwent social, economic as well as cultural changes. However even though some of these associations were encouraged and sanctioned by the government, the rapid growth and expansion of these associations in a short time could not be covered and handled properly by the understaffed government (Bradley 2009).

The contribution of associations to Russia's soft power is that fact that these associations, even under the rule of the sovereign, was able to create an environment conducive to the formation of a civil society; a society that would work together to achieve common desired goals and that would be independent of the State. Russia in the nineteenth century had therefore created an appropriate milieu for soft power as a strong and stable civil society implies that people to a certain extent had freedom to express their thoughts, opinion or even grievances. This image of Russia having a stable and steady civil society is otherwise not extensively remembered or is not quite familiar to an outsider. Unlike the usual ruthless and backward image attached to Russian society, Russia in the nineteenth century provides an image of a society that was able to stand up and contribute to the betterment of the people and the country.

Many historians are of the belief that by the end of the reign of Catherine, "the blueprint for a civil society in Russia was ready" and by the end of the reign of Alexander I, "the growth of civil society proved to be irreversible". Although debatable, many historians have even argued over the fact that the nineteenth century civil society was as such independent of state control and even placed limits over state's powers (Ibid). Whether the civil society that existed was indisputably capable of challenging the state's domination or not, the fact remains that it did emerge at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century to challenge the monopoly of the regime. Although under the Tsarist regime the individual as such was not a free being and before the emancipation of serfs they were like mere objects of use, the birth and expansion of voluntary free associations to increase public participation, mobilisation and cooperation to make people self aware of their problems and to identify their solutions was however a huge jump forward towards a more progressive environment.

According to Joseph Bradley (2009) the learned societies, comprising of academicians, professors and government officials, promoted three defining developments in imperial Russia, and those were- an interest in science, education and the diffusion of knowledge; patriotism and public service; and the public sphere of civil society. However these so called learned societies despite their great contribution were biased as the membership to these societies was not open to women. However such kind of discrimination also existed in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe where civil societies were considered to be association of free men and women were not part of it (Bradley 2009).

Russia's relationship with the West has always been a major factor in determining Russia's soft power capabilities because the portrayal of Russia by the West to the world adds to the image of Russia's either positive or negative image. Russia's relationship with Europe has a long history and especially the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were characterised by a great level of cultural interconnection. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the relationship shared by Russia and Europe had differences in their cultural viewpoints. The Orthodox Church often highlighted the differences in their religious and cultural practices and beliefs and the Russian officials were hesitant in engaging with the Europeans. However despite the unwillingness of the Church and the officials the Russian court encouraged interaction with Europeans in various fields and therefore even employed many foreigners who could help the Russian state. Consequently there were many physicians, architects, officers as well as weapon artists who worked together with their Russian counterparts working for the Muscovite state. During the reign of Peter the Great Russia's cultural differences between Europe started to shrink. Apart from his quest for a strong military and navy, Peter also focused his attention towards culture. His cultural revolution took Russia away from the old traditional ways especially with regard to the Orthodox Church and worked to strengthen Russia's cultural ties with Europe. Russia's image under Alexander II was also quite positive in Europe. Alexander's reign also regarded as the period of Great Reforms indeed appeared fascinating and progressive to Europe (Aust 2016).

Russia's relationship with Europe not only determined the former's image in the latter but also suggested how other countries viewed the former. Russia's image in Africa was

therefore in contrast to the image of the Europeans. The Europeans were viewed as exploitative colonial powers while Russians were viewed in a positive light as they did not indulge in the game of 'scramble for Africa' with the Europeans. Russia's involvement in the Boer's war along the side of Boers against the British further enhanced the perception of Russia as being different from the European colonial powers. However the perception of Russia in China, India and Egypt was just the opposite as they viewed Russia to be in support of Europe's colonial ambitions. Therefore the defeat of Russia at the hands of Japan in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905 was viewed as a first defeat of Europe's imperialism and gave them hope for future emancipation from colonial imperialism (Ibid).

The Russian avant-garde culture also contributed heavily to Russia's image as a country rich in cultural tastes. Although it was gaining attention and popularity before the 1917 revolutions, it reached great heights of success between 1917 and 1932. After which it was overshadowed by the rise of socialist realism and that although had its own kind of style and meaning it did take away the charm that the culture of avant-garde had brought to Russia. The culture gave birth to brilliant paintings, sculptures, architects, literature, photography, theatre and films. The work produced by artists such as Kazimir Malevich, El Lissitsky and Aleksandr Rodchenkonot only gave the masses a new form of art but also created some kind of political revolution as they influenced the minds of the people (Lacma 2012). The contribution that avant-garde culture made to the Russian society was in itself a great source of soft power for Russia during that time. Through its cultural values it aimed to bring about a change in the political and societal values during that time.

Under the Soviet Union

To understand soft power in Soviet Union, one requires to understand the base on which it stood so firmly for a period of almost seven decades, that is to say from 1922 till 1991. Socialism was the main hallmark of Soviet Union and it is through the development and understanding of this ideology that it strongly stood, defending the rights of the working and the oppressed classes, bringing about their emancipation in ways that were never done before. The 1917 October Revolution therefore brought an end to Tsarist Russia and

the creation of the Soviet Union in the year 1922. From that period onwards it had unflinchingly stayed firm against capitalism of the West, thus balancing the world order, as it stood on the one end of the spectrum while the United States was on the other. Both Soviet Union and the United States came into view as ‘super powers’ making the world order into a bipolar system. It is the ideology of the Soviet Union that shaped its soft power to a very large extent. It becomes important to understand the ways in which the socialist ideology had penetrated various realms of the region, whether it was economic, social, political and cultural, thus affecting the region’s power of attraction and acting as an important source of soft power. This attraction as Joseph Nye puts forward should not comprise coercion but merely attract the other regions of the world by building an image that would be an example for the others to follow and by making them want what you want, thus building a strong soft power (Nye 2004: 1-206).

Socialism in the Soviet Union is another great topic of discussion as many scholars have different views about how it was carried forth by the leaders. The concept of socialism as believed by Marx may not have been totally replicated in Soviet Union but the fact that it gave a new turn to the earlier mode of autocratic control of the Tsarists speaks for itself that it did view “man’s freedom’ from the oppression as one of its aims and thus indeed tried to live up to the principles of socialism”. Maxim Gorky (1934) in his speech in the Workers’ Congress explained what socialist Soviet truly stood for: “... In our Union of socialist Soviets, there should not, there cannot be superfluous people... the workers and peasants government has called upon the whole mass of the population to help build a new culture... that means that our criticism must really be self-criticism; it means that we must devise a system of socialist morality as a regulating factor in our work and our relationships”. He further adds, “... fathers are beginning to show more care and tenderness for their children, which in my view is quite natural, as children for the first time in the whole life of mankind are now the inheritors not of their parents’ money, houses and furniture, but of a real and mighty fortune- a socialist state created by the labour of their father and mothers (Gorky 1934). However it does not mean that socialism in the Soviet Union was an ideal one. It did have its drawbacks especially depending on the leadership and the policies formulated under them. Therefore there are many diverse views regarding this.

Russia's rich culture was something that Soviets boasted throughout, especially in the post-war period. Russia's culture was highlighted through various activities and it became highly popular across the world. The Russian ballet was regarded as the best, the Russian classics in literature and music also became highly popular in the world. Russia's cultural dominance was spread across the East European regions and the other republics, with Russian language becoming a compulsory language in all the schools (Figs 2002: 505).

The development of science in Russia has been one of its great achievements as well attractions. As mentioned earlier, it was Peter the Great that made the development of science a possibility in Russia with the opening of the Academy of Sciences at St Petersburg. The Academy of Sciences was renamed after the Bolshevik Revolution as the Academy of Sciences of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The Soviet government also went ahead to make science a national priority and fully supported its growth. The enthusiasm shown by the Soviet government paid off well and accordingly numerous Soviet scientists received Nobel Prize in various disciplines of science. Scientists Ilya Frank and Igor Tam (1958), Lev Landau (1962), Nikolay Basov (1964) and Pyotr Kapitsa (1978) received the Nobel Prize in Physics, and in Chemistry it was Nikolai Semenov (1956) who received the same award (Moulik 2017).

Soviet Union's space program not only brought great feeling of pride to the Soviet people for the achievements, but also gave a hard-hitting competition to the US. Sergey Korolov has made one of the greatest achievements in the space program of Russia. It was he who designed the successful space satellite *Sputnik*. The world remained in awe when the satellite carried the dog named *Laika* in space. Most important of all, it was him who designed the satellite that launched Yuri Gagarin as the first astronaut in space in 1961. Another groundbreaking achievement in the field of science was made by Soviet scientist Vladimir Demikhov who instigated work on organ transplants in animals and humans. Demikhov developed the first artificial heart in 1937 and "performed the world's first heart-lung transplant in 1946 and first liver transplant in 1948" (Ibid). He also artificially created the two-headed dog by performing the world's first head transplant in 1955. Such achievements of Soviet Union are unsurpassed and have acted as a great source of

attraction to the various countries in the world. The world famous deadly rifle, Automatic Kalashnikov-47, also known as AK-47 was created by Mikhail Kalashnikov in the year 1947. It was stolen by Afghan Mujahidin terrorists and was used against the Soviet army (Ibid).

Russia's cultural diplomacy in the Soviet period reached great heights with the leaders taking measures to ensure good ties with other countries through various cultural activities, education programmes and delegations. The opening of the Albanian school in the year 1955 by the Albanian-USSR Friendship Society and the Albanian Ministry of Education highlight the effort of both the governments in fostering good ties through education. The school offered Russian language courses to the students which definitely boosted Soviet soft power. Similarly the same year also marked the coming of the 'Iranian Cultural Mission' to Moscow, led by the head of the department of Construction engineering. This was also a result of the invitation by the Soviet Ministry of education. Here, it can be observed that education has been an important tool in the Soviet cultural diplomacy which certainly had positive results for its soft power. Apart from education, there were several other cultural activities that bolstered Soviet soft power. However, the exchange programs acted as a win-win situation because both the participating countries benefitted from each other. An example of this can be seen from the delegation of representatives of the Moscow Stanislavsky and Nemirovich Danchenko Theatre that was sent to Yugoslavia in October 1955 for studying new approach of ballet (FBIS 1955: BB 15). These cultural ties indeed helped in shaping the soft power projection of Soviet Union to the world.

In this context if we try to understand soft power of Soviet Union, we have to take into consideration the role played by "socialist ideology" as a source of soft power and its amalgamation with the cultural, social, economic and political realm. This can be understood through the concept "socialist realism" that emerged in Soviet Union gradually and became official later. Socialist realism as a term was not used in public until 1932 (Clark 1981: 27-46). It was actually a 'tendency' in the mid 1890s that determined the rise of the proletarians and the beginning for struggle against the oppressors. Only after formulation and promulgation at the 1934 Congress of Writers did

it become the officially sponsored 'method', first in literature and then in the arts in general (James 1973: 87).

Socialist realism reflected deeply in arts that derived itself from the rich culture of the past as well the Soviet period. It brought together two key features of earlier Russia and the Soviet Union: culture and socialism in its formation. It is therefore the reflection in the arts of the struggle for the victory of socialism (ibid). Thus, theoretically at least, socialist realism indeed was a very strong phenomenon as it not only furthered the goals of the socialist ideology but in doing so it also gave a strong message of emancipation especially of the oppressed classes which very much included the working class. Socialist realism also gave importance to the common masses as is seen through many of the socialist realist paintings, literature, cinema as well as other such fields where this concept had successfully managed to penetrate. Socialist realism therefore had strong roots in the culture of Soviet Union as it is through culture that it furthered its goals.

Soviet life is most often imagined as the incarnation of the anti-aesthetic kind, colourless, lacking in style or design especially when compared with the spectacular, colourful and stylish surface reality of commercial capitalism during the same period. Socialist realism traditionally was described by the term "propaganda" and the art was seen to be very dry and lifeless, especially by the West (Efimova 1997: 76). Maxim Gorky, "the most generally quoted exponent of socialist realism" (Kelly 1983: 108-111) dedicated himself to the cause of the state and its socialist ideology. It can be called 'propaganda' but it cannot be denied of the appreciation it has received in its chiselled but flair beauty. This beauty goes beyond all the criticisms. Socialist realism may have restricted the boundaries of the arts on which it is based but even though has come out to be meaningful in its result. By looking at various literatures that were produced during those times we understand the effect of socialist realism on it. If we look at some of the works produced during the 1930s during the Stalin period, we get an idea that all was not totally lost after the death of Lenin, that under Stalin too there were literature that despite being state-centric were worthy of appreciation. Being state-centric was not that much of a problem rather it was a problem if under socialist realism, the literature lost its pure charm. The collection, 'Belomorsko-baltiiski Kanal imeni Stalina' (The White Sea-Baltic

Canal or Belomor) can be regarded as one such example of socialist literature that contained the essence of Engel's theory in 'Dialectics of Nature' that labour has transformed the primate into the human (Carleton 1994: 998-1003).

The revolutionary romanticism of Gorky's writings after the first Russian Revolution of 1905 added a new dimension to the critical realism which was the dominant literary movement in Europe. Socialist realism in its theoretically-developed Soviet form was different from the earlier literary movement as it arose in a socialist society and aspired to be the first stage in a new literary tradition (Kelly 1983: 108-111). The Socialist literature as a source of soft power can be seen in the influence it had on the image of Soviet Union abroad. Countries like China, Vietnam, and Cuba have highly been inspired by the whole concept of socialist realism and its penetration into the literary work was even larger due to the contribution of some of the highly creative minds of the Soviet writers.

A very strong example of socialist realism of Soviet Union acting as a source of soft power is the case of India, where many writers have been influenced by the socialist realist literature and poetry of Soviet Union. D.Selveraj, of Tamil Nadu, India has been one such writer. His novel 'Thol' (Hide) speaks about the travails and struggles of the Dalit Tannery workers of Dindigul in Tamil Nadu. Almost all his works highlight the plight of workers and the toiling masses and their constant struggle to change the social order. Maxim Gorky is among his role models. When asked in an interview about the relevance of socialist realism today, that whether it has been obsolete or not, he answered, "I don't think that socialist realism has become obsolete. 'Thol', his novel, is living proof of the relevance of socialist realism, which cannot be replaced by any other 'ism'... socialist realism is dialectical, which sees the transformation in individuals, society and nature. It is a scientific approach" (Frontline 2013).

'Mother' has been translated into many languages and was also made into movies in many countries. Bertlot Brecht, the famous playwright and poet also wrote a play that was adapted from Gorky's 'Mother'. Apart from 'Mother' there were other books of Gorky that were translated into Indian languages, these books include, 'Foma Gordeyev', 'Three of Them', 'Artamonovs', 'Lower Depths', 'Miserable or Luckless Pavel', 'Childhood', 'Apprenticeship', 'Enemies' and 'V.I Lenin', to name a few (Indian

Literature 1968: 68-73). Nikolai Ostrovsky's 1933 Socialist realist novel, 'How the Steel was tempered' became a centrepiece in the urban and rural areas of China too. It was even made into a film later (Chen 2012).

Soviet history is an example of how Russia has worked hard towards building a positive image in the world and how it has tried to promote its culture and society through the help of literature. Soviet literature although overwhelmed by socialist ideology, did not lose its charm only that things now were to be viewed from the angle of socialism. The State took great advantage of the literary skills of the Soviet writers in promoting their ideas, values and policies. The State then worked towards reaching the global public with the help of these literary works. To this end, the State even started a publishing house known as the 'The Foreign Language Publishing House' which published Russian literature in the form of books, novels and even propaganda, in reign language. The head quarter of this house was at 21 Zubovsky Boulevard. It also published major works of Lenin and Stalin (web-archive.org). Such an effort by the State shows the interest of the state in not only promoting its ideas and ideologues but also its desire to mould the perception that various countries had of Soviet Union during that time.

This publishing house also known as "Progress and Peace Publishing houses" in the later periods was highly successful in achieving their target of translation and dissemination of Russian literature in foreign countries. Apart from Soviet Union, it was China that was quite successful at the same mission. However Soviet Union alone had almost 800 distribution outlets in 68 foreign countries. In the year 1964, more than 45 million copies of pamphlets and books of approximately 1,470 titles were exported by USSR in 39 non Russian languages. Out of these, about 28 million copies of more than 1,000 titles were published in 24 languages; which are spoken in less developed countries. Apart from books, Soviet periodicals were also published and disseminated abroad and almost millions of copies of just fourteen such periodicals were also exported. Such publications of both Russia and China also entered the US and according to existence evidence, about "2.5 million mail packages from all Communist countries arrived in US each year" (Central Intelligence Agency (US) 1966).

However efforts were also made by the concerned authorities of USSR to translate some major literary works of foreign countries in Russian language. This effort by the State helped the Russians to come in touch with the outside world understand the taste of literature other than their own. The translation, import as well as dissemination of foreign literature were free until the late 1930s. The journal *International 'Naja Literatura* (International Literature) played a key role in the translating work (Safiullina and Platanov 2012).

Soviet literature can be categorised under two broad themes, social revolution and the endeavour to rebuild a socialist state. So basically, Soviet writers unlike the writers of the pre-revolution period were faced with the task of expressing themselves through prism of the State ideology and the prevalent society. Despite being restricted to such themes, the world has witnessed some of the finest Soviet writers who are still remembered for their stupendous work. The works of Maxim Gorky, Nikolai Lyasho, and Mikhail Sholokhov can be regarded as the great works of Soviet era. These writers brought about a change in the style of literature with Maxim Gorky setting the new trend. His works mostly dealt with his inner feelings about various social matters. Also keeping in mind the condition during his time, his works mostly highlighted the toilers, the revolutionaries and the outcastes and he went deep into their lives bringing out an understanding of life from their perspective. Although his work differed from the previous genre of literary works, he wanted readers as well as other writers to keep the old form of literary work alive (Moulik 2017).

Writers such as Nikolai Lyasho and Leonid Leonov bring forth the harsher realities of revolution period. *Iron Silence* (1922) of Nikolai Lyasho was one such work that depicted the adversity of economic reconstruction that followed after the Civil War. It basically highlighted the incapacitation faced by various young engineers and factory at the hands of Cossacks.¹⁶ Leonid Leonov through his work has highlighted the plight of peasants against Soviet society. Such literary work expressing true emotions as well as the harsh

¹⁶ During the Russian Civil War fought between the Bolshevik Red army and their opposition known as the White army, the Russian Cossacks were directly opposed to the Bolsheviks and declared war on them. By 1918 declaring their independence they formed independent states, the Don Republic and Kuban People's Republic. During Civil War although most of the Cossacks supported the White Army against the Bolsheviks some of them were with the Bolsheviks too (Michael Kort 2001).

reality shows the weight of Soviet literature. Another literature describing the revolution is that of Mikhail Sholokhov titled as *Quiet flows the Don*, also regarded as an epic novel and one of the best works of Soviet literature. It brings forth the turmoil of revolution and Civil War period. While it underlines the importance of revolutionary ideals, it combines it with earlier traditions of Russian literature (Ibid).

One of the outstanding and controversial writers of Soviet period is Alexander Solzhenitsyn. He has staunchly criticised the Stalinist regime and through his work brought forth the bitter realities of Soviet period. After the death of Stalin and the beginning of the thaw period under Khrushchev, in the year 1962, one of his greatest works so far, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was published. It is about a young peasant who was convicted of an insignificant offence and deemed as a traitor, thus spending eight years in prison. The simplicity with which this novel was written coupled by honest words describing every little detail made this novel one of the finest works of Soviet literature (Moulik 2017).

Socialist realism was not just seen in literature but also in a more visual part of arts, like cinema, theatre, art and architecture and painting. In fact it can be said that some elements of socialist realism have been used in the films that were produced in most of the East Asian countries. 'A Single Spark' from South Korea (1996) written by Park Kwang Su and 'Good Men, Good Women' from Taiwan (1995) by Hou Hsiao Hsien are such examples of films that used style and ideological value system of socialist realism to bring forth the political struggles which were nationalists in nature and were related to Communist internationalism. Chinese film 'Two Stage Sisters' by Xie Jin is another example of Socialist Realist film in East Asia. It is a frequent type of "re-flexibility" in East Asian cinema, particularly in films about conventional opera (James 2007: 72-93). Deutsh-Russische Film Allianz better known by the name 'Derussa', was the German-Russian Film Alliance that was founded in Berlin in late 1927 to market Soviet pictures abroad and co produce films that were suitable for both the Russian and international market (Saunders 1997: 169). Iceland was another such region where Soviet influence could be felt. This country is of interest not only because showed the impact of Soviet Union's soft power through the socialist realist cinema but also because this region

served as a zone of competition between the Soviet Union and the United States during the World War II and the subsequent Cold War period. In the case of Iceland, Soviet agencies such as the 'Ruskiy Mir Foundation' and 'The All Union Society for Cultural Contacts with Foreign countries or *VOKS*' played a major role in popularizing Soviet Cinema. The Mir was founded on 12 March 1950 in Reykjavik, Iceland. For spreading Soviet cinema, it provided free of charge 16mm projectors to all interested Mir divisions, individuals and organizations such as Workers' Union, Farmers' Union, Youth Organizations, schools and hospitals. Films were selected with the aim of entertaining and educating. The movie screenings were very popular as many of these films were discussed during the screenings as well as afterwards (Hafsteinsson and Gre' tarsdottir 2011:361-375).

Most of the Soviet films were based on historical events rather than individual quandaries. Early Soviet movies like Sergei Eisenstein's *Strike* belonged to socialist realism yet highlighted the struggles of the new proletarian class. However Stalin gradually made sure that the movies were to be centred on the communist ideology making it more restrictive. Stalin wanted the ideology to flourish through the help of Soviet cinema like it did through Soviet literature. During the thaw, after Stalin's period, there was a change in the theme of the movies as well and thus movies belonging to romantic genre also started appearing. G Kozintsev's *Spring on Zarechnaya Street* (1956) is one such example of a film that did not revolve around the ideology. The year 1960 also saw the featuring of *Anna Karenina* based on Tolstoy's book with the same title. Tolstoy's War and Peace acted as the cherry on the cake as it was produced during the 160th anniversary of Russia's victory over Napoleon. The movie was directed by Sergei Bondarchuk. Such was the quality and standard of Soviet cinema with or without the influence of socialist realism, that it is remembered even today and that it reflected the glorious days of Russia making it appear attractive to the viewers (Moulik 2017).

Another great source of Soviet attraction was the proficiency it displayed in the field of sports. The early years after the revolution did not witness the participation of soviet sportsperson in any kind of international events. The pretext used was that they did not want to compete with the capitalist countries but Acharya Moulik (2017) is of the opinion

that the real reason for not participating in such events despite the enthusiasm for sports, was that the immediate years after revolution were a period of difficulty for the Soviet people. However the aftermath of Second World War brought confidence to Soviet Union emerging as the super power. Thus after the Soviet sportspeople started to participate, they brought great honour to the country by their outstanding performances. A Soviet Olympic Committee was formed in 1951. In the following year Soviet Union participated in the Olympic Games. Soviet Union ranked first in both “Summer and Winter Olympics” and earned many gold medals in different sports. Nina Romashkova won the first gold medal as a woman athlete at Helsinki and in the Winter Olympics held in Italy, there was another woman athlete, Lyubov Kozyreva who won the gold medal for skiing (Ibid).

Soft power of Soviet Union is very deeply rooted in its ideology and culture. This can be seen in socialist realism which is associated mostly with arts which in itself is rooted in culture. It has an aim of furthering the goals of socialism; it thus can be regarded as a source of its soft power. The ways it failed to act through the principles of soft power, and to show that the kind of soft power that existed in Soviet might not have fulfilled some of the criteria of the idea of soft power as put forward by Joseph Nye but it was successful in attracting many countries of the world and thus building a very positive image. Soft power as an idea had been present since early times but it was coined and theorised by Joseph Nye in the year 1990 in his book ‘Bound to lead’ and in 2004 was further explained in his book “Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics” laying down the basic tenets of this term coined by him. Soviet Union also had strong soft power even though the term was formulated later.

The October Revolution affected not only Russia, but the whole world. It brought an end to autocratic Tsarist rule and in doing so it made a great impact on the other regions. It raised its image in the eyes of some countries while for some it may not have been an impression as many were in favour of capitalism. The whole notion of Soviet Union’s soft power can be seen in the context of a West-Non West divide. With regard to the October Revolution, the West especially the United States did not quite appreciate the way it led to a transition from the Tsarist rule to a Proletarian one. However this fact did

not prevent the spread of its effect in other regions as well as in the United States. Nevertheless some countries like China and Cuba were highly influenced and inspired by the revolution. Its affect was also witnessed in the United States, however it was relatively less and deemed negative so much so that the term “First Red Scare” or “The Red Scare” was used to describe this fear of communism spreading in the United States and the world. After the October Revolution, the Americans feared and dreaded communism to such an extent that they treated it as plague. It was totally absorbed in the life of Russia and was spreading massively. Accordingly in 1919, the American Communist Party was established in Chicago. The fear of the spread of Communism was so strong that President Wilson of America even failed to recognize the government formed by Lenin and even launched a kind of a war against ‘Bolshevism abroad’ and increased the level of anti-communist propaganda at home (Wolfe 2013).

The year 1919 saw the coming up of books like ‘Red Russia’ and ‘Ten days that shook the world’ written by John Reed of America who was later expelled from the Socialist Party and then formed the Communist Labour Party. Later in the same year, he returned to Russia where he received fund and instructions from the Comintern to further the growth of communist movement in America but he was jailed in Finland on his way. Reed had suffered poor health in the year 1920 and hence he died in Moscow. He was buried near the Kremlin war. He was thus the only American to be honoured in Moscow. In the same year, the first Chinese Communist Manifesto is published in Shanghai (Ibid).

Analysis: Soviet soft power was indeed strong and its sources were mostly its culture and its socialist ideology, and being dependent on these, the Soviet Union increased its soft power. Soft power of the Soviet Union is also largely dependent upon its cultural diplomacy and often they can be used inter-changeably as it was state-centric and the activities of the state also determined their soft power to a very large extent. However, the Soviet Union used a lot of its hard power strategies too, thus leading to violence in some cases and this did affect its soft power. The early Soviet experience in Central Asia shows the use of both hard and soft power in trying to achieve its aims. They did not hesitate to quickly resort to the hard power strategies when faced by difficulties but soon also learned the softer way of dealing with things. Thus, both soft and hard actions were

taken to fulfil its goals of modernization. This was defined as secularism, sex equality, and mass literacy as well as spreading of communist political ideology (Olker 2008).

The similar kinds of action have taken place in some other regions too. Since our concern here is to understand the soft power capability of the Soviet Union, it takes us again back to the earlier mentioned term ‘socialist realism’. It is true that the Soviet Union had great source of soft as well as hard power but socialist realism (as it associates mostly with arts like the art or painting, literature, architecture, cinema and so on so forth, all those aspects of the region that help in the promotion of the State’s desired goals or the goals of its ideology and highlights its culture), stands as an interesting source of soft power and as it holds the two major source of Soviet Union’s soft power: socialist ideology and culture, in it. Therefore by looking at some of the major areas where socialist realism got totally entrenched, we get to know about the soft power of the region and the fact that it really worked made the Soviet Union attractive to the other regions without the use of coercion or force.

The writings of Alexander Solzhenitsyn were highly critical of Soviet Union. Through the help of his influential words in his books such as the ‘Gulag Archipelago’, he unveiled the brutalities of Soviet Union especially under Stalin. His words attacked the image of Soviet Union massively. It is said that the ‘pen is mightier than sword’ and in this case too his pen acted mightier than the viciousness of the ‘Gulag’ or the labour prison. Solzhenitsyn also received the ‘Nobel Prize for Literature’ in the year 1970 for his contribution to “the ethical force which he has pursued the indispensable traditions of Russian literature” (Nobelprize.org). Even after the disintegration, his writings bring the horrors of Soviet past in the reader’s mind. This highly affected the soft power of both Soviet Union and later Russia immediately after the disintegration.

It is true that Soviet Union was deviating from the principles of socialism and had become very bureaucratic in functioning as well coercive to a large extent. However, what the leaders as well as great writers such Solzhenitsyn failed to realize is that the fault was in the way the Soviet Union was moving farther away from the ideology and that the fault did not lay in the socialist ideology as such. The main reason for the fall of the morale of Soviet Union was the decline of true socialist values that ultimately led to

the decline of its soft power. However with the disintegration came total elimination of the ideology and therefore this de-ideologization process deprived New Russia of the socialist tag that Soviet Union boasted of, if not always followed it.

Even though the Soviet socialist ideology was deviating from the essential principles of the ideology, there was still a room for improvement, for the rise of an alternate planning method would have been more reasonable and politically efficient. The downfall of the Soviet planning and the economy did not indicate the failure of the whole socialist idea of planning (Cottreli and Cockshott 1993: 168). Hence, the de-ideologization process was not inevitable. It only deprived the new Russia of an ideology that would make it attractive by improving what was degrading in the Soviet Union, and therefore not discarding the ideology altogether.

The development of civil society, which is an essential feature of soft power, during the Soviet period, can be described as “nationalisation of civil society institutions”. Even under the State, apart from workers’ movements, their organisation, and laying stress on work and labour, culture and science also did flourish. Alongside there were also the creation of peasants’ organisations. Peasant Mutual Society is one such example of such organisations. Although under Stalin, these did face a setback because of the government’s decision to forcibly collectivise agriculture and go for rapid industrialisation. Less politicised organisations started developing after the death of Stalin and under Khrushchev. During the Brezhnev era, associations started becoming active and civil society saw the rise of dissidents too. While the civil society gained its strength, the dissidents started developing resistance against the Soviet rule. This led to discussions raising voice for human rights and their preservation. With perestroika and glasnost brought about by Gorbachev there was more freedom and ultimately there was the collapse of communism (Buxton and Konovalova 2012).

Even with regard to socialist realism it can be said that if we strictly follow the principles of soft power as provided by Nye, then socialist realism cannot be regarded as a source of soft power, leave alone the task of positively affecting it. However, if we try to go deeper in it, what we get is a picture of Soviet Union with abundant talented writers, artists, artisans, poets, writers, directors and so forth who have in them the art of moving the

hearts and soul of millions of people at once. The State might have added the 'compulsion' part to their work, a compulsion of adhering to the principles of socialist realism but it could not have forced ideas into the 'minds' of those very individuals. Those were their very own ideas. The next important thing is that soft power itself is the power of the state to get the desired outcomes from others, by making them want what you want through attraction rather than coercion.

However, Soviet Union under the Communist regime although with its idea of being progressive did not give space to express ideas and emotions and this was definitely not a very conducive environment for the writers, musicians, painters and various other artists whose work depends on how openly they are able to express their talent to the people. Therefore under the Soviet rule there were many such artists and writers who had to look for ways through which they could utilize their talents explicitly and therefore found refuge in the United States and in various parts of Europe. However as expressed by Alexis Tolstoy (1923) the loss of such talents by Russia or in other words the misfortune of Russia became the fortune of the Western world (Tolstoy 1923). The loss of such talented people indeed proved to be a brain drain for Soviet Russia and till today their loss is immensely sensed.

2.4. CONCLUSION

By looking into those aspects of Russia's history which bring out its different image other than the stereotypical image of Russia especially through Western mass media and press, we get a fair understanding of its capabilities towards building its soft power. The concept of soft power had not developed during the Tsarist and Soviet period. Hard power was mostly used by countries to compete with one another. There have been traces of soft power in both these periods in the form of its rich culture as well as through various reforms which stood out amidst the autocratic rule of Tsarist Russia and the State centric policies of the Soviet Union. Whatever reforms or cultural practices and progress in any field that had been undertaken in these two periods are indeed remarkable considering the period and the history of Russia. Unlike the European countries, Russia could not be a part of the enlightenment period or the Renaissance. This fact has always been a marker of difference between the Western Europe and Russia. This also makes the

West often boast its superiority over the ‘barbaric’ and outdated Russians, as seen through the eyes of the Western world. As the West and even most Russians would believe, the “Mongol yolk ripped off Russia of its grandeur’ as well cut it off from the rest of the world.

However it cannot be said that Russia just lost everything at the hands of Tartars. The Tartar influence in Russia is also what makes its culture unique and different from the rest of Europe as it was the amalgamation of the existing Russian culture with the Mongol one. Whether it was in the Tsarist period or under the Soviet rule, culture has played an important role which cannot be ignored. Under the Romanovs, Russia highly tilted towards the European side. The European influence in its culture was predominant and this can be witnessed through the contributions of Peter the Great, especially seen in the building of St Petersburg. Frequent intermarriages with the Europeans made Russia develop more European characteristics.

Despite the autocratic temperament of the Tsarist period, issues related to education, women and other societal problems were not totally shoved aside. Through the various Charters brought out, the Non Governmental Organisations and private societies were empowered to deal with the problems concerning the people as well as the society at large. Women did not enjoy much freedom and they underwent hardship and were also underpaid as compared to their male counterparts, even so they could at least earn an independent wage. The condition of women under the Soviet period was better compared to Tsarist Russia. Russia’s golden age of literary work gives us a picture of Russia that is far from the picture of it being a rigid and clustered society. It gives us an image of Russia where there are people who thought ahead of their times and who tried to shape the minds of the rest of the population through their work. The impact of the work of those great authors and artists can be felt till today. In fact this period of Russian history acts as a great source of inspiration for present day generation Russia. The rich cultural history shining through this period suggests that Russia did have and does have the capacity to stir up the minds of the people to make them fight for a just and culturally rich society that would stand as an example for the rest of the world.

The October Revolution changed the structure of Russian society and gave immense power to the working class, which also opened door for women. Women began enjoying impartiality in every sphere of work and life. However it also stands true that despite the slogan “equal pay for equal work”, for many reasons and under many circumstances it did not stand true and women were again underpaid as before. Soviet period generated a different form of culture under the banner of socialist realism which was dominant in most of cultural aspects of Soviet society and mostly seen in art, literature and architecture. This form of culture present then has been criticised by various scholars for being so restrictive, direct and for tying chains to the otherwise free minds of Russia’s great talents. However as mentioned earlier in this chapter, it did have its own attraction to countries that were sympathetic to socialism. Despite the State centric approach of Soviet Union or the autocratic nature of the Tsarist period, whatever little progressive side of this period should not be brushed aside totally. Even after being known for being totalitarian in outlook, Soviet period did manage to give workers the right and its citizens the privileges which no other country during that time would do for its second class citizens. Even in Tsarist Russia, the emancipation of the serfs under Alexander II was quite a progressive act during that time.

One of the broad patterns of soft power that can be identified in both Tsarist and Soviet periods is that in both the periods some form expression has found an escape in art, literature, cinema and education. This form of expression for change and progress is seen even under autocratic and authoritative rulers in both the Tsarist and Soviet period. Quest for education can be seen as a dominant feature in both the periods and efforts have been made to promote education for the betterment of Russian society. Religion is another element that has played a major role in the politics and society of Russia. Traces of religion playing a vital role and as a source of connection and unity among people of the same faith has been seen in Tsarist Russia. It has also shaped cultural unity and promoted education in many ways. During the Soviet period, that role was played by ideology of the state. Socialist ideology tried to unite people and to make them more aware and sensitised.

The purpose of this chapter has been to understand Russia's quest for soft power in the present period. By dwelling into Russia's history we come to know about its socio-political and cultural conditions during both Tsarist and Soviet periods. The situation and conditions undergone by Russia has shaped the way Russia functions today. The socio-cultural and political environments of Russia in the past highlight its capabilities as well as its precincts in soft power. By highlighting those events necessary for understanding Russia's soft power, not only the traces of soft power have been identified but also the mistakes and drawbacks have been highlighted; as examples to show that Russia can learn from its history and avoid repeating the mistakes. Through this chapter we also get an image of Russia contrary to what the West has portrayed it to the world. The Western perception of Russia's history gives us a grim image of it; a country that missed the renaissance period and thus appearing as barbaric to them. While it is true that Russia missed out on the enlightenment period and was cut off from the rest of the world, and it also didn't have the privileges enjoyed by the West, it was not totally a backward country. Its rich sources of culture coupled with its various socio-cultural and political aspects discussed in the chapter bring out its own kind of attraction different from the Western standards. These phenomenon of Russian society in the past make one think and understand how things happen and what the consequences that followed were; explaining the directions in which the Russian society is heading to at present. Despite what the Western notion of soft power would suggest, it has never been solely restricted to Western liberal states. There are other countries such as Russia that have shown capabilities of possessing soft power.

For soft power to flourish in a given country there has to be an element of freedom. This is because the basic tenet of soft power is about attraction, and a country where its own citizens aren't free totally gives a picture of a coercive society. By looking into Russia's history we get the idea that people have often danced to the tunes of either the ferocious Mongols or the autocratic Tsars or even strong State control during the Soviet period. The '*silnaya ruka*' or the strong ruler who rules with the 'iron fist', has been evident in almost all the periods of Russia. Today even while Russia decides to include soft power in its foreign policy, it still has that sense of a strong upper hand that decides the way a country is supposed to be attractive. A strong civil society is an essential prerequisite for

soft power. Russia's history has shown few examples of steps taken toward the development of civil society. During the Tsarist rule it was seen in the reforms of Russian estates under Catherine the Great or the Great reforms brought about by Alexander II including the abolishment of serfdom. Even though Russia was still under the autocratic rule, these are some traces of its civil society building efforts. During the Soviet period, it is seen through the rise of local peasant movements and proletarian organisations, the avant-garde of the 1920s and even in the form of socialist realism in art, literature and architecture. However even through such organisations, societies or art and literature, a sense of freedom and independence has been missing.

During the Gorbachev era, perestroika and glasnost was brought about to deal with country's economic crisis and the 80s also witnessed the flourishing of various organisations and societies, and many present civil society groups can trace their origin to the groups formed during the Gorbachev era. After de-Stalinisation under Khrushchev and during Brezhnev era, there was the rise of dissidents who sought resistance to the Soviet state. This can be seen as strong foundations of civil society that was followed by the collapse of communism. It is in this backdrop that we can try to understand the present civil society of Russia where organisations and activists working for the betterment of the society are in minority. These organisations deserve more support from the government, at least in terms of their independence in working. A strong and stable civil society is needed for the smooth functioning of its soft power. However as history has shown that a strong civil society could bring about great dissidents, Russia today fears the same and therefore its civil society has not reached a level that can adopt soft power measures. The history of Russia from the beginning gives importance to hard power but alongside there have been traces of soft power too which cannot be neglected. This can serve as the foundation in understanding the present day take of Russia on its use of both hard as well as soft power.

Chapter III

Russia and the West: A Study of Cultural and Political

CHAPTER 3

RUSSIA AND THE WEST: A STUDY OF CULTURAL AND POLITICAL INTERACTIONS

3.1. INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the reception of Russia's soft power in the world, we must first look into its relationship with the West and how the West sees it or reacts to it. This becomes important because the West has always been a strong critique of Russia in various matters and Russia too has not been lenient towards the policies and measures taken by the West. Even though the Cold War has come to an end, Russia and the West and especially the United States, have always been at loggerheads with each other. The changing dimensions of their relationship becomes interesting in understanding the reaction of West to Russia's soft power ambitions as soft power has often been described as a western construct. Before we understand how the West reacts to Russia's soft power, how it portrays it to the world, and whether it affects Russia or not we need to look into the intricate details of their relationship from the past till the present. Tracing their relationship from the beginning would be beyond the scope of this study hence this chapter will look into the relationship of Russia and the West from an important period, the Cold War period which marks the beginning of actual souring of relationship between them. Although the chapter will be focusing on the issues and scenario related to the relationship Russia shares with the West, it will do so by bearing the context of soft power in mind, as this is the main focus of the study.

3.2. RESHAPING OF THE WORLD ORDER

There are various events that have changed the course of history as well as have great contributions in understanding how the international system is functioning today. Every great event in history has some kind of implications whether good or bad. Hence it becomes interesting to look into such events that have shaped as well as reshaped the world order. Had there been any changes in such events the whole course of history we

know today would have been different. There would have been different victors and different losers or no one would win or lose at all. However since these events did occur in the past and that they did have a great impact in the world system it becomes imperative to understand them. Since the study is about Russia and the responses of the West, the events that are important and related to it will be discussed. It will also be interesting to note that it is both Russia and the West that have huge contributions in such events that impacted the world order.

How both the West and Russia have viewed each other in the course of various events has an important role in understanding the relationship between the two. There have been many research and studies conducted in the Western countries, especially by America on Soviet Union. However despite extensive study done on the Soviet Union by the American scholars there have been misapprehension, prejudice and errors that have overshadowed the studies. Before proper research on Soviet Union were conducted, Americans who wanted to know more about the Soviet rule and the functioning of Soviet events could read the book by W.H Chamberlin's 'The Russian Revolution' and the book 'Civic Training in Soviet Russia' would give the idea of political socialisation in Soviet Union (Zimmerman 1977).

However it should be noted that Russia has always been of interest to the West. The growth of Tsarist as well as the Communist empires brought the question of Russia in the minds of the Western countries. Hence, they set many theories that would aid in understanding the differences between Russian and Western cultures. According to one of such theories, Russia's difference from the West occurs from the fact that the former did not come in contact with Aristotle's views. This is so because in the West the current fundamental intellectual tradition draws its roots from the understanding of 'Aristotelianism' that contour the conceptualisation of reality as well as the fundamental outlook of life and the ideals of social action (Broda and Swiderski 2002). Russia continued to be of prime subject of interest to the West.

It was during the end of World War second that there was an increase in the study of Soviet Union by various scholars across the Western countries and especially in USA. This is so because World War second witnessed the defeat of Nazism by the Soviet

forces and that it emerged as a super power next to America. The researchers were now interested in the politics and society of Soviet Union. The Americans wanted to know the inside of the way Communism was functioning in Soviet Union and also to test the durability of the system. To further the research there was an increase in the number of scholarships for conducting such kind of research. There was an emergence of great centres of professionalism competence in a number of universities. Soviet studies started flourishing in the US and under the Harvard Russian Research Centre alone almost 30 books came into view that included the famous book, 'How Russia is Ruled' (1953) by Merle Fainsod which was a milestone in the growth of Soviet studies (Zimmerman 1977:119).

However what impact did these studies have on the image of Soviet Union is worth mentioning. For obvious reasons the research conducted by the Americans on Soviet Union were biased and they did not highlight the significant aspect of changes that occurred after Stalin's death in 1953. They mostly highlighted the authoritarian aspect of the Soviet Union and the defects of Communist system. The analysis of the research conducted by the Americans painted a very terrorising picture of Soviet Union where terror was the key player of the Soviet system. Therefore the general image of Soviet Union that the US portrayed to the rest of the world was that of a system that was very static and self-perpetuating. They highlighted the purges as a permanent feature of Soviet Union. Soviet Union was portrayed as being very non-reactive to the changes of the world and that the success achieved by it was only as a result of the strict rule of the dictatorial outlook of the ruler (Ibid).

Whether it was before the Cold War period or after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the relationship between the West and Russia have been shaped by various events in the world and it can also be said that the highs and lows in the relationship between the two sides have also contributed to the changing dynamics of the world order. From the period of fear of conflict and the clash of ideology in the Cold War period to the short period of cooperation between the two, the world events that have involved them have contributed to the way the present international system is functioning. The period of 1990s alone saw the broad pattern of cooperation as well as confrontation between them.

Events such as the Bosnian conflict, or the expansion of the NATO as well as the assertiveness of Russia in the post-Soviet states all show the ways in which the cooperation and conflict between Russia and the West have affected the countries that were involved and changed their role in the international arena. However amidst all these events and the changing course of international relations, it should be noted that Russian foreign policy has been very difficult to understand, and even more so to predict or respond to the outside world (Kubicek 2000). This fact keeps the West more intrigued and captivated to Russia's role in the world.

The Cold War Period

During the Cold War period everything was about ideology clashes and therefore how Soviet Union viewed culture was also from an ideological point of view. Culture was then basically used as a tool in delivering ideological messages across to the wider audience and especially to the Western countries. To this end the Soviet Union spent hugely on founding Friendship Societies, conducting art exhibitions and sending specialised Soviet artists to Western countries (Feklyunina 2009).

At first, Khrushchev was seen as a pragmatist by the Westerners but gradually through his actions it became more apparent that he was more of an "ideological revivalist". His attitude towards the dealings of the world had a strong ideological tilt and Lowenthal (1965) states that it was stronger than Stalin's. In fact he believed in the progression of Communist revival everywhere although fashioned to be in a harmonious character. Khrushchev's this aim of spreading the movement everywhere in the world did not prove to be very realistic at that time and gradually even he became aware of it and viewed it as an illusion. However it is also irrefutable that under Khrushchev the Soviet Union not only gave room to propagandas but also became strong militarily and politically "in areas ahead of the continental frontiers" (Lowenthal 1965).

Some researchers believe that Soviet Union always wanted recognition from the West. Even before the Cold War period under the Bolsheviks, the Soviets wanted the West to recognise them as a 'legitimate state', and under Stalin they wanted to be acknowledged as a 'great power'. During the Gorbachev era the recognition was to be on lines of being

the ‘Common House of Europe’. Although the West did hesitate to recognise Soviet Union but during World War II, Soviet Union through its active participation with the West against the Nazi Germany did acquire a legitimate recognition from the West (Moscovici 2008: 2). Hence, it can be seen that for Soviet Union the West has always been the significant other and how the West saw them surely did matter to them. It should also be noted that the West has recognised Soviet Union only according to their terms and conditions. The fact that the Soviet Union sought to be recognised by the West, made the West and especially the US find itself in a superior position even though Soviet Union was equally powerful. Therefore the hegemony of the West was not unknown to the West themselves and they made best use of it in portraying the Soviet Union to the rest of the world through its own prism of standards and conditions.

According to Susan Turner (2009), after the end of Cold War the triumph of capitalism over communism was a major setback not just to Soviet Union but also to all the other handful of communist countries including China. Both Russia and China underwent identity crisis post Cold War and became one of the victims of the US hegemony. However with disintegration of the Soviet Union, it was Russia that was affected more severely than China. The post-war and post disintegration identity crisis took the form of “an acute case of schizophrenia”, as its foreign policy moved back and forth between allying with the West and allying with the East. Despite Russia’s preference for the West in the early 1990s the West did not live up to the expectations of Russia and left it more lost and confused. The West continued with the policies that were of objection to Russia and even provided fewer funds than what was needed by Russia during that time (Turner 2009). The disintegration of the Soviet Union is an important event in the history of international relations as it marked the beginning of a new world order. The period after the immediate disintegration therefore becomes important to understand as it shows the course of the relationship shared by West and Russia.

After the Soviet disintegration

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, there was a brief period of cooperation between Russia and the West. However this cooperation that had no strong roots did not last long and soon both the sides showed their true emotions for each other. Russia was

dismayed by the lack of help and support shown by the West and therefore focused on forming a foreign policy that was vigorous and nationalistic. The optimism shown towards the West was seen as a misrepresentation by the Russians leading to clashes between Russia and the West over a number of issues. There were many opinions raised by different groups of people as to whether Russia's close relations with the West would prove beneficial or detrimental to it in the long run. Many scholars have viewed the then foreign minister Andrey Kozyrev's view as being more open and beneficial as he was in support of fostering ties with the West. According to Kozyrev, the West could provide economic assistance to Russia which the latter needed urgently at that time. Some even believed that improved relations with the West would also lessen the burden of Russia whose huge military budget had absorbed almost 20 to 25 per cent of the gross national product under the Soviet rule. Kozyrev also believed that allying with the West would not only ease Russia's financial load but the ensuing democratisation and marketisation process would bring about "political and psychological reinforcement as well" (Marantz 1994).

The after effects of the disintegration of the Soviet Union along with the collapse of communism were felt in almost all aspects of New Russia and even in the Post-Soviet States. These included the decline in the standard of living and also the crisis of human security. The mortality rates were increasing after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Although there are many explanations to the cause of such increase in the health issues as well as the mortality rates, the decline in the economic and social conditions of these countries after the disintegration stands as one of the most imperative reasons. Russia was one of the worst affected countries and the period between 1989 and 1994 alone, the approximate death rate in Russia ascended by 45 percent and life expectancy at birth dropped from 64.2 to 57.7 years for men and from 74.5 to 71.3 years for women (Chen et al 1996: 518).

The disintegration of the Soviet Union however displayed an unconventional picture where the people of Russia did not completely believe in the idea of communism but the surrounding world could still sense the mixture of Soviet propaganda of aggressive imperialism and aspirations of a consumer society where there was no dearth of food

supply and freedom for all, a situation totally foreign to Soviet people. The Cold War effect on people was still seen to be present in the way the people viewed the Western countries, especially the United States, as they have been used to seeing it as an enemy or a rival but it should also be noted that some people also viewed US as a successful state that could be taken as an example by Russia after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The success of the Western countries' system of economy and politics was seen as a ray of hope by the Russians; if they could also follow the same path. However there was another section of the population who viewed all the policies of the West towards Russia in a hostile manner and also analysed the democratic experiment as something that was being imposed on Russia by US in order to weaken a perilous rival (Lukyanov 2005:861).

The West might have been practicing democracy and freedom in a more rigorous manner as compared to the other countries; however it is also true that they also lack these ideals in many cases and their imperialist actions have been often seen in their way of dealing with other developing or the third world countries. It is also true that Russia did not receive the expected help from the West in their transition phase. It can also be said that the Western model did not entirely suit to the Russian society. The transition was supposed to take place bearing the essential factors of Russian history and prospects in mind. Russia's initial foreign policies towards Western Europe and the United States were based on 'liberal internationalism' strongly expressed by Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev. The substitution of foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev by Yevgenii Primakov in the year 1996 was seen as a move in Russia's policies from Western acquainted to a Eurasian one (Lynch 2002: 167). The mere effort of replicating the West in Russia was a big mistake on part of the Russian leaders and high authorities during the disintegration phase. Russia was thus struggling with the process of distribution of power and this explains the reasons for a weak legislature of Russia as compared to the presidency. The two branches of Russian political system therefore could not match the level of the Western and the other developed or developing democracies and this was also complimented by the weakness in the legal system of Russia (Shevtsova and Olcott 1999: 12-13).

During the 1990s, all centres of information and culture as well as propaganda channels suffered a huge loss as they were underfunded and became unproductive. However under Putin these centres of cultural promotions were funded again and thus foreign propaganda once again came to play as an important schema. The promotion of culture under him were not constrained to conventional actions such as organising art exposition, showing Russian movies or organising public talks by celebrated people, it took a larger picture and Putin concentrated more on working with Russian ‘expatriate’ (Feklyunina 2009). Therefore during the second presidential term of Vladimir Putin, the focus was on the Russian communities living abroad. They were viewed as important targets for Russia to gain their trust and support as well as to endorse an additional optimistic picture of Russia in their eyes. In their attempt to achieve the aforementioned target they focused on the promotion of Russian language among them, as a mark of unity and closeness (Ibid: 75).

It should be noted that Russia did try its best to foster ties with the West after the Soviet disintegration. Russia backed the United States on many issues and even went on to vote in favour of the Western proposal of imposing economic sanctions against Yugoslavia in 1992, even though Russia has a history of traditional ties to Serbia (Marantz 1994). The Russians who were eager to join the West tried to improve ties with the Western countries by adopting an unbiased position with regard to Bosnia. They also ardently worked in the United Nations and the Contact Group of the US, UK, Germany and France, and joined hands with the West in peacekeeping efforts (Feklyunina 2009). The conflict in Bosnia acted as an important test for the relationship between the West and Russia as it was the first policy wherein Russia devised a general policy with the West. However this case also revealed the first signs of strains between Russia and the West as although the Russians tried to provide guarantee to an international resolution, Russian position towards Serbia and the Bosnian Serbs was not in tune with the West’s. The West saw that Russian lacked the necessary power over the Bosnian Serbs and thus the West forced Russia to take a back-seat; ultimately reducing Russia’s role in the Balkans (Kubicek 2000). The signing of START II causing sharp cuts in nuclear arms by Russia showed its allegiance to the West and especially to the US as it did not wish to upset the mood of the West during its critical phase. However during 1992 the West was not quite

supportive and viewed Russia but as a failed state and despite their cooperation shown towards the West and their efforts in exhibiting that Russia had resolutely rejected the anti-Western directing features of the preceding Soviet foreign policy (Marantz 1994).

The ignorant attitude of the West towards Russia's deterioration of political and especially economic standards and the resultant crease in the standard of living of the people did affect Russia's foreign policy. There was rise in the feeling of dissatisfaction among the people who felt humiliated and lost. Therefore many dissenting voices from across the Russian political spectrum started to be heard that criticised Yeltsin and Kozyrev's policies and attitude. Highlighting the special geographical position of Russia spanning across East and West, the Eurasianists insisted on Russia's freedom and independent from the West but without being anti-Western in their stand. They wanted Russia to follow a clear conception of national interests they pursue even if it comes at the cost of some form of discomfort to the West. The Ultra-nationalist went much beyond the Eurasianists' vision of following an independent path as they did not hesitate to follow anti-Western stand whenever the need arose. The Moderates however wanted the leaders to follow a path that would extract beneficial aspects from the Western politics and society by acquiring market economy and viable institutions of political pluralism. However they also criticised the policies of the government as being against the interest of the Russians (Marantz 1994).

The concept of 'pragmatism' flourished under Yevgeny Primakov, foreign minister of Russia between January 1996 and September 1998. This policy of pragmatism did not prove to be as fruitful as expected by the Russians; instead the policy made Russia lose the support of many of its friends and also sowed seeds of hostility among the countries that were already suspicious of Russia's intentions. It was against this backdrop of events and the rising gap between theory and practice of Primakov's 'competitive pragmatism' that Putin took advantage of. He was aware of all the consequences that that Russia was facing due to failure of understanding the reality and relying more on rhetoric. Hence, from the very beginning of Putin's rise to power, he focussed on improving not just the economy of the country but also aimed at 'normalisation of Russian foreign policy' (Sakwa 2008).

Russia after the disintegration faced the dilemma of either looking for its own path or following the path of Western development and success. While Russia's wish for modernisation and development has made it think over following the Western path, the need to uphold their rich traditions and culture has taken it away from the West in the past as well as now. Putin's desire to view Russia among the top developed countries that would participate in the formation of a proper world order becomes a victim of the same dilemma. However along side, Putin also earnestly believes that the Western model of development is not suitable for Russia as he regards Russia as a unique country that requires "unique approaches to governance". Therefore Lukyanov (2005) believes that the methods that Putin resorts to while considering the development and functioning of Russian politics and society is not a "return to the Soviet but pre-Soviet Russian tradition" as it considers the role of one strong centralised authority in carrying out the task of modernisation and change and views people as subject who are to be guided throughout (Lukyanov 2005).

Therefore after the disintegration things did not work out quite so much as what Russia had expected and its reaction towards the Western policies during this period therefore ranged from "grudging acceptance and growling resentment". However it ought to be noted that it is in this period that Russia was welcomed to the Council of Europe (1996) as well as to the Group of 8 (G8; 1997) thereby signing its first complete accord with the European Union (EU; 1994) and NATO (1997) (Makarydiev and Morozov 2011). While Russia started entering the new phase of trial, stepping its foot on the capitalist world, the West was already becoming a champion of democracy and capitalism. Earlier during the Soviet period, its main source of support came from the Third World countries and this was something the capitalist West could not do as resourcefully as its Soviet counterpart. However with disintegration, Russia started to lose that source of soft power it enjoyed over the developing and underdeveloped countries. The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the de-ideologisation process has shown that the support that Soviet Union could provide to these countries could not be surpassed by any other countries because after the collapse of socialist principles and Soviet Union, the third world totally suffered great losses. The reports of the United Nations as well the studies done by various scholars suggest that the market driven policies in the third world countries have not

helped them overcome their poverty and underdevelopment. Some countries might have gained from the capitalist system but they have entered a new form of indebtedness that is through the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (Singh 2011: 55, 60). With the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the socialist ideology, Russia not only lost its soft power capabilities and influence over the third world regions, but also itself came to a condition where it needed help from other countries. This is again tied to the economic reforms that ultimately carried forward the de-ideologisation process.

While the disintegration of the Soviet Union happened in the hope that it would be able to follow the Western path of market economy and development, it did not turn out to be a cake walk for Russia as it involved the transformation of the whole political and economic system from socialism to market economy. Hence, when the Soviet Union disintegrated it faced a huge task of creating an environment for smooth transformation of system but instead it faced various problems. Russia set itself to create a democratic foundation which is necessary for the new system to function. The task of creating a democratic foundation in Russia will not happen overnight as it always had been used to being under the rule of a strong rule. Even though few elements of democratic functioning did exist in the Soviet Union but it still functioned under the authoritarian statute of a ruler and the Communist Party which had the final say in all the matters. However the West does not take into account the backdrop of Russia's democratisation process and judges Russia in accordance to the highest standards of democracy. This becomes unfair for Russia as even some of the leading members of the European Union at times fail to live by such high standards of democracy. Democracy as Nadia Arbatova (2008) states forms in a natural way gradually and consistently that spreads from above to a wider stratum of population (Arbatova 2008).

The gradual increase in the economy of Russia with the rise in the oil prices, increased foreign investment, higher domestic consumption and also because of some form of political stability brought Russia back in track and thus it could work on its aim of becoming a more stable for business and politics. This economic growth was needed to attract various countries to invest in Russia since the country had already treaded on the

path of marketisation. Accordingly many global business houses were motivated to expand and invest into the Russian market. Moscovici (2007) writes that in first half of 2007, foreign investments in the Russian economy doubled, reaching 60.3 billion dollars. Major investors in Russia were American car maker 'Ford', South Korea's 'Samsung', and Germany's 'Volkswagon' (Moscovici 2007).

Russia's economic setback was tackled by its advantageous position with regard to natural resources. It became an economy dependent on the exports of such raw materials. To gain its old superpower status is a long journey for Russia but it hopes to become an energy superpower and wants to become one of the top most suppliers of natural resources. However an economy that is solely dependent on the export of raw materials is highly unstable, and creates hindrances in the economic modernisation of Russia as well as lead to a proper integration with the West, especially the European Union. This is so because even though European Union is heavily dependent on Russia for natural resources, Russia's role as a supplier can make it act in an authoritarian manner at times. Russia will also resort to a domineering role and can cut the supply whenever there is a clash of interest between it and its partners. The model of an economy based on exports of raw materials also nourishes the policy of overbearing in the post-Soviet space to ensure security. Russia can thus make transit pipelines cheaper and can access control over the energy resources of other CIS countries (Arbatova 2008).

Russia's move towards liberal democracy followed by market economy after the disintegration can be considered to be a mere act of imitating the West without understanding the depths of the Western model. Such kind of imitation is considered to be misleading as in their act of imitation they have neglected the social and cultural aspects that was more evident in the earlier Soviet Union as compared to the Russia after the collapse. The West was not keen to caution the Russian leaders and the political elites who were undertaking the task of such transition. Hence with the lack of such cautions shown by the West, the Russian leaders then carried on with the transition without realizing the fact that the base or the foundation for a liberal democracy or market economy were not properly laid (Shevtsova 1997: 20-33).

Soft power of the Soviet Union was embedded deeply in its culture and ideology. However as these are also linked to the political, social and economic situations, it becomes necessary to understand the soft power of Soviet Union and of Russia later, through the prism of all these factors. The case of Soviet Union therefore does not quite fall into the perimeters of soft power as explained by Joseph Nye because he viewed it mostly from the angle of the experience of the United States. Soviet Union was not the same as United States and therefore its way of attraction and use of soft power was also not the same. The way Soviet Union headed towards its disintegration, its soft power also declined in the same way. The decline of soft power of Soviet Russia is not a sudden phenomenon; it happened gradually through the passing of every phase. Although the decline of soft power is more vivid in the aftermath of the disintegration, the beginning of it could be seen in the twilight years of USSR. As we know that Soviet Union's attraction lied in its ideology which claimed to be the winner of the heart and soul of the weaker and oppressed classes, especially the working class against the high-handedness of the bourgeois class, we need to understand the fact that with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, its soft power suffered a decline. This is so because the disintegration meant the collapse of the ideology too. It was after the death of Lenin, that Soviet Union took a hard and rigid way under the leadership of Stalin.

Rise of the Multi-polar world

The Foreign Policy Doctrine, signed by the president in June 2000, states that, "Russia shall seek to achieve a multi-polar system of international relations that really reflects the diversity of the modern world with its great variety of interests" (Makarydiev and Morozov 2011). This doctrine therefore sets Russia's road to multi-polarity and its cooperation with various rising powers of the world which could together give a hand to push the clouds of unipolarity.

As early as June 2007, President Vladimir Putin went ahead to criticise the Western dominated economic institutions as "archaic, non democratic and unwieldy" and therefore gave a call for a new form of economic order where the regional institutions would enjoy larger power and that rouble would stand as an alternative to dollars or Euro (Roberts 2010). However this assertion by Putin was dismissed as it was considered to be

a rhetoric that was mostly pretentious. However the BRICS stands today as that posturing rhetoric come true. In the inaugural BRIC summit, then President Dmitry Medvedev described BRIC as “an outstanding or even historic event” which can be seen as a new platform where the rising economic problems could be discussed and solved, including the global financial crisis. It is true that Russia cannot and does not deny the existence and importance of US and other Western powers but the rise of new powers, regional and global is seen by Russia as a strong opposition to unipolarity, especially of the US. The decline of unipolarity thus gives BRICS the opportunity to work towards fostering a multi-polar world and giving more space for decision making power to the rising powers in the global institutions, and these changes can be brought about without having to undergo revolution of any kind (Ibid).

A public opinion poll conducted by the Public Opinion Foundation in early October 2004 showed how the Russians view the West as the poll displayed that almost 68 percent of Russians believe that Russia has strong competitors and enemies that are capable of destroying it and when they were asked to specify the names, almost 25 percent named United States, 5 percent believed that the West as a whole threatened Russia while 7 percent stated that Russia is threatened by the Arab Islamic Nations. The poll also showed that only 8 percent of the people surveyed believed that US could be viewed as a friend. While the poll shows Russia’s aversion towards the United States, it also highlights the fact that now Russia is not only threatened by US alone. It is an indication of the rise of other powerful countries, some of which can be considered as partners while some can be strong rivals for Russia. Another poll conducted by ROMIR public opinion research agency asked the question, “who posed a nuclear threat to Russia?” and the result showed that almost an equal percentage of people (32 percent) named the source as United States and International terrorism (Lukyanov 2005).

The hegemony of the United States still exists but it is also not the only powerful and hegemonic power in the present multipolar world. The disintegration of the Soviet Union still has some effects on Russia and the post Soviet countries, and while the US still tries to show its control over weaker states on the pretext of aiding them through democratisation, the presence of recovering Russia and other various rising powers do

not let the prevalence of unipolar world again. After the end of Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union the world did witness the rise of emerging powers that have not fully reached the level of US but in the future could definitely compete with the Western powers. Russia has been trying to get back its lost glory of superpower status at least in terms of oil and gas, but it also is striving to view itself as great power although its relations with the developed countries were far from normal after the disintegration. Russia has become one of the countries that “refuses to accept the tutelary role of western institutions”, that impose conditions on countries for them to be accepted by the Western countries, and thus Russia views itself as falling in a very different category from all other east European post-communist states (Sakwa 2008:243).

The hegemony of the US during the 1990s was a major impediment to social progress, democracy and peace in the world. Even though the pretext used by the US to intrude into the matters of other countries was to promote democracy and peace, the actual motive behind was to make use of its hegemonic stand to acquire benefits for itself. The Gulf crisis is an example of such intentions of the US that saw Washington secretly encouraging Saddam Hussein to invade Kuwait and then turned the situation to its own favour to institute military settlement over the petrol states of the region. Even the UN and the Europe backed the US in undertaking this act of subjugation. Thus, Samir Amin (1999) is of the opinion that this kind of unipolarity that the US displayed during the 90s can be counteracted by ‘multipolar globalisation’ which is the only policy that would allow adequate social development for the diverse regions of the world resulting in the proper democratisation of societies and reduction of conflicts (Amin 1999).

The popularity of the concept ‘multi-polarity’ since the 1990s was popular even with China and Russia. In fact the two countries went ahead to make it the basis of all the joint declarations they have had from the mid 1990s to present. The 1997 ‘Joint Russian-Chinese Declaration’ about a multi-polar world was first among the various statements emphasising multi-polarity and disapproving US hegemony. Countries like Russia and China and other emerging powers act as checks and balances for the American dominance. The post-Cold War identity crisis faced by both Russia and China faced, even though of different degree and kind, brought the two countries closer and made

them more aware of the uni-polar world. However even though both the countries have repeatedly emphasised on achieving and maintain multi-polarity and multi-lateralism, they have not mentioned about the ways in which multi-polarity can be achieved (Turner 2009).

The multi-polar world demands the cooperation and integration of countries in working on various issues. This is so because the world is faced with similar kind of problems and also that there interests are also similar. Globalisation has made it impossible for the states to remain strangers to others. Cooperation is needed among countries in almost all the spheres including the military and political. The social sphere is the most blended and cooperated one among countries due to various social networks making the boundaries between various countries less conspicuous. Likewise the EU and Russia have a lot of common areas of interest and have common problems too that have to be tackled jointly and maintaining stability in the whole of Europe is of concern to both the sides. The European Union is more concerned towards maintaining stability towards east of its borders while Russia strives for securing stability towards west of its borders. For making stability possible both the sides have to bear in mind the fact that it is possible only if both EU and Russia believe in integration and cooperation in both military and political sphere. Nadia Arbatova (2008) states that the goal of stability in wider Europe is not possible without integration just like earlier in the case of Western Europe the stability was impossible to achieve without the rapprochement and integration between the two opponents, France and Germany (Arbatova 2008).

The creation of the Shanghai Five in 1996 which later transformed into Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in 2006 brought together two countries, Russia and China in their mutual desire of spreading multi-polarity. The future of such an organisation also shows that Russia's cooperation with China based on the policy of balancing could give rise to a future Russia-China- India triangle, which was also put on the foreign policy agenda by Evgeny Primakov, and figures prominently in the 2008 Foreign Policy Doctrine (Makarydiev and Morozov 2011).

3.3. IS RUSSIA CREATING AN ALTERNATE DISCOURSE OF POWER?

One of the greatest sources of attraction for the West is the hegemony it enjoys over so many countries. Knowingly or unknowingly many countries of the world submit to the call of the West on various occasions. By using the changing dynamics of international scenario as a pretext and highlighting its need to protect some countries through the umbrella of democracy, the West and especially the US has been coating its hard power ambitions with soft power. Russia has been a strong critique of such actions of the West and believes that by portraying itself as the saviour of many countries against authoritative governments, the West is trying to appear attractive to the world. Judging by the current interests of Russia the question that arises is- is Russia also learning the rules of the same game with the intention of creating an alternate discourse of power? Terrorism has been one of the greatest threats that the world is facing and almost all the countries including the Western countries and Russia seem to condemn it. The United States and Russia consider the use of force as the main aspect of countering terrorism. However some of the other Western European countries condemn terrorism too but do not believe in the use of violence and fear, rather they believe in resorting to democratic methods and stressing more on human rights than security (Lukyanov 2005:867). Russia establishes itself as a strong alternative to that of European Union, and also follows different approaches to sovereignty, power and world order. Due to the differences between Russia and the West and especially Western Europe on matters related to sensitive issues and disputes in world politics has brought them at loggerheads with each other. An argument put across by then French President Nicolas Sarkozy sums up the equation between Russia and Western Europe, as he states that “Russia is imposing its returns on the world scene by playing its assets, notably oil and gas, with a certain brutality” (Moscovici 2007). The ways set out by Russia in dealing with disagreements with various countries by using its advantageous position over gas and oil is rebuked by European Union at all time because they feel it to be unethical and also because it is of great disadvantage to it whenever such a situation prevails.

However Sakwa (2008) is of the opinion that Russia is indeed trying to reclaim its lost status and also views itself as a great power but with the changes in the development of

the world as well as amidst other rising powers its desire to achieve great power has been “complemented by the desire to normalise its relations with the world”, and to that end it is willing to cooperate with the existing institutions related to world affairs. It can be said that the rise of other powers in a way prevents the severing of ties among various countries as each country engages in its own betterment more than standing as an obstacle in other’s development, and also and as Sakwa states that Russia’s aim after Putin’s coming to power was no longer to stand as an alternative to the West but rather to “act as a champion of the autonomy of sovereign states, and above all its own” (Sakwa 2008).

Amidst the rising powers, the old powerful countries like Russia and some countries of the West try their level best in cooperating with all the other countries and also form coalitions of states with regard to many issues such as ‘climate’, ‘international terrorism’, ‘world poverty’ that require joint action. The countries are now aware that without the support of other countries a single country cannot achieve the desired goals. It is a different fact that every country strives hard to become powerful than the other but it is by bearing in mind that without integration and cooperation not much can be achieved. For example, without the support of each other, neither Russia nor European Union can become an autonomous centre of authority in international relations. The support of other powerful countries is needed by Russia to face the future and rising superpowers such as China and even India in the longer run. The United States is already present as a competition to Russia, however their history of Cold War rivalry is enough for them to realise that both need to be strong enough as well as work in cooperation (Turner 2009).

Both Russia and the West are aware of the rising power of China. Despite China taking bold steps in the international showground, countries like even the US and some other Western powers have not been able to openly attack the policies of China due to its rising economy. Strong and stable economy is one of the main factors behind China power in the world. Russia and China have been strong proponents of multipolarity and multilateralism as mentioned earlier in this chapter and this has acted as one of the binding forces between the two countries although there are differences in their approach to various international issues. Despite Russia’s switching sides with the West after the end

of Cold War and even after the September 11 incident even at the cost of giving up its previous stand on multipolarity, China stood steady in its approach to multipolarity (Ibid). China stands clear in its approach to a multipolar world and the promotion of multilateralism and stability but takes very careful measures while handling the international issues. It concentrates more on its own rise first before it can attack the policies of other countries but at the same time makes sure that no country tries to meddle with it. The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 supported by Britain and Spain was condemned by Russia, France and Germany. China still adhered to the policy of multipolarity but did not join either of the teams (Ibid).

Russia along with its BRICS partners symbolise the rise of an alternate power to the Western hegemony, although in the economic sphere. The US and the European countries only offered limited partnerships and some form of status enhancements to the rising powers but never offered full membership to any of the rising powers including Russia and China. The Western countries never invited these countries to join the top Euro-Atlantic clubs. Although not to the level of Euro-Atlantic standing, Russia with the support of BRICS is back in the international showground and alongside it brings a wave of new rising powers. These rising powers will soon be able to give competition to the Western powers and China is already making way to the pedestal of success in the international arena and gradually becoming a rival pole to the United States (Turner 2010).

It is a fact that for the West it is hard to see Russia as one of the rising powers because after the end of Cold war and the fall of communism and the resultant disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russia has been viewed as a failed state and economy by the West. Hence, Cynthia Roberts (2010) asserts that the image of Russia as a failed democratic state is not uncommon among the Western countries. She states that while the European elites at least regard Russia as a 'normal' state, the American congressmen have not hesitated to openly describe Russia as being a failed state. Moreover after the 1998-1999 financial crises, American congressmen described Russia as "a looted and bankrupt zone of nuclearised anarchy", and "the world's most virulent kleptocracy". While the harsh comments of US made the circle around the globe, Russia slowly began to pull up its

socks. Roberts also states that such assessments by the West have however failed to notice the slow rise of Russia. The West failed to notice that for the first time in the modern Russian and Soviet history, Russians became more obsessed about economic growth, thanks to the criticism of the West. After Russia's recovery began in 1999, economic growth soared, increasing by an annual average rate of 7.0 percent in real terms between the years 1999 and 2008 (Roberts 2010).

According to the 2008 US National Intelligence Council's (NIC) 'Global Trends 2025' report, 'in terms of size speed and directional flow, the transfer of global wealth and economic power now underway- roughly from West to East- is without precedent in modern history.' Certainly the rise of East will be good opposition to the hegemony of the West. However the report also underscored the fact that this shift in global power is 'strengthening states like Russia that wants to challenge the Western order'. The report also highlighted the fact that Russia has the capability to be stronger, richer, and more powerful and secure in the year 2025 (Ibid).

Creating an alternate discourse to the Western hegemonic power does not just depend on the use of its hard power. History has shown that relying on hard power alone does not bring attraction in the long run. Cooperation with the West is also needed to come at par with it. Russia has been realising this fact and there are various instances where it has tried to maintain cordial relations with the West, at least in the cultural front. Maintaining good cultural relations by countries can heal the souring of relationship brought about by geopolitical and economic fights or other forms of misunderstandings. During the term of David Cameron as Prime Minister of Britain a cultural cooperation agreement was signed with Russia leading to a number of cultural projects even though both the countries had faced a period of low prior to that, and its diplomatic ties have been quite grim on many occasions including the death of Alexander Litvinenko (Clarke 2013). The year 2007 saw instances where the British Council was forced to close offices in Russia but the year 2011 again brought the two countries together in the form of delegation of 20 top business men led by David Cameron to Moscow. This was followed by the two leaders Cameron and Putin watching judo together at London Olympics in 2012. Observing cultural years have proven to be very effective in knowing the other country better as it

also helps in establishing personal relationships between individuals as well as institutions through contribution of museum exhibitions and curators to performances by ballet stars and musicians.¹⁷ The collaboration between Houghton Hall and the Hermitage Museum saw UK curators being allowed to bring works from Catherine the Great's collection, which were not seen by British population for generations (Ibid).

For cooperation to exist between Russia and the West, it is important to know how they perceive each other. The West sees Russia under Putin to be quite authoritative where the civil society is very weak and unstable. Many scholars believe that Putin has designed new Russia solely and it totally depends on him because there has not been any other worthy successor till now. Therefore, the West sees Russia as a country that is being controlled by Putin is also not ready to give up on its leader who is the political architect of new Russia. Some scholars and politicians in the West feel that Russia will not be able to withstand without a strong ruler like Putin like it did with the exit of many predecessors from Ivan the Terrible to Boris Yeltsin. This makes Putin look even more authoritative in the eyes of the West because he has given no room for change in Russia. In fact right after the first decade of Soviet disintegration, the West had started to understand Putin that he is a typical leader of Russia who is strong and obstinate. The West and especially the US was fast to understand the fact that Putin believes more in 'preservation' of the government status quo rather than realisation of his programs. Hence, in the eyes of the West Putin is a leader who does not care whether the goals are met so long as he is in power and the development strategies that are centuries old are preserved well (Zlobin 2015).

If the West expects Russia to understand the rules of international system, they should also understand that Russia does not expect to be treated like a student who needs to be instructed by them. Of course healthy competition and sometimes a little compromise

¹⁷ The year 2014 was celebrated as the Year of Culture between Russia and the United Kingdom. It celebrated the rich culture of both the countries and the diverse relationship they share culturally as well as to exchange ideas. Its purpose mostly was to foster cultural exchanges that would in turn establish stronger relationships between people, the institutions and the government. The year therefore dedicated itself to programmes covering arts, language, sports and education, to keep alive the aspirations and ambitions of both the countries to and discover new areas of cooperation through culture (British Council, online).

would not harm either Russia or the Western countries. The West should understand that it should change its long-term attitude towards Russia. The current sanctions imposed on Russia by the West have only worsened the matter. Nikolai Zlobin (2015) asserts that the West's act of driving Russia to the world's periphery because of a disagreement with part of its foreign policy is not very farsighted. He believes that, "Bears wandering in the cities" is particularly Russian stereotype of how Russia is seen in America. However he also states that in order to bring about a change in the attitude of West towards Russia, the latter should also feel its responsibility to correct its long term attitude towards the West as for how long will Russia want to consider itself a bear (Zlobin 2015).

New events in the world add to the changing dynamics of Russia-West relationship and after Brexit there have been debates about its impact on UK itself as well as on Europe, US and Russia, and whether it would change the world altogether. Many scholars have been debating about its impact on Russia and how it might benefit or lose from it. The ones who were not in favour of the Brexit campaign believed that of all the leaders in the world it was Vladimir Putin who would benefit the most from it as European Union would be weak for sure and that would put Russia at a greater advantage. This is so because the political leaders of UK have been staunch advocates of continuing heavy sanctions on Russia, and with the exit of UK from EU, there was a hope that the sanctions would be eased a little. Brexit however could pose great risk for global markets and Europe causing financial and currency instability. This slowdown in the global growth would also halt the recent rise in oil prices causing Russia to look for other alternative investments especially with China. The attractiveness of UK in the form of London Stock Exchange or through the purchase of high-end –London property for Russian capital will probably decrease and other financial hubs in Europe like Paris and Frankfurt could benefit from it (Walker 2016).

There have been many instances where prominent figures of Russia have openly expressed their contentment over Brexit. Moscow's mayor, Sergei Sobyenin expressed his pleasure in the social media, Twitter that with Britain out of EU, the sanctions on Russia would be less. Boris Titov, Russia's business ombudsman asserted that the exit of UK from Europe would take Europe away from the US and therefore he looked at it not

as the “independence of Britain from Europe, but the independence of Europe from the USA”. The US has also been concerned by the exit of Britain as it would lose its chief advocate in its various policies. The fear of Russia benefitting from Britain’s exit can highlighted in the Twitter tweet of the former US ambassador to Russia, Michael McFaul, “a giant victory for Putin’s foreign policy objectives” (Ibid).

While speculations have been going on about how and whether Russia would benefit from Brexit, there is also concern about how it would affect Russia’s economy negatively. Elena Ananieva tries to explain what Brexit actually means for Russia. Ananieva states that Brexit would not immensely affect the bilateral trade and economic relations between Russia and Britain as firstly the trade isn’t noteworthy enough due to the sanctions related to Ukraine. In fact Brexit could affect the economies of other EU countries such as Netherlands and Cyprus with which Russia has established quite considerable relations. If there is a drop in value of Euro then Russia could suffer (Ananieva 2016). Alexei Lossan and Kira Egarova (2016) posit that the exit of Britain from EU could pose more danger to Russian economy than bestowing it with advantages. As Russia’s economy is heavily dependent on the prices of oil, the decrease in oil prices due to the reduction of world trade could hamper Russia’s economy badly. The cost of oil fell by more than 6 percent to 47.77 dollars per barrel after the publication of the UK referendum results. There are also chances of Russia’s leading oil companies delisting their stocks from London Stock Exchange (Lossan and Kira 2016). There may be such consequences that will affect Russia’s economy positively or negatively and likewise change its relationship equation with UK, US and some other European countries but the fact remains that it has affected Britain’s soft power. To the outside world Britain now appears as country that is inward looking and closed in terms of international cooperation.

The controversial allegation of Russia’s interference in the 2016 US Presidential election to support American President Donald Trump during his election campaign might take a bitter turn in the relationship between Russia and the West. Apart from tarnishing the image of US democratic system which due to such allegations appears to be susceptible to such deceit and manipulation, it will also certainly affect the image of Russia.

However Russia is firm in its stand that such allegations are baseless. While such acts have definitely impacted Russia's image negatively, the future of the relationship between Russia and the West will depend a lot on how these countries will view each other. Since a long time especially after the disintegration the West did not see Russia as a threat although the image of Russia was going down. The Russian media houses have been trying since then to improve their image but they had also been promoting anti-Western propaganda through their news and other TV channels; still things were not so troublesome until Russia started to sink deeper into economic and political isolation and the West started seeing it as a threat again. However Roman Dobrokhotov (2017) raises a question as to whether Russia is really a threat to the West; the way the latter portrays it to the world? He himself then answers his own stated question and states that even though Russia is behaving aggressively in the international arena its influence in the world is not very great when seen through its ability to achieve its political goals at home or abroad. Russia according to Dobrokhotov has achieved very little in that front, and even after the alleged interference in the Donald Trump victory, Russia has not benefitted from it (Dobrokhotov 2017).

Many Russians are of the opinion that the West cannot stand Russia because under Putin the country is emerging to be strong again both economically and politically as compared to the Yeltsin years, and this makes the West uncomfortable. Future relations with the West will also depend on whether both Russia and the West are able to reach a level of trust that is the basis of establishing relationship even among the countries. With the emerging trends in the way Russia has been following its foreign policy involving the use of state-sponsored cyber warfare operations, trust will be pushed farther into oblivion if the West continues to feel threatened by Russian interference and meddling. According to Valery Gerasimov, Russian Chief of General Staff at the Academy of Military Sciences, the Colour Revolutions of the 2000s that was people powered displayed some form of hybrid warfare mechanisms and it is from then onwards that Russia started to reconsider its foreign policies and started focusing on non linear or hybrid warfare tactics too. However the state sponsored cyber operations designed to destabilise Russia's enemies and to promote its goals in the international arena makes Russia distrustful in the already sceptical eyes of the West. According to a Chatham House research paper by Keir Giles

entitled 'Russia's New Tools for Confronting the West', Russia has already found out ways which can silence the voices of the opposition on social media through the use of 'online troll army'. It is said that in January 2016, mass bots were used to post automated complaints that led to the banning of pro-Ukrainian accounts on twitter and in thus shutting the open medium that pose a challenge to Russian Federation (Kelly-Clark 2016).

With the kind of perception the West has of Russia considering their history, cooperation between them is difficult but not impossible. To create an alternate discourse of power, it is not necessary to go through the way of confrontation. By cooperating with the West and simultaneously building its independent stand it can still create its own kind of hegemony in its own terms. Russia is an emerging power that still believes in its potential to counter the West's hegemony. However before doing so it has to build its own kind of legitimacy among other countries. Confrontation with the West will invite unwanted negative connotation to its image in the world. Instead, by devoting the time to building associations with other countries, Russia has the potential to achieve more and simultaneously build for itself a place in the international set-up.

Therefore to increase the voice of rising powers like Russia itself as well as other powers, Russia does get involve in institutions like BRICS and also to reform key economic and security structures to increase representation of these powers. Institutional help also prevents the concern for leadership and legitimacy problems (Roberts 2010). It binds all the states together to bring about the desired goals they have set. However how the Western countries perceive this clubbing together of different regional powers, which could give them tough competition in the future is also noteworthy. Some authors even believe that the EU-Russia partnership strategy could act as a hurdle and prevent Russia from pursuing a strategy of balancing the West through aligning with non-Western governments. This can be understood by the fact that some already find the EU-Russia partnership very alluring. Institute for Contemporary Development (INSOR), an influential Moscow- based- think tank argues that EU growth can seen to be following the path to multi-polarity and therefore it calls for strategic partnership with EU in areas

of common energy space and joint markets for transportation and technology transfer (Makarydiev and Morozov 2011).

3.4. THE THREAT OF COLD WAR 2.0: ITS IMPLICATIONS ON RUSSIA'S SOFT POWER

Although the end of Cold War brought relief to the whole world as it marked the end of period of fear for not just the superpowers but also to less significant countries. The end of Cold War brought the downfall of communism and the West claimed it to be their victory as it became the sole powerful country forming a unipolar world but gradually the world witnessed the rise of various other countries forming a different picture of world politics. This time there were not just two overtly powerful countries with their respective blocs but there were various budding countries that claimed a strong and powerful future. Therefore the rise of this kind of multi-polarity seemed to be promising to the World of a free and fair competing world politics. However for some scholars, Putin's rise to power after his election as a President for the second term can be seen as a starting point for a new Cold War. They believe that the world is once again inward bound to a phase of "self-reinforcing suspicions and distrust between the major nuclear powers". The Iraq invasion of 2003 bore the testimony that countries without nuclear weapons are vulnerable as they are likely to be attacked while the countries having nuclear weapons are dealt with diplomatically (Sakwa 2008). In this multipolar world, all the countries strive to be strong, successful and powerful so that no country is subjugated by other powerful countries.

After Putin's take over as the president of Russia, he not only tries to normalise its ties with other countries but it also stressed on forming and identity of its own. That is to say that it did wish to cooperate with various countries that otherwise are seen as being hostile to Russia but it also stressed on cooperation that would not always put Russia on the receiving end but that decisions are taken on Russia's conditions too. On this note Sakwa's (2008) comparison of Putin to 'de Gaulle' fits perfectly. He states, "Putin is the de Gaulle of our day: Russia, like France wants to be part of the West, but on its own terms. While the West wants Russia to be a junior partner, Russia insists that it is a separate power in its own rights". (Sakwa 2008:246).

Russia under Putin also wants to regain the lost glory that it enjoyed during the Soviet times but it also is aware of the present economic and socio-political constraints towards attaining its goals. However it also knows that by merely judging itself through the prism of Western democratic model it will not be able to achieve the desired goal for Russia is like a newly formed country and democracy does not come about in the blink of an eye. Russia is also looking for alternate ways of attaining success in economy and politics, other than the Western ways. Therefore it came up with the concept of ‘Sovereign democracy’ as opposed to ‘Western liberal democracy’. This is an indication that Russia wants to give to the West that it has its own history that shapes its own political and economic course. Russia is willing to cooperate with others including the West provided they are treated as equal partners in the international arena. However Russia’s Western partners do not view positively the reasserting of Russia in the international arena. The West view Russia’s such intentions with exasperation as well as suspicion as they have been habituated to Russia’s “low-profile policy of the 1990s” when it could but agree to almost all the policies of the Western powers (Arbatova 2008).

During the Cold War soft power played an important role for both US and the Soviet Union to promote each other’s ideologies, values and norms to the world and to project an attractive model for the international community to follow. Even in the present world, soft power plays important roles in portraying a positive image of a country and the Western countries have somehow been more successful in using this power as compared to Russia. Whether it is the culture or the language or just the way of life, the West has been grabbing the attention of people around the world. However this spread of Western liberal values and influences is seen by Russia as an impending threat. By referring to instances such as the Uprisings of the Arab Spring, Colour Revolutions and the Maidan Protests in Ukraine, Russia claims that the US is using soft power as a weapon in new hybrid warfare, a tactic which often Russia itself is associated with.¹⁸ In an article of the Moscow newspaper *Muskovskie novosti* in the year 2012, Putin has robustly criticised the

¹⁸ Hybrid warfare involves the use of both conventional military force as well as irregular and cyber warfare tactics. Non linear warfare claimed to be used by Russia during the annexation of Crimea and the war in eastern Ukraine involved the use of such military and non military warfare tactics, and the West could not do much against it. This use of non linear tactic illustrates the concept of hybrid warfare (Stowell 2017).

United States involvement in the Arab Spring Uprising stating that, “soft power is a complex of tools and methods to achieve foreign policy goals without the use of force, through information and other means of influence. Unfortunately, these methods are often used to encourage and provoke extremism, separatism, nationalism, manipulation of public sentiment, and outright interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states” (Kelly-Clark 2016).

The New Cold War does not involve any two particularly strong countries. The rising powers in the world are seen as a threat by the existing powerful countries. There are agreements between various countries but each country is very careful so as to not to get trampled by any country stronger than them. To this effect they tend to come together on various issues that support multi-lateralism and not the dominance of any single country. Countries like China and Russia have come forth to show their aversion to any kind of threat by powerful countries and have shown signs of cooperation through various treaties signed between them. In 2001, China and Russia formalised their relationship by signing the Sino-Russian Treaty on Good-Neighbourliness, Friendship and Cooperation, a twenty year renewable treaty delineating their cooperative tenacity to endorse ‘a just and fair new world order’. Before the 2001 agreement China and Russia have also shown cooperation in the context of ‘Shanghai Five’, a group comprised of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan that focused on regional security and border disarmament. The group represented a strong aversion to dominance of a single power and in particular aimed at balancing the US presence in Central Asia (Turner 2009). While such efforts may be seen as a measure to protect the interest of the concerned states, it might seem like alienating the US and thus it might take it as a threat to its interests.

The Ukraine crisis can be seen as another event that gave the indication for a Cold War like situation in the world. Relations between the West and Russia started deteriorating and fear started overwhelming their relationship. According to Sergey Rogov, director of the Institute for US and Canada Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences the relations between Russia and the West had reached the worst phase in 30 years during that time. He alleged that further corrosion of the relationship could have advanced to new Cold

War phase but since there is no clash of ideology involved it could not reach to that level- “...And a situation has arisen that could give rise to a Cold War”; he further stated that “right now it’s just cold peace....but there can’t be literal repeat of the Cold War. This isn’t a collision between two systems, there is no socialist camp. There is no bipolarity, either” (Ilyashenko 2014). However during Parliamentary hearings held in December 2014, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said, “relations started to seesaw long before Ukraine, and through no fault of Russia’s” as “the desire to tear the CIS countries away from Russia has always been an American foreign policy.” (Ibid).

While Russia is among the future rising powers that could counter the West, its strong reliance on hard power reflects its preference for sovereignty more than democracy. Instead of relying on its soft power in winning the confidence of its near abroad, Russia in many instance has resorted to coercion and force. This attitude of Russia undermines its aim of acquiring regional hegemony. Russia’s resort to violence and its dispute with Ukraine not only made it appear as a threat to the Western world but also frightened the small states in its near abroad. For Russia, its sovereignty matters the most and it can go to any extent to prevent it from any kind of external threat or interference. It also regards the interference by foreign countries in its region as threat to its sovereignty. Russia’s political elites initially viewed even the ‘colour revolutions’ in Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan as grave geopolitical intrusions by the US and its agents (Roberts 2010).

The sanctions against Russia by the Western countries after the “annexation of Crimea” gave a severe blow to not just the economy of Russia but also its image. While Russia disagrees to view it as an annexation as they believe that it was based on people’s decision based on a referendum, the West continues to view it as unlawful. Prime Minister of United Kingdom even mentioned in one of her speeches that this act of Russia is “illegal” and it is “first time since the Second World War that one sovereign nation has forcibly taken territory from another in Europe” (Theresa May speech, 12 March 2018). The US too is firm in its decision to not recognise the annexation of Crimea by Russia. In a recent Bill named, “Crimea Annexation Non-recognition Act” the same is discussed. The Bill prevents the recognition of Russia’s sovereignty over Crimea by any federal agency and prohibits support of any kind towards this act of Russia. The

Bill has been passed by the House of Representatives on 3 March 2019 but it is yet to pass the Senate after which it becomes an Act (Congress.gov 2019).

When Trump came to power, Russians as well as the world hoped that there would be betterment of relationship between Russia and the US. This was further realised when Trump talked about improving relations with Russia in his meeting with Putin on the sidelines of the G20 Summit. However in July 2017 the US Congress came up with a legislation that would prevent their president Trump from withdrawing sanctions imposed on Russia.¹⁹ This bill also places Russia along with Iran and North Korea as the top enemies of US. The significance of the new bill lies in the fact that Russia has again been regarded as a formal enemy of the United States, marking a beginning of tension between the two countries again which had earlier been called off after the signing of a treaty by Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan that focused on putting an end to arms race (Dobrokhotov 2017).

Nadia Arbatova believes that despite the problems between Russia and the West, it cannot be uncared, for Russia and the EU have some goals in common. The European Union may not agree with Russia's policies on various issues and the same can be said of Russia's opinion about EU's policies but stability in wider Europe remains of paramount importance to both the sides. The gap in the Russia-Western security perceptions does act as impediment in the smooth functioning of the relationship between Russia and the European Union but the two sides have many common interests as well as mutual dependence despite the fact that they have faced the problem of "mutual dissatisfaction and deceived expectations". However the fact is that Russia is EU's third largest trading partner. For Russia, the EU is one of the most important energy export markets. Apart from exports, the most important foreign investors of Russia have been European companies. So the cycle of mutual dependence continues despite disagreements between the two. In fact according to some estimates, the EU's dependence on external energy

¹⁹ The bill highlights a rare scenario where the Republicans have come together with the Democrats against their own President. This has been due to the investigations going on due to the alleged Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election. The Trump administration opposes the bill on the grounds that it hinders the executive functioning (Winter 2017).

supplies will be almost 81 percent of its oil consumption and 93 percent of its gas consumption, by the year 2030 (Arbatova 2008).

The image of Russia in the West relies on all the factors discussed above. However various instances have added to the negative image of Russia in the West. The recent Salisbury incident where Sergei Skirpal, a former Russian officer and a double agent along with her daughter Yulia Skirpal were poisoned in Salisbury, England. Prime Minister of UK, Theresa May in her speech dated 12 March 2008 confirmed that the act was done by Russian agent either aiming at UK or it could be that the Russian government “lost control of the nerve agent” into the hands of others. In any case, it was confirmed that the act involved a disastrously damaging nerve agent known as “Novichok” developed by Russia. This incident has again raised suspicions of the West against Russia (Theresa May speech 12 March 2018).

3.5. CONCLUSION

In order to understand how the West responds to the efforts taken by Russia towards building its soft power, we need to understand how Russia is viewed by the West. This chapter highlights the relationship between Russia and the Western countries in the most crucial periods of history, especially the Cold War period and the post disintegration period. The relationship between Russia and the West helps us in understanding how they perceive each other. The chapter therefore tries to highlight the fact that Russia has always been of interest to the West. The way international system functions today are a reflection of important events involving the West and Russia. For Soviet Russia the main source of attraction was its ideology and the way it viewed culture was from an ideological point of view. The clash of ideologies between Russia and the West and especially the US during the Cold War period displayed a lot of efforts from both the sides to project their own ideology to be better than the other. For the Soviet Union, its ideology acted as its soft power as it attracted many countries that believed in its ideology and on the basis of it strong friendships were built. However after the end of Cold War, the triumph of capitalism and the disintegration of Soviet Union left a deep scar in the image of Russia.

Countries like Russia and China took a while to recover from this shock but the latter remained steadfast in its ways and instead of falling victim of the identity crisis after the so called victory of capitalism, China remained firm in its own ways. However the same cannot be said of Russia. The disintegration of Soviet Union made it vulnerable and dependent on the West. Russia's political and economic deterioration affected Russia's image as well as its foreign policy. The indifference of the West during this period played a huge role in the way the relationship between Russia and the West evolved. The attitude of the West toward Russia during its transition period acted as an add-on to the already dissatisfied and humiliated feeling of Russia. Russia's initial steps towards liberal democracy and market economy highlighted the fact that Russia took this step to imitate the West but without proper understanding of the depth of the Western model.

With the coming in of Putin's era, the way of looking at certain things started changing. Russia started to realise that blindly following the West would bring no fruitful results for Russia in the long run because Russia is different from the Western countries in many respects. The gradual realisation of recovering Russia as well as the rise of other powers brought to picture the notion of multipolarity and that the all in all US hegemony can also be challenged. With the rise of new powers, the game of bipolarity has taken a backseat as each country focuses on its own betterment and accordingly Russia's aim is no longer to stand as an alternative to the West but rather focuses on promoting the notion of sovereignty by reaching out to countries with similar preferences.

There is still a tussle between Russia and the West but the line of distinction between the two is not so definite as compared to the Cold War period. The way some international events have turned out does suggest a bit of new Cold War like experience but given the interdependence between countries in the present international scenario such deep polarisation is unlikely to occur. While hard power dominates the international scene, sole reliance on it can result into fatal consequences. For a country to achieve success there is a need for both hard power and soft power. Russia's hard power strategies are known to all but its focus on soft power is somewhat restricted to its neighbouring regions. Even in this region, Russia lacks patience to solve issues and on many occasions

have exhibited a 'big brother' and a 'bully' image. Soft power requires patience and the outcome takes time.

However the interference of the Western countries in post Soviet regions is considered as a severe threat by the West. Even though Russia has a strong hold in this region, any kind of resentment from any of these countries towards it receives the support of the West. For Russia, the love for sovereignty over powers the love for democracy, and it can go to any extent to safeguard its sovereignty and to prevent it from any kind of external threat. The West on the other hand fights in the name of democracy. No matter what kind of differences that the West and Russia have, in the present world scenario, no country is the true enemy of the other because in some ways most of the countries are connected to each other.

Russia and the EU also have many some common goals that cannot be ignored. Soft power is the key to maintaining relations between countries and at the same time knowing the best way to get the desired goals fulfilled through attraction. Cultural exchanges between Russia and the West can help in preventing the souring of relationship that is caused mainly by geopolitical and economic brawl.

The way Russia and the West perceive each other has a lot of impact in their relationship which in turn affects their image in the international scenario. The West sees Russia under Putin as nothing but an authoritative regime where the civil society is very weak. This image of Russia is portrayed by the West through its mass media and press to the rest of the world, which will be discussed in details later. The negative image of Russia is detrimental to Russia's quest for soft power. Many in the West are of the opinion that Russia cannot survive without a strong ruler. This history of Russia also suggests the same as there always has been the need for a strong ruler to come save the day for the Russians. Despite some form of opposition and criticism against the working of the government, many in Russia continue to support the Putin regime. This is so because they are of the opinion that the Western countries fear Russia under Putin as it's him who brought the country out of its economic and political crisis after the Yeltsin years and is continuing to so.

It should be noted that Russia differs from the West in many respects and the way it handles its domestic or foreign affairs also differs from that of the West. Russia's values at home and abroad do not quite live up to the standards of western liberal democratic values. Therefore according to Joseph Nye, countries like Russia and China do not understand the core aspects of soft power. Russia on the other hand understands soft power mostly as a government tool to achieve the desired results. Government involvement is necessary but it doesn't solely rely on that. However what remains common in the Western countries as well as Russia is that soft power in many instances is given a second class treatment. This is so because hard power brings results quicker as compared to the slow process of soft power.

This chapter shows us that the changing dynamics of international relations has brought about a change in the way the West perceives Russia. During the Cold War period, Russia was viewed as a threat to the West; especially its ideology was portrayed as evil and against humanity as well as progress or development. So basically this period shows that although the West and especially the US despised Soviet Union, it did consider it as a worthy opponent and the fact that it was scared of its ideology shows that the fear of losing to Russia during that time did haunt the West. The transition period of Russia after the disintegration of the Soviet Union highlights that the West perceived it as a weak country incapable of surviving without the support of the West or the US in particular. However with the rise of Putin and as well as the rise of a multi-polar world the US no longer became the sole powerful country. The changing dynamics of the world changes the way Russia is perceived by the West to the world. The West with its powerful media and press then portrays that image of Russia to the world.

However whether the negative portrayal of Russia by the Western mass media and the press affects Russia's soft power which is still in its nascent form or not, and how much truth and false lies in their depiction of Russia's image will be discussed in details later in the fifth chapter.

Chapter IV

Russia's Soft Power: Approaches and Strategies

CHAPTER 4

RUSSIA'S SOFT POWER: APPROACHES AND STRATEGIES

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Whether it was in the pre-Soviet period or the Soviet period, Russia has many examples to boast of its attractiveness to many countries through its rich cultural heritage. While it is true that Russia did enjoy its soft power over many countries along with its hard power strategies, it also showed its unattractive side to others. This unattractive side of Russia whether in the early periods or the Soviet period did not come forth due to any particular incident or event in the history but rather it was the accumulation of such events that added to the negative image of Russia at home and abroad. The unfolding of Russia's history also shows us how it slowly earned the title of a superpower and gradually lost the same title in a matter of time. The once glorious and attractive Russia slowly started to lose its charm; it no longer enjoyed the power of attraction in the same way it did before.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union brought with it not just economic and political turmoil but it also affected its power of attraction. Russia was a newborn child but without a mother as the ideology that governed Soviet Union for almost seventy years came crashing down. As we have seen in the second chapter that Russia has a long tradition of following a 'silnaya ruka' or the strong ruler, it once again turned towards a strong ruler who they hoped could bring them out of disarray and give a hope of a secure and stable future. President Vladimir Putin therefore started the task of rebuilding Russia's soft power and thus gaining its power to influence and attract others. However it was only after focussing on the task of stabilizing the economy that he focussed on rebuilding the soft power capabilities.²⁰

²⁰ However it is also a known fact that Russia has been associated with its hard power capabilities and that it has not hesitated to use power involving military actions, force or coercion whenever the need has arisen.

Vladimir Putin in his second term of office drew his attention to rebuilding Russia's power of attraction. Earlier even under President Medvedev, the emphasis had been made on such aspect of power but it was under Putin that it has been included officially in its concept of foreign policy and it states, "soft power", a comprehensive toolkit for achieving foreign policy objectives building on civil society potential, information, cultural and other methods and technologies alternative to traditional diplomacy, is becoming an indispensable component of modern international relations (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2013). At the same time, swelling global competition and the rising crisis also build a threat of mishandling and unlawful use of soft power and human rights concepts to exercise political pressure on sovereign states, impede in their internal matters, abate their political situation, manage public opinion, together with the ploy of financing cultural and human rights projects abroad (Ibid).

During the Soviet period, Russia did enjoy considerable influence in many of the non Western and the Third World countries. Although Socialism has been held responsible for the downfall of Russia by the West and also considering it as a threat especially to the Western world, the fact remains that Socialism as an ideology did attract many countries especially through its idea of equality. Whether Socialism was the only driving force behind Soviet success or it was leading Soviet Russia to its downfall as the West claims is still debatable. However it did come to a closure and Soviet Union ultimately disintegrated. Hence, Russia now has to gain back its lost glory whether in terms of economy, status, its image abroad or all of them. As Russia has often been associated with its pro hard power and military strategies, the image that it has in the world also reflects the same. Russia's dream of regaining the status of superpower has drawn its attention mostly towards strengthening its military capabilities and even strengthening its economy predominantly in terms of oil, gas or weaponry. Russia's foreign policy also reflects its hard power stance. It is in this backdrop that considering how Russia undertakes or has undertaken the task of building its soft power becomes interesting.

4.2. RISE OF RUSSIA'S SOFT POWER

Both the Tsarist and Soviet Russia, have faced socio-economic as well as political problems and its weaknesses were highlighted but it was handled tactfully through

superior manpower, political centralism and industry heavily focused on military production. Basically it tried to cover up the shortcomings through its hard power resources. But after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russia lost its earlier capabilities. The country faced a problem of demographic crisis that threatened to cut its population by more than fifteen percent by the middle of the century. In fact it is still recovering from the shambles of past failures. The raw materials of Russia also started declining. The Russian defence industry also underwent great losses as it could not produce a full range of conventional weapons system leading to a situation where it has been forced to buy arms from abroad, such as drones from Israel and ships from France. Russia's nuclear power faced a setback and is faced with difficulties. The continuing failure of the Bulava ballistic missile is an example of such failures (Trenin 2009).

What post-Cold War period brought with it was the dominance of United States. It emerged as a powerful country and for the realist and neo-realists this is a great achievement for United States. This is so because the neo realists view any system in the light of distribution of material power amidst the rise of a strong power. Therefore in the eyes of neo-realists the only way for a country to gain the status of a great power is by strengthening its hard power resources and engaging in a direct war against the most powerful state. However a hegemon would not view the world through the prism of war and hard power alone. It would first employ self restraint measures and would build up institutional binding and thus aim to denigrate others' acumen of threat (Hurrell 2006:6). After the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russia was in a similar kind of dilemma, whether it would aim in strengthening its hard power resources and fight against the West directly or whether it would focus on strengthening their economy for the time being. Russia obviously went for the latter but with hard power ambitions. Although it didn't resort to violence directly on its target but it did start continuing with its hard power image by showing off its strength in its own neighbouring areas or even on the troubled areas of its own region. However it started affecting its already weak economy and this was all adding up to the negative image of Russia in the world, first as a failed state and second as a brutal country.

Hard power is an essential part of a country's progress and security but focusing solely on it will prove detrimental in the long run. Soft power of a country is difficult to achieve but it does not get destructed easily. A country's reliance on both hard and soft power will help the country sail through crisis. After the disintegration Russia required rebuilding of both its hard and soft power. Russia is often associated with its hard power capabilities but its soft power faces a backlash. Therefore it is essential that Russia invests more on its soft power capabilities. Soft power basically focuses on a "value laden identity" that is based on certain yardstick of social and political behaviour. It relies on creating a successful domestic norm and aims promoting it outside the country by making it attractive to other countries (Makarychev 2011).

During the 1990s, the cataclysm arising out of Russia's decisions and measures to liberalise and reform its economy resulted in Russia losing the capacity to continue providing financial subsidies to the former Soviet states which was one of the main sources of economic attraction it enjoyed over these regions. However it is also true that although Russia's economy in terms of cash was going down but the possession of a bulk of Soviet military arsenal including bases, personnel and equipments made it "armaments rich". This gave Russia hope that it could still emerge as a strong power in terms of its hard power capabilities but it also made the newly independent and weaker states more anxious as the economic remuneration of alliance with Russia faded (Hill 2006).

Despite the goodness that Socialism bestowed on Soviet Russia for almost 69 years, the drawbacks attached to it could not prevent the breakdown of Soviet Union and it also could not survive beyond that. Even though there were many people who kept reminiscing the good old days, they had to swallow the bitter pill and face the reality of capitalism slowly starting to creep in. Capitalism now has entered almost every corner of the world. During the 1990s it slowly started to acquire stability and durability and the countries of the world started to accept it; to some countries capitalism was forced upon them while some started accepting it with open arms. The countries that long opposed capitalism started coming under its purview including China that had long been its antagonist and it has accepted capitalism in a form of 'market socialism'. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, even the east European states as well as the members

of the Commonwealth of Independent States inducted the process of capitalist development (Harshe 1998).

According to Donna Bahry (1999), caught up in traditional values, Russia even after the adoption of market economy has been acting capricious while dealing with both state and market. Although Russia supported the idea of economic reforms, which however was at a slow pace, it was still caught up with the earlier practice of state owned prices, state owned industries in many sectors and state enforced socio-economic equality. This confused attitude displayed by Russia is understandable as the economic reforms therapy that was suddenly imposed on Russia indeed proved to be sudden and shocking in many ways. Hence the scepticism shown towards market economy or economic reforms stands justified. Bahry (1999) also goes forward to state that the scepticism of Russia is also seen in the way they see democracy, that is to say that they want it but they also trust a 'strong hand' that can bring order in a muddled society.

After facing the economic low of 1998, Russia started seeing some signs of recovery. The change started taking place from the years 1999 and 2000. This was due to many factors taking place. One of the most important factors was the rise of world crude oil prices from around ten dollars a barrel in December 1998 to around 33 dollars a barrel in September 2000. This resulted in the major inflow of cash into Russia's domestic economy. Another factor that helped in Russia's economic recovery was the increase of Russian oil production by around one million barrels per day to seven million barrels per day. To increase export capacity, Russia started improving the infrastructure and thus built the Baltic Pipeline System and a new oil terminal at Primorsk on the Gulf of Finland. This was Russia's oil production that had bounced back even further by 2005, to reach 9.6 million barrels per day (Hill 2006:343-344).

A country's economic condition is very essential for the functioning of that country and maintaining its international as well as domestic politics. However what is equally important is the political culture of a country. For a country to improve its soft power, it is requisite that it has a sound political culture that gives way to the maintenance of democratic institutions. Scholars like Walter Lacqueur, the author of the book 'The Long Road to Freedom' (1989), is of the opinion that democratisation efforts undertaken by

Gorbachev were bound to fail because Soviet Union did not have enough democrats present then. He argues further that the reason behind such a failure of democratisation process is that the Russians have never respected or loved democracy; they have always favoured autocracy (Hahn 1991). While this is altogether a very debatable argument as democracy can flourish even in non-Western countries, it is an argument that belongs to scholars who believe in the idea that there is continuity rather than change in the way Russians think about politics. This is one way of looking at things in a vast country like Russia. Although due to various historical circumstances Russia has had to rely on a strong ruler or the *Silnaya ruka* but it is also true that Russia like any other country has tried to work towards bringing about certain changes and also attaining democratic polity (Sixsmith 2011).

Conversely there are a number of analysts who believe that there has been a change in the way Russians view politics. They state that the Russians now are better educated and are more urban and doing well materially and mention that such characteristics are usually associated with higher levels of political participation. Although it is true that there have been changes as such but there is still widespread inequality and corruption and there is still quite a lot to achieve. The material well being of people also does not correspond to the level of their political participation. Jerry Hough, in his book 'Russia and the West' also brings out picture of Russia that has strived for positive changes. Hough mentions that the Bolshevik Revolution and the period of Stalinism that followed it was an example not of restoration of "absolutism" but rather it was "an unnatural break" in the struggle of Russia to modernise. In this regard the period of Gorbachev can also be seen as a period that strives for a return to modern western like society recalling the era of Peter the Great. These periods according to the author are an epitome of social structural changes accompanied by economic development. Similarly Moshe Lewin, in his work 'The Gorbachev Phenomenon' talks about Gorbachev period as one that helped in transforming a primarily rural and traditional society to that of predominantly urban and modern (Hahn 1991).

While such examples of Russia striving for a change rather than continuity in the form of modernity and urban development does represent the idea that Russia did not remain

static in the way it viewed politics and society but such examples does not show how it corresponds to Russia's struggle against absolutism. By merely trying to modernise the society in terms of material standards does not entail a sound political culture. There should be development in its political and social values along with other kinds of development. Of course it does depict an image of Russia that is different from that of an autocratic one but it does not mean that Russia's transformation from a rural to urban would justify the end of autocratic practices. Nonetheless, there has been a change in the way Russia is functioning albeit at a slower pace. The most interesting change can be seen in the way Russia has been realising the value of soft power along with its hard power strategies.

As mentioned earlier Vladimir Putin in his second term highlighted the importance of soft power and regarded it as one of the important aspects of Russia's foreign policy objectives. The role of government has been regarded as an important aspect in improving Russia's image abroad as well as achieving its soft power objectives. Here, soft power of Russia slightly differs from Western understanding of soft power that theoretically does not rely much on government actions. Many in Russia believe that Russia has its attractive side that can be highlighted in a number of domestic policies that otherwise are not talked about much by the Western media. Virginia Rusakova of Sputnik News Agency also believes that Russia has the potential to win the hearts of others but it has never really believed in the idea of showing off. She mentions that Russia has a lot of potential and is working towards achieving the soft power objectives but it has never spent enough efforts in proving its potential to the rest of the world in terms of its soft power. This according to her is also one of the reasons that many countries have misunderstood Russia and hence adds to the image of Russia as being a 'cold country' literally as well as in terms of behaviour of Russians. Since soft power is all about attraction, a little effort on part of the government is essential for improving its image abroad of course by proving through their actions and not an explanation. Virginia Rusakova believes that more than a 'tool' or a means for achieving any objective, soft power is an "attitude towards certain things as well as about people's perception" (Interview 3, Virginia Rusakova 2018).

Russia's foreign policy went a phenomenal shift under President Vladimir Putin. In the year 2001 he aimed at prioritising country's economic rejuvenation and recognising country's weaknesses. It was a great initiative taken by a leader for a country that was badly in need of reforms and a right strategy to recover from the setbacks of disintegration. However in the winter and spring of 2003, US- Russian relations appeared to sour as Moscow joined Paris and Berlin in opposition to Washington's Iraq policy. This brought a different twist in Russia's foreign policy of just focusing on rekindling of relations with countries for economic benefits. The souring of relations with its former adversary is definitely not a progressive move concerning the economic status of the country. Nonetheless the quest to retain great power status is very dear to Russians and keeping that in mind Putin's policies also highlight the fact that Russia has not given up on regaining its status of super power (Wohlforth 2003).

Russia has an enormous potential to rise as a strong economic power and particularly as an 'Energy superpower'. Energy resources provide Russia with a source of economic attraction and a way of achieving economic and political influence using sometimes non-traditional and non-transparent methods too (REP Seminar summary 2011). Russia has the second largest coal reserves in the world; it is the fifth largest producer and third largest exporter. In 2009, 20 percent of the European Union's coal imports came from Russia. Russia should also give State the key role in most of the matters. It is true that the State is an important player in its diplomacy concerning energy but there are other group of actors too in Russia that are important (Sherr 2013:58-60). However Russia should not solely aim in promoting itself as an energy rich country. A lot of economic relations between countries also depends on the way a country functions internally. If Russia follows a fair system in its conduct of its affairs with other countries as well as in its domestic affairs then Russia will automatically appear more attractive than other countries who also engage in similar energy based economic relations. Moreover by indulging unfair and foul politics at home and abroad can cause situations of economic sanctions on Russia leading to a cut in its economy which is just about rising. Russia's influence through energy and industry is sizeable and in doing so it takes into concern both hard and soft forms of power and sometimes without much balancing.

President Putin apart from focusing on rejuvenating Russia's economy has also laid stress on improving its image abroad. In his second term of Presidency, when he officially announced Russia's intentions of increasing soft power, there are many actions taken by him before which suggest Russia's increasing soft power. The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation 2013, talks about the world affairs and describes the current status of international relations and the various changes and then under the theme 'Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation and the Modern World', there is also the description of soft power and its importance as well as the threats related to its misuse. It defines soft power as, 'a comprehensive toolkit for achieving foreign policy objectives building on civil society potential, information, cultural and other methods and technologies alternative to traditional diplomacy, is becoming an indispensable component of modern international relations' (Concept of the Foreign Policy of Russian Federation 2013).

Putin's focus has been mostly in the surrounding areas and the former Soviet regions with regard to its increasing their soft power capabilities. President Vladimir Putin in his speech addressed to the representatives of this institution discussed the role of its various organizations in building the country's foreign policy as well as in making a positive image of the country abroad. By calling *Rossotrudnichestvo*²¹ and its branches as an important means of Russia's soft power, Putin has prioritized the activities involving culture, science and media in Russia's foreign policy. It also shows his interest in promoting Russia's culture, traditions and legacies as mentioned by him in the speech (President of Russia 2012).

In one of his speeches addressed to the ambassadors and permanent representatives in international organizations, he brought forth the importance of soft power but also stressed upon the fact that "Russia's image abroad is formed not by Russians and therefore it is often 'distorted'". Putin's statements indicate that Russia's image is highly

²¹ Rossotrudnichestvo is an agency set up by presidential decree under the former President Medvedev, on 6 December 2008. Earlier it was largely responsible for international cultural cooperation, promoting Russian language and maintaining a network of Russian Houses of Science and Culture. However in 2013, Rossotrudnichestvo was transformed into Russia's national agency for international development. With its expanded powers, it is expected to shift Russia's approach to international development from passive to active (Sherr 2013:62-63).

dependent on how the ‘other’ views Russia and through his statement it is clear that it is not quite good. However, his positivity is highlighted in his speech as he talks about “Russia’s contribution to global civilisation, science and culture” and that emphasis should be placed on the Russian language and the Compatriots policy for fostering Russia’s soft power (President of Russia 2012).

However, it should be noted that the former President Medvedev had also contributed greatly to the building up of Russia’s soft power through the opening of various organizations other than Rossotrudnichestvo. One such organization is the Baku International Humanitarian Forum that was initiated by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and the then President of Russian Federation Dmitriy Medvedev in the year 2010. The main objective of the forum has been to look in humanitarian problems that have arisen in the rise of globalization period. The forum comes in operation every once a year and involves the participants and representatives in to various dialogues and discussions (Baku International Humanitarian Forum 2011). He had also ordered for the establishment of two other institutions that would further Russia’s foreign policy goals, the Gorchakov Fund for public diplomacy support and Russian International Affairs Council (Shakirov 2013). President Dmitry Medvedev in his address to the participants of the forum in 2011 compared the activities of “Humanitarian cooperation” with soft power, as according to him such activities would help in promoting greater cooperation between countries. Medvedev’s stress on humanitarian cooperation indicates Russia’s outlook in the matters of influence abroad (President of Russia 2011).

Russia’s rise of soft power and its development correlates to its development and adoption of its own form of democracy, ‘the Sovereign Democracy’. Russia’s sovereign democracy stands not only as an example of its independent stand in the world defying the Western standards of liberal democracy but also in a way aims in forming a ‘self-identification’ of Putin’s rule in Russia. It not only tries to legitimise the actions of the government at home by justifying every action in the pretext of democracy but also forms an ‘ideological tool’ in legitimising its actions abroad. However what is appealing is not just the fact that Russia is promoting an alternate democracy to the world, different from

the Western liberal democracy but it lies in the fact that soft power of Russia has also been developing in the light of Russian democracy (Kozak 2015).

Russian literature, artists, music and theatre, philosophy, ballet, painting, folklore and architecture are known all over the world right from the Soviet days and even in present day Russia they form an important source of soft power. Patriarch Kirill I of Moscow has made himself a chief actor of the Russian World or the 'Ruskiyy Mir' project. Kirill, Putin and Medvedev are also willing to make religion a major factor abroad (Sherr 2013:87). Russian Orthodox Church and the Patriarch hold central positions in the Russian society. It is estimated that Moscow Patriarchate has over 150 million members in more than sixty countries around the world (Liik 2013: 40-44). This shows the influence Russia can have over these countries through the hold of Russian Orthodox and the Patriarch. The Ruskiyy Mir (Russian World) Foundation, headed by Vyacheslav Nikonov, was set up by a decree of President Putin in 2007. This organization too is mostly used for the promotion of Russian language and culture. Along with it there are numerous institutions that carry out similar kind of roles and they help each other in their work. One such institution is the Institute for Democracy and Cooperation, which also works as an NGO and was also established in the year 2007 (ibid).

The conflict between Russia and the West or United States in particular is not just due to the steps taken by Russia but it also can be understood by going back to the time when Russia looked up to the Western countries for help, following the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Far from getting such expected aid from West or US in particular, Russia's attempts to integrate with the West remained a distant dream. The West failed to accept Russia as its own and probably was unwilling to take the responsibility of a country totally broken into pieces and had nothing to fear because the West had already won the fight with the collapse of the Socialist ideology. As a result in the second presidential term of Vladimir Putin, Russia quit its goal of joining the West and returned to its "default option of behaving as an independent great power" (Trenin 2009).

The Global economic crisis of 2008 affected many countries and Russia was definitely one of them. Before the fall of 2008, Russia had chances of becoming an economic and geopolitical power. The Global economic crisis not only took that opportunity away from

Russia but also made it go through a difficult time at home. The domestic situation in Russia started to worsen because the leaders now resorted to ways that could give them any kind of benefit, be it at the cost of its people. The desperate times and desperate measures in Russia changed the course of Russia's foreign and domestic policies. The model that Russia started following after the crisis is that of "growth without development, capitalism without democracy, and great-power policies without international appeal" (Ibid). This kind of approach definitely cannot prove beneficial both in the long and short run. Russia has been trying to recover from various setbacks it has faced but it needs not only a resetting of its policies but also requires a "new strategy and new policy instruments and mechanisms to implement it" (Trenin 2009).

Russia's foreign policy objectives and priorities need a change in order to avoid failure. The focus of Russia's policy should not solely rely on "seeking political status and economic rents" as the failure to achieve those will only end up in disappointments and resentment among the masses. Before trying to achieve a great power status it should try to overcome its social, economic and political backwardness. Russia's foreign policy also needs to focus on strengthening its soft power. Russia has a great potential and possesses "precious and unused elements of this kind of power", especially in its near abroad. In its near-abroad, Russia's influence is still subtly present. From the influence of Russian language to Pushkin's work to Russian pop music, Russian culture still has its strong grip on the post-Soviet world. A little effort by Russia to rebuild its infrastructure can attract many students especially from the post-Soviet world for higher education in science and research. Russia also needs to bring about fundamental changes in its political and economic system for its business sector to be attractive to the outsiders and so that "Russian business people would no longer be perceived as agents of the Kremlin" and they too could do business in various other countries without much suspicions and apprehension from those countries (Ibid).

There are many opportunities that Russia has got and it must use to the best of its ability in order to create a positive image in the world and to counteract the negative image and all the stereotypes that are attached to it. Events like the Sochi Olympics in the year 2014 and the recently held FIFA 2018 have been an important platform for Russia to get back

its lost glory and to prove its worth to the world. Whether these events turn out to be as successful as expected or not does not matter more than the efforts put in by the country to clear away the doubts in the minds of the people and country in general regarding Russia. There are different ways of looking at such events hosted by Russia or any other such emerging great powers. Sochi Olympics was criticised for the government's massive 50 billion dollars investment. However it was a great platform for Russia to prove its worth to the world. The display of their rich culture did not go to waste as was suggested by the Western media. According to the result of a survey conducted by Monocle and the London based think Institute for Government, Russia (ranked 27) appeared in the Top 30 nations in the world in terms of soft power. Earlier even China had benefitted in the same way after hosting the Summer Olympics in the year 2008 (Basulto 2014).

The hosting of Sochi Winter Olympics came with a lot of criticisms especially from the Western world who viewed it as being unworthy of hosting such an event. Even Joseph Nye went forward to state that Putin did not succeed in building its soft power even after being given a chance to hold an event like the Winter Olympics. Russia's political situation at that time, its stand in the Ukraine crisis and the annexation of Crimea all clubbed together to negate the efforts taken by the Russian government during the Olympics. However Jonathan Grix and Nina Kramareva (2017) argue that Nye and the West are completely mistaken in their understanding of Russia's soft power. They try to understand that the biasness of the Western media overlooks Russia's achievements. Russia's way of looking at soft power is different from that of the West. They go forward to state that Russia's soft power ambitions while hosting the Sochi Olympics was more to woo the domestic audience. Sports have often been used in Russia to stir a feeling of nationalism and national identity and Putin exactly had that opportunity during the exact moment. They state that Sochi Olympics acted like a domestic soft power project that did achieve its desired goal. It might have faced criticism at the international level and mostly at the hands of the Western media but it ultimately served its purpose. This is so because after the Olympics there was a stark improvement in the approval ratings of Putin. That is to say it increased from 54 percent in 2013 to 75 percent after the Olympics and it even reached 86 percent in February 2015 (Grix and Kramareva 2017).

Despite the criticisms faced by Russia while and after hosting the Sochi Winter Olympics, Russia tried its best to fight back and counter the image portrayed by the West when it got chance to host the FIFA World Cup 2018. Of course there were a lot of criticisms arising even before the football cup started. In fact right after the decision to host FIFA World Cup in Russia was made in 2010, criticisms and accusations started overflowing. Amidst the controversies of bribery, fraud and corruption, Russia continued with its responsibility of hosting the event. The Western media did not hesitate to cover all the negative aspects related to Russia hosting the tournament. In fact the British press brought forth headlines such as, “England fans in danger of ‘extreme violence’ from Russian hooligans at the World Cup” and, “Russia sees spike in racist and homophobic chants before World Cup” (Crilley 2018). The Western media’s negative portrayal of Russia continues but Russia decided to fight back such comments with its actions. The FIFA World Cup was conducted successfully and with full hospitality and in an organised manner. The fact that even the England fans admitted that they were welcomed openly cancels out such negative remarks (Ibid).

4.3. MEASURES TAKEN BY RUSSIA TO BOOST ITS SOFT POWER IN ITS NEAR ABROAD

It is important to understand the relations between Russia and its former Soviet Republic before going into the details of its soft power in those regions. After the break-up of the Soviet Union into fifteen new independent states the geopolitical space earlier occupied by Soviet Union underwent dramatic socio-political and economic changes. The then official term used for these new states was ‘post-Soviet space’. The term ‘post Soviet space’ then appeared as an umbrella notion that stressed the ‘common historical roots’ although these political and economic culture as well as the remnants of the common features started becoming more diverged with every passing year. While the term ‘post-Soviet states’ was more applied by the Western scholars who stressed the common Soviet origin and continuity of the new regimes, the term ‘Newly Independent States’ or NIS was more keenly used by politicians and researchers in the region denoting national sovereignty and a split with the former regime. During the 1990s, the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) despite them maintaining distance with the

Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) remained a part of the post-Soviet geopolitical and economic space due to the flow of trade, security concerns and ethnic migration. It was only after the attainment of the three Baltic States to both the European Union and NATO in the 2000s that the concept of post-Soviet space abridged from fifteen to twelve newly independent states (Nikitin 2008:8-12).

Russia is successful to quite an extent in promoting its soft power in the near abroad and it is largely due to measures undertaken by the government to attract these countries. These measures encompass a wide range of opportunities lured at the masses of these countries through an 'attractive visa-free travel policy, the rhetoric of fraternity, and the ubiquity of Russian media in most CIS countries'. Moreover the Russian labour markets are for obvious reasons economically appealing to low paid migrants from the post-Soviet states. However Russia should not solely rely on gaining their support through helplessness of the migrants of post-Soviet countries or the countries at large. The achievements of Russia are not supposed to be based on the "quantity of immigrants and the amount of their allowance, but the qualitative characteristics of their experiences in Russia" (Makarychev 2011:2). This is a very valid point raised by Makarychev (2011) as this way Russia will not be progressing but rather relying on easily available benefits. The goals which might prove to be fruitful in short run, in the long run they will not be genuinely earning the support of other countries. A true help from Russia should be to aid the countries in coming out of their current situation so that the impression that Russia casts upon them is a lasting and strong one (Ibid).

However Fiona Hill (2006) is of the opinion that if the influx of migrants from the surrounding areas continues and if Russia use right kind of measures in dealing with them, if Russian business investments grow in the neighbouring areas, the regional youth continue to watch Russian TV and films and purchase Russian software, including CDs, DVDs and other consumer products and if Russia relies less on its military hard power and more on commerce in its foreign policy, Russia will enjoy the economic and cultural predominance in Europe that the United States has in the Americas (Hill 2006:342).

Russia has interest in its neighbourhood but its zone of influence in the region is hampered by its territorial thinking. Its view that the world is a set up where the big

powers are fighting with each other for gaining their influence in smaller regions is not suitable in the actual contemporary healthy global politics. Some of the former Soviet republics are in friendly terms with the Western countries. Georgia is overwhelmingly pro-Western and this to a large extent is due to Moscow's policies that have made the population of Georgia largely anti-Russian. Azerbaijan has managed to do business with Western oil companies but they have managed to stay on good terms with Moscow but avoiding being dominated by it. Armenia on a national scale depends on Russian security guarantees, but as a result of the continued altercation between Georgia and Russia, it is more physically secluded (Trenin 2009:71).

The way Russia shapes its soft power in the case of some of the post Soviet countries is quite interesting. It can be understood by the difference in the way it deals with the pro-Western and neutral counties or countries that are inclined towards Russia. Makarychev (2011) states that Russia uses 'selective pro-democracy rhetoric' while dealing with countries such as Ukraine and Georgia. In other words countries that show a pro-Western attitude are often targeted by the Kremlin. In the case of Ukraine and Georgia, following the 'colour revolutions', the Kremlin condemned Kiev's decision to join NATO as being against the interest of Russia and also as 'undemocratic' because of the lacking of popular support among the Ukrainians. On a similar line, the Kremlin viewed the Saavashvili regime in Georgia 'undemocratic' and claimed that it oppressed the opposition and suppressed the minorities. However when the question of other countries such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan and other breakaway territories of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria or Nagorno-Karabakh has come about, Russia has hardly raised the issue of democracy (Makarychev 2011).

The way Russia handles its relationship with the former Soviet states also highlights its fear to lose its control over the regions which once belonged to it as a part, and also its desperation to regain the earlier lost power status. During the 1990s, Russia not only faced an economic downfall but also its cultural footing in the former Soviet regions. The use of Russian language became a highly politicised issue. Russia's use of hard power resources to make the post Soviet regions comply with the interests of Russia only led to

states going farther away from their zone of control. The constant attempt by Moscow to make the countries comply with Russian interests created a negative image of Russia and thus Moscow was perceived by these countries as “a bully on the block”. During the 1990s Russia not only faced internal problems, it slowly lost its former dominant position in the region as well as the confidence of its neighbours. Countries that were not totally dependent on Russia and were comparatively more stable like the Baltic States, Ukraine, Georgia and Azerbaijan did not rely solely on Russia for help; instead they started tilting towards the West. However countries that were in dire need of help and aid such as Armenia, Tajikistan and Belarus stayed close to Russia and maintained close relations with it (Hill 2006).

Although Russia’s influence in some of the post-Soviet countries is fading away due to tough competition that it receives from the West, it should not resort to stiff measures in dealing with these countries. Relationships with countries should be based on free will and any country cannot be forced to become another country’s ally without their consent. Likewise while dealing with countries such as Georgia or Ukraine Russia should not look for ways to prevent these countries to defect to the West. It should rather reach out to the people directly and should look for measures that would attract them, especially through the creation of healthy business and working environment as well as good opportunities for students (Trenin 2009). Russia’s modernisation program should not be limited to technology or economy but it also requires an overall socio-political change and improvement as its top priority. Russia’s most important partner for modernisation is European Union due to its proximity and its European roots. According to the 2005 EU-Russian Agreement, the four areas of cooperation between them were defined as economics, justice and internal security, cultural and human contacts, and external relations. Russia should make the most of this cooperation and with sincere dedication it can benefit from it and can also create a common European economic space with the EU, without having to join or become the member of EU (Ibid).

The relationship that Russia shares with Ukraine is a more complex one from the point of view of soft power. Russia has historical, cultural and economic connections with Ukraine and this makes Russia’s chances for having a great influence in this region, yet

the conflict between the two countries cannot be overlooked. From the cultural angle, language and religion act as the binding factor between the two countries. Both the countries belong to the Eastern division of Slavic languages.²² Due to the common history of the two countries, a vast majority of Ukraine's population has a good command over Russian language. This can also be understood due to the fact that there was mass migration of Russians to Ukraine in the 20th century and also because under the Soviet Union learning Russian language was mandatory. Huge population of Ukraine belong to Orthodox Christianity and until the year 2014, most of the people belonging to this faith went to churches subordinate to the Moscow Patriarchate. Economically, both Russia and Ukraine are dependent on each other in many ways. Many industries of Ukraine are dependent on Russian investments, while the oligarchs, business men and politically associated people of Ukraine have their big business in Russia. Some of the Ukrainian oligarchs that are strongly associated with Russia own media houses that naturally advocate a pro Russian stand and project Russia in a positive light. Rinat Akhmetov, richest man in Ukraine owns TV channel *Ukraina* and newspaper *Segodnya*, and both these media outlets are known for their pro-Russian stance (Kozak 2015).

The Russian compatriots living abroad are one of the important sources of Russian soft power abroad. Almost 30 million Russian compatriots live abroad. They are the bearer of Russian culture across various regions. They spread Russian values, language and aid in strengthening humanitarian ties between Russia and other countries. Therefore it becomes important and imperative for Russian authorities to keep the spirit of Russianness alive in them. To this end, Rossotrudnichestvo dedicates itself to organising events that would keep alive the connection between Russia and their compatriots abroad. The events usually focus on themes such as “National Unity Day, Russia language Day” and on such days they organise sports tournament, art competitions and celebrate other themes and events memorable to Russian cultural history (Rossoatrudnichestvo, rs.gov.ru). This way the Russian authorities keep the compatriots rooted to Russian culture and history and in turn they spread the seeds of Russian culture and values

²² The East Slavic languages are currently spoken in Eastern Europe and it outnumbers the Western and Southern Slavic sections of the Slavic language. These languages have a common origin and they use the same script. Belarusian, Russian and Ukrainian are the East Slavic languages (Sussex and Cubberly 2006).

wherever they go. One such event known as “Hello Russia” organises competition on Russian cultural history and language among the young compatriots living abroad. About a thousand winners get a free education trip to Russia’s Moscow, Kazan and St. Petersburg. Apart from keeping the compatriots closely knit to the Russian culture, Rossotrudnichestvo along with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation bring forth their importance by providing them with protection of their rights and interest (Ibid).

Russia sees the post Soviet states as a zone where it enjoys “privileged sphere of influence” (Cooley 2017). While this can be seen as a reason for Russia to expect a greater level of soft power display in these regions, its overconfidence and overbearing nature can be counterproductive for it. This is understood by the West and it tries to use this against Russia by supporting countries that would not want to be under the influence of Russia’s soft or hard power. However interference of the Western countries is not tolerated by Russia and like in the case of the Western inspired Euromaidan protests, it is often seen as undermining Russia’s ‘privileged’ interests in its near abroad. Territorial conflicts especially on ethnic lines have often been used by Russia as a gateway to entering these regions and creating a zone of influence over them. Whether it is in the case of Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia or Azerbaijan there have been territorial conflicts and ethnic divisions between the sovereign state and the breakaway region, and the latter is often supported by Russia. However many a times Russia even resorts to the use of hard power while displaying its support thus undermining the soft power that it had created by exerting its influence in the Eurasian region (Ibid).

Russia’s influence in the Central Asian region is quite advantageous for it with regard to its soft power ambitions. Russia’s durability of soft power in its five former Soviet republics is also because of the fact that these countries have been an integral part of Russia since the late nineteenth century. Therefore Russia enjoys a strong hold of its language and culture in these regions as many of these countries speak Russian and also are accustomed to the Russian way of life. Another binding factor has also been the fact that there are millions of ethnic Russians living there. Many Central Asians also come to Russia in search of greater opportunities and work. Russian news channels have reached

the television of these countries and they promote pro Kremlin views. According to Prof Alikber Alikberov, Deputy Director of Institute of Oriental Studies of Russian Academy of Sciences, scientific resource usage has become very slow after the disintegration. Therefore Russia now is trying to regain the scientific cooperation and economic integration with the post –Soviet states especially focusing on new technologies. He believes that soft power is good for cooperation between Russia and other countries. However Russia is mindful to keep a check on actions where any other country tries to increase its influence in Russia's area of interest, especially in the former Soviet countries, for their ulterior motives. In such a case Russia has its own way of balancing the scenario. For Example, China's increasing influence in Central Asian region makes Russia support India on various occasions (Interview 2, Prof. A. Alikberov 2018).

According to Professor Alikberov, for Russia to regain its influence in the Central Asian region it needs to understand the influence of Western principles on this area and accordingly it should try to create new programmes and schemes that would be attractive for this region. He states that education is one of the key instruments of soft power for Russia. Programmes such as 'summer school exchanges' as well as PhD programmes are very important ways of gaining influence according to Prof Alikber. He goes further to opine that higher education has always been an effective way of maintaining close inters relationship between countries. This is so because it leads to a deeper understanding of various policies, actions, relationships, international issues and common measures to solve them. He gives an example stating, that the final declaration of a PhD programme is joint for Russia and some other countries like Kyrgyzstan which is an efficient way of fostering and maintaining ties with those countries. Both the countries involved can benefit from each other in various other matters. This can be explained further with the help of another example stated by Prof Alikber, that the level of Kyrgyztan scholarship as a result of such ties is higher than other Central Asian countries that do not share such kind of relations with Russia. Other than these, he states that books exchange programmes, creating international journals, joint publications of research work are all important for re-establishing economic as well as cultural ties (Interview 2 2018).

While Russia's soft power has been most effective in its near abroad region due to historical and cultural affinities, the over confidence with regard to handling this region at times represents Russia as a 'big brother' to these countries. This big brotherly treatment of Russia highlights its soft power in this region as its 'great power projection'. By applying this kind of 'Russo centric hegemony' in its near abroad, Russia is able to gain the desired results but without the consent of the people. The display of this "imperial ambition" of Russia in the region that it considers as its 'sphere of privileged interest' does not work favourably towards Russia's soft power; rather it creates an environment of distrust in which Russia is bound to lose its hegemony in the long run. Russia's soft power in this region based on "unsolved territorial disputes" does not create a suitable condition for its budding soft power aspirations (Hung Le 2016).

Due to Russia's overtly ambitious attitude while handling relations with the near abroad region, it has started to lose the trust of even those countries that have otherwise been sympathetic towards it. This can be clearly understood by the way Kazakhstan has reacted recently with regard to the matters concerning Russia's too strong foothold in its area. In 2016, there has been an arrest of prominent pro-Russian Kazak businessman by the Kazak authorities, and there has also been the passing of a law that forbids advertisements in foreign television channels and thus restricting Russian language channels in the country (Ibid).

Nevertheless Russia continues to make its presence felt in this region through various projects and providing aid and assistance to its "Near Abroad" regions has been its primary focus. Russia's this endeavour is highlighted in its programme of International Development Assistance (IDA) The state policy of Russia in this field seeks to provide "sustainable social and economic development" of the beneficiary countries and to aim them with assistance and provide provisions for handling crisis situations as a result of "natural disasters, man-made disasters and other emergencies". The Concept of State Policy of the Russian Federation highlights the aims and objectives IDA which was approved by the Presidential Decree No 259 on 20 April 2014. Russia's Rossotrudnichestvo carries forward the task of IDA through the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No 476 dated 8 May 2013. Although the main focus of

Rossotrudnichestvo is the CIS region, it has also started to expand its span of assistance to the Sub-Saharan countries of Africa, some of the poorest countries of the Asia-Pacific region and seeks to achieve cooperation in the issue of development with the Middle East, North Africa and Latin America. By making its presence felt in these countries, Russia seeks to acquire a positive image as a country that not only aims in providing technical and scientific expertise to the recipient countries but also seeks to bring about a development of the “institutional and human capacities of the partner states” (Rossotrudnichestvo (IDA), rs.gov.ru).

4.4. AN OVERALL ASSESMENT OF RUSSIA’S SOFT POWER BUILDING EFFORTS

Russia’s efforts in boosting its soft power have been outstanding but it is slowly taking its shape through the policies and measures undertaken by the government. Although as Nye mentions time and again that soft power is more effective when there is less government involvement, in Russia the government has to indulge in this activity because it acts as an important head in all the other matters too. Nevertheless there have been various views emerging with regard to handling Russia’s soft power. If all the proficient views are taken into consideration irrespective of whether it coincides with the State view or not, there can be a good end result to the way soft power can be pursued in Russia. The two emerging views that are not totally analogous to each other but highlight Russia’s radical views include, first, that soft power has little significance without hard power, and second, it views Western (especially American) soft power as almost all powerful and able to achieve great results even without applying hard power (Kozak 2015).

The first view highlights the role of hard power even when it is talking about soft power and renders the latter as worthless without the former. This view portrays the traditional, hard core realist view and explains the present state of soft power that lacks progress because it is not given much credence compared to hard power. The second view by highlighting the success and importance of American soft power tries to bring Russia’s attention to the neglected area of soft power. Although it is true that Russia’s soft power has not reached the level of Western countries’ standards and is still taking its baby steps, it should be noted that both the views do not express the true nature of a country’s

success in the world. Soft power is an essential element in Russia's path to success but it is not the sole factor. For any country to achieve success, it has to look into both its soft as well as hard power aspects. However it remains true that Russia's soft power has not achieved the level of importance that the hard power has received and therefore at present soft power deserves greater achievement so as to balance the elements of Russia's success in international politics.

There have been various attempts by the scholars and publicists of Russia to challenge the restrictive and conservative views on soft power that are enrooted in the Russian society. While Sergey Karaganov, a professor at the Moscow Higher School of Economics criticises the Russian government for its failure to modernise as well as its preference for hard power over soft power; Andrey Tsygankov, a leading Russian IR scholar believes in Russia's repugnance to the unipolar world and also proposes to establish a Russian school of International Relations that would act as a tool of soft power in counteracting the prevailing American realism and liberalism (Ibid).

The policy makers in Russia view soft power as a western construct and also view it with suspicion at times with Cold War rhetoric of 'ideological warfare', and therefore it has to retort to it somehow. This is the reason Makarychev (2011) observes, has made Russia's first steps in the soft power terrain blatantly 'imitative and reactive' both in form and in substance (Makarychev 2011:3). For the policy makers the stereotypes associated with Russia especially in the Western countries are of main concern and they feel that this leads to distortion of Russia's image in the West and ultimately leading to negative perception of its image by other countries. However it is also true that criticisms from the West can be helpful in improving Russia's image if the leaders start looking for ways to resolve Russia's quest for soft power with whatever resources and capabilities they possess. There are differences of opinion with regard to the way soft power is viewed by Russians. The former head of The Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation, known as *Rossotrudnichestvo*, Konstantin Kosachev believes in the idea of Nye's soft power and stated that Russia's image should also be "naturally attractive". However for a country to become naturally attractive it has to follow a lot of standards.

Many countries are more familiar with the Western version of democracy and Russia does not quite fit into that model. Therefore while Konstantin Kosachev believes that Russia should focus on attraction that comes naturally he also feels that values such as democracy that are important for soft power cannot be narrowed down to just Western democracy. It cannot be patently applied to countries like Russia which is different from the West historically as well as culturally. He believes that Western democracy cannot be suitable for all and that alternate versions of democracy depending on the specific countries should be acceptable (Kiseleva 2015).

Although soft power deals with the foreign policy aspect of Russia, it depends a lot on the domestic policies of a given country. Hence, the politics that Russia adopts at home shapes how it is viewed by others abroad. While the Western countries have been very critical of the Russian policies at home and abroad, there are many Russians who seem satisfied with the functioning of the Russian government. The dissatisfaction of Russians does not get highlighted much as opposition in Russia has not been able to make a strong voice there; making very little space for dissent. This is where they face harsh criticism from the West. However Prof Eugenia Vanina of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences mentions about various domestic policies, that otherwise have not been featured much by the Western media. These include- policy on maternity as well as a policy on pension, which according to her have helped the people a lot. She mentions that Putin also lays a lot of emphasis on sports and co-curricular activities. She states that Putin has time and again shown concerns for the health of the younger generation as well as the older ones. While even the old aged people are advised to join swimming or dancing classes, Putin is really keen about forming a comprehensive plan regarding physical education for the youth. He is highly inspired by the earlier Soviet training programme for physical education. Sports were highly encouraged during that period and even various sports schools had opened to train the youth for events such as the Olympics (Interview 1, Prof. Eugenia Vanina 2018).

The childcare facilities provided in Moscow are striving to be of high standard contrary to what the case was earlier. This probably could be because of the demographic crisis that Russia has been undergoing. However the pension policy of Putin that has decided to

raise the pension age for men and women met with protests by thousands of people who are dissatisfied with the concessions made by him. The Levada Centre polls suggest that this measure of Putin even led to the fall in his approval rating by ten percent. Russia's retirement age is very low compared to so many other countries. In Russia it is 55 for women and 60 for men, whereas in other Western countries it is five or ten times higher compared to it (Reuters 2018). Low retirement age has been costing the government a lot and Putin has expressed his unwillingness to raise the age but has given reasons that the financial situation of the country demands for it. How far the scheme will go and how it will affect things at home will certainly have an impact in image of Russia abroad.

During the Soviet days, many countries such as Cuba, Afghanistan, the Middle East and Africa tried to maintain associations with the Soviet Union because of its potential for trade, infrastructure subsidies and technical assistance, and training and education programmes in the Soviet Universities. However the benefits that these countries enjoyed out of these facilities provided by Soviet Union were often overshadowed by its use of hard power through the possibility of larger arms transfer and the utter stubbornness of Soviet military power forced upon those regions. For Russia to gain the support of countries in the world, it should focus on its culture and this is mostly possible in the CIS rather than in other parts of the world. This is so because in the CIS, Russia can claim its linguistic and other nostalgic past ties with them from the Soviet period. However when it comes to other regions of the world, the same card cannot be played. Russia will have to focus on improving its political and social values apart from working on promoting its culture abroad. According to Fiona Hill (2006) oil will continue to play a significant role in underpinning Russia's economy and domestic stability. Hill goes further to state that it is 'oil' that will to a certain extent help in regaining Russia's lost superpower status, at least as an 'energy superpower'. Hence according to her Russia's 'oil power' holds a great potential in improving its economic and political influence in the world and thus also aiming gaining its soft power resources (Hill 2006).

In understanding Russia's influence in countries that were its close supporter even during the Soviet period, we see a certain kind of similarities like in the case of Russia and India. The friendship that Soviet Union and India shared was incomprehensible. Both the

countries stood by each other during difficult as well as good times. The influence of Soviet Union over Russia is noteworthy. An excellent example of Soviet Union's source of soft power is the case of India is the case of literature. Many writers have been influenced by the socialist realist literature and poetry of Soviet Union. D.Selveraj, of Tamil Nadu, India has been one such writer. His novel 'Thol' (Hide) speaks about the travails and struggles of the Dalit Tannery workers of Dindigul in Tamil Nadu. Almost all his works highlight the plight of workers and the toiling masses and their constant struggle to change the social order (Frontline 2013).

Another example from India witnessing the soft power of Soviet Union in its socialist realist writings is the work of very renowned writer Gopalakrishnan. He spent twenty five years in Moscow, where he translated Russian writings, communist classics and propaganda. In the hot Indian summer, the readers felt the chill of the Siberian winters. They were so inspired by the writings and folktales that even though they were aware of the terror of 'Gulag', but they were too unreal for people who had been introduced to Russian affairs through its literature. Such was the power that literature of both Soviet Union and India possessed. India was therefore a fertile soil for the Soviet soft power to gain roots (Lal 2011).

Any discussion on socialist realist literature would be unfinished without mentioning the great works of Maxim Gorky. This is true even in the case of India where his writings have been explicitly appreciated and adored. Almost all his works have instilled a sense of fervour in the minds of the readers. However 'Mother' (1906) is one such notable and world famous work that made a lasting impact in the minds of the readers across the world. In India, 'Mother' has received an additional magnitude and has been translated into various Indian languages like Hindi, Punjabi, Marathi, Gujarati, Oriya, Bengali, Assamese, Tamil, Urdu and the like (Indian Literature 1968: 68-73).

Other than literature there have been other areas that have appeared very attractive to India. The two major revolutions of Russia have also influenced India deeply. However things did start to change after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Although the friendship shared by both Russia and India is still intact, the influence of Russia is no longer overpowering like it used to be during the Soviet Union days. Both Russia and

India started witnessing great changes after the 1990s and there are many similarities in their struggle during this period. The whole changing world order did affect all the countries including Russia and India. This change also speaks for the influence of Russia over India now as compared to the influence of Soviet Union over India. The changes that have taken place in international relations after the Cold War have forced countries to reconsider their foreign policies and same is true in the case of Russia and India. This change in the policies of both the countries have also changed the pattern of influence each country has on the other (Harshe 1998).

Russia and India both have entered the world of capitalism of varying degrees and kind. However the similarity between the two countries acts as a binding factor between the two countries. After the 1990s both the countries have been trying to reassert their positions in the international arena. Accordingly the two countries have tries to reclaim their position in international forums like the United Nations through mutual cooperation. Of course here Russia can raise its image in India's by supporting them in achieving the permanent membership in the Security Council. The two countries also encounter similar kinds of problems when it comes to their domestic politics, especially with regard to their federal structure. While Russia has had to continuously face problems of Chechnya, the issues related to Kashmir in India or other such sensitive areas have tried to trigger Indo-Russia ties in innumerable ways (Ibid). Therefore Russia will always remain of interest to India even though both the countries have moved on a long way post Soviet disintegration, and although Russia may not be the only ally of India it surely will continue to influence and aid India in many ways.

The partnership that Russia and India share not only builds their relationship but also work in favour of both the countries in forming a positive image in the world. Apart from contributing in national interests of both the countries, Russia and India both are responsible for maintaining stability and security in Asia and the world in general. The annual summits that both the countries hold help in building strong ties not only strategically but also helps in knowing each other and their socio-political and cultural environment. As mentioned earlier Russian culture and heritage has been of great influence in India. India's great leader Mahatma Gandhi was highly impressed by

Russian thinkers and writers. The communication that Mahatma Gandhi and Leo Tolstoy had is well known to all. Apart from Tolstoy, Mahatma Gandhi was also influenced by the writings of Maxim Gorky although it differed from that of Tolstoy. The first Russian revolution was also of great importance to India and especially Gandhi was stimulated by it. He said: “We too can resort to the Russian remedy against tyranny. The movement in Bengal for the use of *Swadeshi* goods is much like the Russian movement. Our shackles will break this very day, if the people of India become united and patient, love their country and think of the well being of their motherland...We also can show the same strength that the Russian people have done” (Chopra 2008). Such kind of appreciation was shown by Russian writers and intellectuals towards India as well. Maxim Gorky asked Shyamji Krishna Varma to write an article for ‘Russian Review’ that could act as an example for Russian democracy by highlighting the knowledge of the Indian movement for liberty and justice (Ibid).

The depth of friendship that was present between Soviet Union and India cannot be said to have continued after the 1990s but despite their different priorities and associations with new strategic and cultural partners the spark is still present which can rekindle the flames of friendship between the two countries. Russia and India have always shown keen interest in maintain their relationship and have stood by each other whenever the need has arisen. On 13 April 2017, Russia and India completed 70 years of diplomatic relations. Russia and India have joined hands in trying to solve common as well as international problems together. Recently there has been an agreement between the Stavropol State Medical University, Delhi Pharmaceutical Sciences and Research University and the Chennai International Centre for Medical Education to aid in developing affordable drugs that are competitive in the global market. These organisations seek to develop innovative ways to develop the pharmaceutical industry, reduce financial cost for the import of drugs, thus assisting local manufacturers of medicines in both countries (Aniket Chakraborty 2017).

Such joint cooperation programmes between Russia and India display the level of trust that both have for each other as well as help in improving their image in the world. India still holds Russia as a reliable partner and it demonstrates that Russia hasn't lost its

influence in India completely. This can be further understood with the decision of both Russia and India to jointly combat terrorism that have been of major concern to both the countries as well as to the rest of the world. The meeting held between Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) and Rajnath Singh, Indian Home Minister discussed this issue in great details. Prior to this meeting there had been discussions regarding countering terrorism between Ajit Doval, India's National Security Advisor and Nikolai Patrushev, Secretary of Russia's Security Council on 30 and 31 January 2017 (Nekrasov 2017).

Russia has tried to make its foreign policy more attractive to other countries by portraying its image as a country that believes in the idea of democratising the international political scene through the principle of 'multipolarity' as opposed to 'unipolarity'. This is a soft attack to the Western countries, especially the US who try to dominate the international arena. Russia tries to use this as a soft power to attract the support of various other countries that have also projected themselves 'as alternatives to the domination of the West' including China, India, Brazil, Venezuela, Iran, and Turkey (Makarychev 2011). By acting as the primary bearer of Eurasian civilisation and stressing on its spiritual nature, Russia tries to portray to the world its image as one that is opposed to Western materialism and in doing that it also tries to divert the attention of the world from its economic failures (Tomusk 2004).

The educational exchange programs have also been quite noteworthy that definitely add to Russia's soft power goals. Most of the international students who enrol in Russian universities are from the former Soviet regions and China. According to a survey in the year 2013, among the developed countries, it is the United States that has been the most represented country in Russian universities. However the number has not exceeded more than approximately 2000. This is followed by Germany, France and Japan with 1300, 850 and 700 students approximately (Dolinsky 2013: 12-15). Apart from the CIS regions, students from India, Mongolia, Vietnam, Malaysia and Myanmar also come to Russia in good numbers. The increase in the number of reservations for the students from the foreign nationals has been due the rise in need for "training specialists for foreign countries in Russia". Resolution number 891 drafted by the government has furthered the cause of cultural cooperation and also to implement the State Migration Policy Concept

until 2025. Apart from education schemes in the university levels, there have been policies that have focussed on the training of foreign students in Russian schools under the outline of state needs for the condition of government work at the cost of federal budget (Ministry of Education and Science, Russian Government 2013).

Judging from the fact that the higher education sector of Russia suffered a great degree of loss both in terms of its quality as well as its financial aspect after the disintegration period, and knowing that it continued to struggle and fight for its survival especially amidst the ordeal of national and cultural identity crisis is quite laudable. Russia has been striving hard for improving its educational sector and to make it attractive to other countries, especially in its near abroad as well as in Europe. According to Prof Sadovnichy of Moscow State University Russia's educational sector does not just strive to become equal to educational sectors of other countries; it is just not enough. He also opposed the participation of Russia in the process of forming the 'European Higher Education Area' by arguing that this act "would equal a brain surgery where Russia would be attributed the role of an organ donor"; implying that it would not be as beneficial to Russia as much as it would be to others although Russia would be a major part in it (Tomusk 2004:447).

Russia through the help of education can focus on handling the domain of public policy in a diverse and improved way. According to Sanjay Rajhans, a faculty at the Department of Public Policy of Higher School of Economics (Moscow), public policy is gaining importance in Russia and the department of Public Policy at HSE, commits to raise its importance for the better handling of public issues. He states that the students of School of Political Science, HSE often participate in activities that make them more aware about the political systems of their own country as well as that of others. There have been various instances where students have been given opportunities by the institutions. An example of Rajhans' statement would be the first CELAC-Russia' Youth Forum (CELAC, is the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States), where students participated. Events like these have helped in strengthening not just regional cooperation between countries but also in understanding the challenges to the political, social as well as economic systems of various countries. This would further aid in the awareness of the

youth of Russia towards a sustainable and stable development of their country. Human rights is another key area where HSE has shown keen interest and has always encouraged their students to participate in activities such as that involving women rights and violence. To that endeavour, HSE also seeks to offer courses on human rights in non-Western countries (Interview 4, Rajhnas 2017).

However despite the great ambitions of Russians for achieving a high status in higher education among other countries, the fact is very far from this state. According to Tomusk (2004) the Russian higher education lacks “critical self-reflection”. This implies that it requires change in many ways but very little is done towards achieving that end. There is a problem of major public sector funding. The future of students pursuing higher education remains bleak. The students in order to have a satisfying career in foreign services or commerce need to study in the most prestigious Moscow institutions like the ‘Moscow State Institute of International Relations’, and for that they need to pay extremely high fees. The universities have also done very little in improving the living conditions of the students (Ibid 2004).

The multi-ethnic nature of Russia urges it to construct an identity that would highlight this feature of Russia to the rest of the world by offering ‘a romantic frame’ for it. To this end, Russia has worked on formulating a version of cultural studies called *Kulturologija*. It is a compulsory discipline and it aims to replace the ideological discipline (Tomusk 2004:445). In the quest for achieving their soft power goals, the Russian authorities have started taking baby steps. The establishment of ‘Positive Russian Foundation’ in London aims for building a positive image in the Great Britain. Such organisations that aim to improve the image of Russia abroad as well as other initiatives taken by the country through public relations

While Russia has been engaging in a lot of activities that would aid in its soft power strategy, its involvement in few affairs of international politics may not be adding to its positive image in few countries. According to the Pew Research Centre survey regarding Russia’s image and support in the world, neither Russia nor its leader scored good results. Russia’s support for the Bashar al- Assad regime in Syria has weakened its image in Jordan as it recorded almost 80 percent of negative sentiment for Russia. Poland also

shared the same sentiment with 80 percent of the people showing their dislike for Russia. With Poland, Russia has had a strong history of bilateral tension and that in itself explains such a negative response. The survey also showed that a median of only 24 percent in the countries surveyed have confidence in Putin. Countries like Israel, Japan, Germany and France also displayed negative opinion about Russia with 74 percent, 73 percent, 70 percent and 70 percent respectively. However according to the same survey, the greatest support for Russia come from Vietnam (75 percent), followed by Ghana (56 percent) and China (51 percent). It is also worth noting that in 2010 almost half of Germans viewed Russia favourably but in 2015, only 27 percent hold such views, according to the same survey (Stokes 2015).

The survey highlights the fact that Russia's image in the world has not been so great due to many circumstances and past activities. The past still seems to haunt the present state of affairs in Russia and the countries that have suffered under or during the Soviet rule have deep scars that will take a long time to heal. At present the high percent of negative responses have mostly come from either the Western countries or the ones who have close ties with them. The greatest support for Russia has come from Vietnam, Ghana and China, according to the above mentioned survey. What is worth mentioning is the 75 percent support shown by Vietnam. The Vietnam-Russia relations may not gain a lot of world attention but it has been strengthening in the recent years. The newly appointed Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc's visit to Russia is of great significance to Russia. In 2013, President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev had also paid visit to Hanoi (Asia Times 2016). However the economic ties still remain very weak. According to the Vietnamese statistics in 2015, bilateral trade between Vietnam and Russia was about four billion dollars. If we look at Vietnam's trade with its top five trading partners, such as, China (over 66 billion dollars), Association of South East Asian Nation-ASEAN (42.1 billion dollars), United States (41.5 billion dollars), European Union (41.2 billion dollars), and South Korea (36.7 billion dollars), the bilateral trade Russia has with Vietnam is insignificant (Ibid).

Although the economic ties have not been very weak, the cultural and political relationship that Russia shares with Vietnam is a strong and time tested one. The

friendship between the two countries dates back to the Soviet era. During the two decades war between Vietnam and US as well as its conflict with China in the 1970s and 1980s, Russia has been Vietnam's main ideological, political, military and economic supporter. Russia's improved relations with Vietnam also acts like a gateway to ASEAN countries. Russia can thus go forward with its goal of having a strong influence in the South East Asian region, where it faces a tough competition from big power countries like China and United States (Ibid). Although Russia faces competition from both US and China, its relationship with US has an obvious competitor and rival image, whereas in the case of China, competition is present but is not very conspicuous in the present international relations. China has always been very careful when it comes to taking stands for various countries and hence on this line the friendship shared by Russia and China is also a complex one. Many scholars in the West debate on the nature of Chinese-Russian partnership and whether it will lead to any kind of alliance in the future. There are basically two kinds of view with regard to Chinese-Russian relationship in the West. The first view is that the relationship is quite weak and fraught with uncertainties and insecurities, which lessen the chances of them bonding strongly; instead the two countries, might go farther away from one another. The other view however sees the Chinese-Russian relationship as formed on the basis of ideological and strategic ties, and that they both view US as an obstacle in achieving their goals. This might land the two countries in some kind of anti-Western alliance (Ying 2016).

However Fu Ying (2016) believes that neither of the above view understands the actual pattern of their relationship. Ying believes that the two countries have only been brought closer by the changes in the international systems after the Cold War. She states that although they have been growing their ties, China has no interest in either forming an alliance with Russia or in forming an anti-US or anti-Western bloc. Ying goes forward to state that China aims to have a good relationship with Russia to form a 'safe environment' for both the countries to achieve their respective development goals (Ibid). Although China has differences in view with the other countries of the world and some similarities in the views sometimes but it knows where it has to draw the line when it comes to making or breaking ties. It becomes neither too close to any country nor does it aims in having estranged view with any of the country when its aiming for certain goals.

However that doesn't mean that China is often ready for compromises. It believes in playing cautious but also will not tolerate when any countries crosses its line.

Ying (2016) states that while Russia tries to favour 'strong, active, and often surprising diplomatic styles, Chinese diplomacy is more 'reactive and cautious'. However despite the differences in their style of handling international affairs, it stands totally justified that the cooperation between the two countries has been mutually benefitting and that Russia's image in China is not bad after all like in the Western countries. In fact China trusts Russia in carrying out projects together, and they have been cooperating on various new multi-national financial institutions, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the New Development Bank BRICS, and the BRICS foreign exchange reserve pool (Ying 2016).

For all the BRICS countries, BRICS as an association has helped them to come up with various projects and initiatives that would have been difficult to achieve on their own. The cooperation that exists between the members paves the way for great success for each of these countries, and all the members have their important contribution and roles that help in carrying forward with the goals of this organisation as well as in shaping a positive and attractive image in the world. Russia is an important member of this group and by assessing its role in the organisation we can get a picture of Russia's position and image not only among the BRICS members but also in the rest of the world. While dealing with the international affairs Russia has to keep in mind that its role is partly European, partly Asian and that it is a BRICS member, making it imperative for the policy makers of Russia to work in diverse groupings (Stuenkel 2013). Russian Ambassador to Brazil Sergey Akopov sees great potential in BRICS and believes that it has wide ranging scope in areas such as reforming the international financial order, science and technology, education and also trade in the near future. He goes further to state that Russia remains 'a pragmatic and at times a visionary member' of the BRICS. He states the relations between Russia and Brazil as an example whereby in 2008, the bilateral meeting between Russian leader Medvedev and the then Brazil President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, led to great results. The success of this bilateral meeting is in the fact that the two countries could get a deal involving the signing of 'a visa-waiver

agreement' that would allow an easy flow of tourists between the two countries by doing away with the trouble of applying for a visa. Sergey Akopov also stated that Russia aims to institute similar agreements with other BRICS members too (Ibid).

Although Russia's zone of interest is seen to be its former Soviet republics (near abroad) and Europe, the Asia Pacific region as a whole is becoming its target in the aspect of both hard and soft power. Russia's Federal Agency for Tourism, *Rostourism*, is an effective soft power instrument and it is dedicated towards attracting many tourists to Russia from various parts of the world, especially the Asia Pacific region. Towards fulfilling this end, *Rostourism* has already started implementing the Russian hospitality program, which includes such projects as China Friendly, Halal Friendly and India Friendly (TASS 2016). These initiatives taken by *Rostourism* cover a wide range of tourists and it can be of great benefit to Russia's economy, which in turn helps in making the country more stable and it can divert more funds towards achieving its soft power and public diplomacy goals.

4.5. CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS TO RUSSIA'S SOFT POWER

The disintegration of the Soviet Union affected Russia's image in the world. Not only did it lose its dominant position in terms of the economic and political standpoint, it no longer became an alternate power opposite to the United States in terms of its soft power. It was Yeltsin who proceeded with the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The decline of Russia's soft power and the disintegration of the Soviet Union worked concurrently. It can be said that the seeds of the decline of soft power can be seen in the early Soviet period but it became more patent in the later Soviet period while its disintegration added fuel to the already burning fire. Hence, it can be said that the decline of Russia's soft power is linked to the economic, social and political factors that was going on during the Soviet period and after the disintegration of the Soviet Union the decline of soft power reached its heights as the main source of its soft power was its socialist ideology. Hence, when the ideology of the Soviet Union was lost with the collapse of the Soviet Union, it lost its identity for a while because for seventy four years, the Soviet Union had been a socialist state. It therefore becomes necessary to understand the causes of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and simultaneously the causes leading to the decline of

soft power of Russia. Overcoming the setback of disintegration of the Soviet Union stands as one of the greatest challenges to Russia in its soft power building efforts.

Russia was not doing well enough even in the 1980s and its economy had become very weak by then. Therefore in the early 1990s, Russia lost almost 40 percent of its production capacity. Russia still imports a huge percent of the goods and food products that it consumes. The liberalisation and privatisation programme did affect the whole country very badly. Although the proponents of such a programme did talk about the benefits it was trying to bring and the changes that were coming about, it can be noted that the changes or progress it brought with it is negated by the loss that Russia had to face. According to Viktor Pelevin, a writer, the argument that they put forth about the percentage of Russia's housing with running water that increased from 66 percent to 73 percent since 1993 does not quite depict the picture of an improved Russia in terms of its housing conditions; it rather falls flat in front of the side effects of depopulation of large areas in Siberia and the far North. During the period between 1986 and 1994, the life expectancy of Russia fell from more than 70 years to 64 years, which is a loss of fifteen million lives. Viktor Pelevin uses literature as a medium to ascertain the impiety that privatisation brings with itself (Tomusk 2004).

It was during the 1970s that the access to Western consumer goods started becoming more rampant and it slowly started wearing away the lifestyle of Soviet Union. The ability to consume foreign goods started determining the hierarchical positions of individuals in the Soviet society (Tomusk 2004). The disintegration came as a loss and pain for those who believed in the ideals of equality and were against poverty, oppression and Capitalist exploitation (Keeran and Kenny 2010: 491-520). Russia was in the middle of nowhere, as it had neither fully acquired the status of a proper democratic country and a market economy and nor was it following the earlier ideology. The decline of Russia's soft power is therefore also connected to its socialist ideology. The beginning of de-ideologization had its roots in the Soviet period and to a certain extent did accelerate the disintegration of the Soviet Union. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the de-ideologization process reached its logical end.

Although Russia's economy is growing it still is tiny compared to other big powers, with GDP in 2003 expected to total 387 billion dollars at market exchange rates which is roughly the economic size of New Jersey. In Russia's quest to become a great power again, its chief priority as well as its major challenge will remain its modernisation process and economic rejuvenation. This is so because it is only with a strong and stable economy and a modern socio-political system that Russia will have initiatives to maintain productive partnerships with the government of the world's richest and most influential states. Russia understands that to a large extent its revival depends on its domestic affairs and that by creating an environment of proper political and social values it can not only achieve modernisation but also raise its soft power. Along with the improvement in the domestic affairs of Russia, there should also be an attempt to strengthen their ties with other countries as too much tension in relations with the other major powers may have a negative spill over on a range of international economic matters where their support is crucial. And what Russia requires at the moment is to strengthen and stabilise its economy and political values. The act of balancing the world with Russia on the one side and the Western countries and especially the US on the other is out of context (Wohlforth 2003).

The lack of democratic practices and policies in Russia acts as a hindrance in its soft power. The disintegration of the Soviet Union was expected to bring democratic ideals in Russia in all the socio-economic and political fields. However Yeltsin turned Russia into a failed experiment and made it an example for the other developing countries. He got rid of the Socialist ideology as it stood as a hindrance on his journey towards capitalism. Yeltsin's claim to bring about democracy in Russia was far from becoming a reality. The very fact that his practices were not any close to democracy made the task even more difficult. In fact the democratic principles were present during Lenin and Trotsky's time but it started declining after Lenin's death in 1924. Soviet Union thus started losing its charm and slowly the attraction for market started rising. With the reform of Gorbachev turning the tables in favour of market economy, Yeltsin took advantage of the situation to bring about a complete transformation. He started with a strong support for independence. However this is contradicted by his action in the year 1994, only three

years after coming to power, he stood firm against the national revolt in Chechnya by sending troops to crush the movement (Doyle 2007).

Therefore many Russians are of the view that it was under Boris Yeltsin that the devaluation of the idea of democracy took place thus resulting in the poor standing of Russia in global affairs. Russia of the 1990s period is therefore described by some as 'anocracy' rather than democracy. Under Vladimir Putin, Russia has shown some signs of growth, although it has not evolved as a proper democratic country if measured by the Western standards. Under him, however it became a quasi-democracy with some definite overbearing qualities (Rukavishnikov 2012: 9- 18).

The economy also crumbled and thus emerged a weak country that lacked political values and an attractive economy. On the one hand, Russia lost its ideology which was its source of attraction and on the other it did not emerge as a country with true political values. The West encouraged the transformation and the de-ideologisation process but after it happened it abandoned Russia. Now they weigh it in terms of the Western liberal values and claim that Russia is nowhere close to it.

In a survey that was conducted in Russia about the earlier Soviet system, the most valued feature of Soviet rule was 'job security' and up to 29 per cent people voted in favour of it. This was followed by 'peace between nationalities' (24 percent) and economic stability (22 percent). When asked about the most detestable feature of the Soviet rule, the votes of the people clearly highlighted that it was 'too much of bureaucratization', and almost 32 percent of the people voted for it. Other findings of the research show that people lacked confidence and trust in the newly formed civic institutions including the parliaments, the trade unions more than the leading bodies inherited from the earlier system or their corresponding Soviet counterpart. This survey does highlight some degrees of yearning for Soviet system, although not in majority but more importantly what it clearly highlights is the decline in the level of trust in the institutions of Russia, that included the Church, the armed forces which usually had experienced the greatest public confidence (White 2002: 37-41).

Makarychev (2011) raises two big challenges faced by Russia to achieve its soft power. First, Russia's sceptical attitude towards the notion of 'human security' hinders Russia's growth of soft power as it shows Moscow's unwillingness to engage in matters concerning the normative issues. Russia refutes the notion of human security as being unnecessary and a policy propagated by the West. Second, Russia's disinterest in joining the international normative mechanism that aims at promoting economic transparency and financial accountability. This feature Makarychev states is essential from the European perspective. Such un-progressive attitude on part of Russia clearly acts as a big challenge and goes against the basic tenets of soft power, thus rendering the country as unattractive to many progressive countries in the world (Makarychev 2011).

One of the major challenges that Russia faces is also from the fact that it could not find a right way to have a strong hold on the CIS. In fact the Commonwealth of Independent States itself is a weak structure. It remains one of the biggest but it does not remain the 'only political focus of the post-Soviet space'. Countries like Ukraine, Georgia, Uzbekistan, and Moldova have often criticised or have condemned the CIS projects as being Moscow-Minsk centred. Basically in the eyes of the post-Soviet countries as well as the Western countries, Russia appears like a big brother trying to control the region but mostly focusing on its own development. It was by the mid of 2000 only that cracks started developing in the CIS. It started to weaken from within and resulted in the end of summits in the CIS format. This is seen in the way Council of CIS Defence Ministers and the formal abolition of the Staff for Coordination of the CIS Military Cooperation have been paralysed in their functioning. There have also been conflicts arising between the CIS and certain group of countries, for example, the Baltic States versus CIS, Guam versus Collective Security Treaty Organisation and the like. The problem with Russia and the CIS is also due to their vague border settlement. During the collapse of the Soviet Union only sixteen percent of borders between its former republics had been demarcated and delineated on the ground. The remaining borders were just "pencil borders" or lines on maps. This is the reason why none of the Newly Independent States including Russia for quite some time was not able to have an effective control over their borders (Nikitin 2008:12-13).

The colour revolutions in Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgystan have also acted as an impediment in Russia's efforts in building its soft power image. These revolutions have weakened the already feeble 'post Soviet space'. This is so because these revolutions through wide public revolts change of elites and political orientations of the countries have developed an anti-post Soviet character. The colour revolutions in the case of Georgia and Ukraine have portrayed Russia negatively especially in the Western world resulting in a direct break or at least limiting their relations with Moscow. However Alexander Nikitin (2008) believes that the pro-West attitude displayed by these countries is not the result of the colour revolutions but instead it is because of the accumulation of pent up frustrations that the countries have held over the course of time (Ibid).

While Russia struggles to build its soft power in the post Soviet states by laying emphasis on their common culture, language and religion, the fear of Western influence in these regions often makes Russia act in a defensive manner. Thus the earlier mentioned binding cultural factors are often not enough to fight Russia's coercive image. Therefore it can be said that the West also acts as a hindrance in Russia's soft power ambitions. It is true that soft power of Russia depends on its own actions but when it comes to competition with the West, Russia loses its credibility in the post Soviet regions where Russia does not tolerate interferences from the Western countries. Russia's soft power in the other regions of the world is not just dependent on common cultural factors. Its influence in the world is measured by the way it has been able to make its country attractive mostly through its exchange programmes, education, cinema or even ballet and sports (Kiseleva 2015). However Russia's attraction is also dependent on how the world perceives Russia. Due to the wide reach of Western media, the image of Russia as portrayed by the Western media also matters to a great extent. Shaping of Russia's identity in the world is therefore also dependent on how the West perceives Russia. Russia's soft power in the West stands important due to hegemony the latter enjoys over various countries in the world. As stated by Yulia Kiseleva (2015) that for Russia to gain the international status it has been waiting for, recognition from the hegemonic West remains important. To obtain recognition from the West, Russia has to abide by the rules and criteria of the Western standards of soft power.

With regard to Russian notions about soft power, various opinions are present within the country. The Foreign Minister of Russia, Sergey Lavrov defined soft power as “the ability to influence the world with the attraction of one’s civilisation, culture, foreign policy” (Kiseleva 2015). He opines that for a country to be attractive there must be a strong civil society, participation in international aid programmes, as well as improvement and success in health care and education. There is a great gap in theory and practice with regard to Russia understanding of soft power. Although Russia differs from the West in many ways and its values differ too but even the basic criterion of soft power, that is attraction without much state interference and use of coercion is often compromised. The policy makers in Russia are of the opinion that one of the great obstacles to Russia’s soft power is the way in which the Western leaders have intentionally made attempts to “discredit Russia as a powerful geopolitical rival” (Ibid). However the constant criticism that Russia faces from the West makes Russia believe it to be a great power which acts as a threat and challenge to Western and especially hegemony (Ibid).

The challenge that Russia faces in building its soft power also comes from the external influences in the zone of Russia’s interest. Russia sees the influence of other countries in its ‘near abroad’ as “out of region actors” and regards them as being “unfriendly, potentially dangerous or interfering with the interests of major regional players”, which essentially meant contradicting the interest of Russia in the region (Nikitin 2008). It is in circumstances like these that a real test of Russia’s soft power can be actually seen. Russia’s influence over these regions should be that of attraction rather than coercion or just for gaining economic benefits. The influence that Russia can have over these countries through the use of soft power and not just hard power will be a long lasting one. However the growing presence of US and NATO in Central Asia, the regional influence of China and Iran in Central Asia, Turkey’s influence in the South Caucasus, and even the European Union’s willingness to play a mediatory role in Georgia or Nagorno-Karabakh all act in the favour of those countries and limit the role or influence of Russia in this region (Ibid).

According to Joseph Nye, Russia and China misunderstand the core aspects of soft power as both the countries regard the government as the main instrument of soft power (Hung Le 2016). Accordingly Nye talks about sharp power (coined by Christopher Walker and Jessica Ludwig of the National Endowment for Democracy) in describing Russia and China's use of soft power. Sharp power as discussed in the introduction basically deals with the tools used by countries like Russia and China such as the information warfare to damage the information and political environment of targeted countries in contrast to the soft power. However he also mentions that having government backing does not necessarily mean there is no soft power or that it's a form of sharp power threat as he states, the BBC of United Kingdom is backed by the government but is independent enough to be counted as a source of soft power. Nye has repeatedly mentioned about the fact that soft power can be derived from the civil society like in the case of US it comes from the various aspects of civil society like universities, NGOs or foundations, Hollywood rather than just focusing on official public diplomacy. However in the case of countries like Russia and China due to their 'unwillingness' to free the elements of civil society as well as restricting talents have curbed the growth of soft power. He states that such countries if they involve transnational issue climate change as well as promote exchange programs can work towards gaining attraction and hence increasing their chance of achieving soft power (Nye 2018).

With regard to countries like Russia and China, Nye states that one of the greatest limitations towards attaining soft power is that they do not understand that soft power is not a 'zero-sum game' and that all the countries can be attractive and can find one another attractive. The fact that one country is attractive doesn't mean that the other cannot be. Soft power of a country doesn't try to negate the soft power of another. Unlike hard power, soft power is merely used for the benefit of the country that uses it. It doesn't try to downplay the other (Sergunin and Karabeshkin 2015). The main ingredient of soft power is that it wins the hearts of other countries and their people in a subtle manner. Nye states that many initiatives of Russian and Chinese soft power practise explicitly "pragmatic and interest based goals rather than aim to take into account international partners' interest" (Nye 2003). Nye opines that this attitude of such countries is the

reason why they face hostilities and suspicions from other countries which in turn affects their image negatively (Sergunin and Karabeshkin 2015).

Human rights become an essential yardstick for soft power as the world is becoming more and more concerned of the lives and freedom of people. Russia does not have a strong hold in this area as human rights is reserved a backseat when compared to its nation and nationality. The State becomes more important, and hence nationalism and following the instructions of the government is considered ponderous than human rights. Iaroslav Kozak (2015) is of the opinion that Russia's conservative stand on human rights especially when it comes to LGBT rights is taken as a step towards its soft power projection by portraying itself as "a conservative power in the world" (Kozak 2015). This conservative image of Russia according to Kozak (2015), aims in winning the support of conservative audience in the world, from American evangelicals to Iranian mullahs and especially to fellow conservatives in the former USSR and Western Europe. It is a stand not occupied other progressive powers of the world. It may be used as a soft power tool by Russia and it may garner legitimacy in similar conservative countries but human rights should be extended to all the citizens of a country. The increasing role of Orthodox Church and the resultant traditional values in Russia's affairs make it confined to strong opposition to LGBT rights. While the religious institutions have freedom to take their own stand with regard to any such matters, mixing traditional and religious values with State affairs only makes Russia look un-progressive, and hence limits its soft power (Ibid).

The Magnitsky Act of 2012 passed by the United States congress and President Obama is a consequence of the death of Russian lawyer Sergei Magnitsky who expired in the prison a year after he exposed the fraud of almost 230 million dollars involving numerous Russian officials (Kraner and Shevtsova 2012). The death of Sergei Magnitsky has been cited by the official report as a result of heart attack but many are of the opinion that the officials that were under Magnitsky investigation might have been involved in his death (Magnitsky list, rbth.com). Nonetheless the popular belief apart from the official reports remains that he was deprived of vital medical attention and was left to die in a Russian prison (Kraner and Shevtsova 2012). The Magnitsky act was therefore as a result of

various discussions in the international circles about this whole issue. It started with the imposition of ban on Russian officials with regard to the access of visa to enter USA as well as the restrictions on their banking facilities. However, the act ultimately grew to include all people, under the ban who have been accused of human rights violations (Magnitsky list, rbth.com).

In the light of the Magnitsky Act that affected the Russia's soft power image abroad, Russia imposed ban on Americans adopting Russian children. This ban is a part of the bill called 'Dima Yakolev Law'. However the critics of Kremlin as well as the Russian human rights committee have out rightly criticised the bill and accused the country of putting the future of children at stake for the sake of politics (Elder 2012). The Magnitsky incident and the resultant 'Act' has dealt a severe blow to Russia's image abroad. The Dima Yakolev law depriving the Americans from adopting children might have angered the Americans who genuinely are interested in adoption and are not involved with politics as such. This again adds to the picture of Russia as being exceptionally inflexible and prohibitive regarding the issues of human rights and thereby affecting its soft power. The West never leaves a chance to criticize Russia in any matter and when it comes to human rights it becomes more valid. The bill passed by Russian State Duma to prevent the adoption of Russian orphans by gay married couples from other countries as well as single people from countries where gay marriage is legal, on 18 June 2013 becomes another matter of criticism by the West (Ponomareva 2013). It also hinders the growth of soft power of Russia that is now in a very vulnerable position with regard to such issues.

Russia currently is facing a lot of problems that might hamper its soft power growth. It is not doing well economically as it is faced by problems such as weak economic growth, enormous currency inflation and even the foreign investments have been declining.²³ This not only projects a grim image of Russia but also makes it difficult for the country to

²³ Due to geopolitical tensions between Russia, Ukraine and the Western countries, Russia's economy has been severely affected and this in turn has affected the flow of FDI (Foreign Direct Investments) in Russia since 2014 even though it had reached great heights in the year 2013. Therefore FDI inflow during the years 2013 to 2015 can be seen to have fallen from 53.4 billion US dollars to 11.9 billion US dollars, which is a huge setback for Russia. However FDI in Russia started rising in the year 2016 and reached to 37.7 US billion dollars which is said to be due to privatization of Rosneft oil company (Santander Trade Portal 2018).

finance the institutions that promote soft power (Kelly-Clark 2016). Although Russia has started to take measures to fight its economic problems through the help of economic reforms but there are many hindrances to it as the country is facing administrative problems, corruption and other internal and regional challenges. Russia is also facing a new kind of problem for which the country is being accused of; especially by the Western world that Russia is training people in cyber warfare. However according to an Australian cyber security researcher Daniel Clark this will in turn be counterproductive to Russia. He states that the trained individual could use their skills outside of their designated tasks. This would prove to be detrimental not just for Russia but also for the entire international community. Russia would be a very unsafe country as such people would use their skills against their own country and indulge in activities such as launching cyber attacks on Russia's domestic market as well as attacking overseas targets causing massive social unrest and destabilisation (Ibid).

4.6. CONCLUSION

Russia should aim at building an articulate foreign policy that serves Russia's ends but focuses on having friendly partners that would back Russia in its various policies. If not as great power in Europe, Russia can definitely build a strong influence in Asia. With the disintegration of Soviet Union, Russia faced political, economic and social problems and his affected its image negatively in the world. Russia's power of attraction suffered a blow. Earlier despite the problems that were present in the Soviet society, it remains true that with socialism as its ideology it did attract many countries. This ideology was one of the main sources of soft power despite its own set of limitations. Russia during the transition period appeared as a very weak country to not just the rest of the world but it also could not win the hearts of its own former states. However Vladimir Putin's efforts in drawing attention to improving Russia's image abroad as well as rebuilding soft power capabilities can be regarded as the rise of Russia's soft power. Russia's zone of interest with regard to soft power is its post-Soviet states or the Near Abroad as it prefers to call it.

Language and some of the common cultural practices act as important sources of Russia's soft power in this region. However the way Russia handles these countries

shows that its interest in these countries is mostly related to territory and geo-strategy. This way Russia for its own interest sometimes acts in a bullying manner which affects its image negatively. Russia's relationship with the former Soviet states highlights its fears and insecurities with regard to the control over this region. This is mostly due to the Western intrusion in this area. Russia cannot tolerate intrusion in the region where it wants to make a strong hold. As mentioned earlier in the chapter Russia seeks to enjoy 'privileged sphere of influence' in this area. The West uses this insecurity cum overconfidence of Russia in this region against Russia by siding with countries that are not satisfied with Russia and would not want to be under the influence of Russia.

Russia's soft power status can also be understood by the way it views it as a concept. For many policy makers of Russia, soft power is merely a western construct and that many countries do not fit into this model, including Russia. They also feel that the stereotypes attached to Russia in the Western countries often lead to Russia's negative image in the world and thus affecting its soft power capabilities. While it is true that Russia's image is affected by its negative portrayal by the West, the fact remains that Russia too has a lot of flaws and that it does fail to qualify some of the basic tenets of soft power. Even though Russia calls itself 'sovereign democracy' as opposed to Western liberal democracy, and uses it as a pretext to justify its lack of democratic practices, soft power after all does rely on 'attraction' and not coercion. It is also true that countries like Russia and China that do not follow the Western democratic model should not be judged solely on the Western lines.

Chapter V

Western Efforts in Counteracting Russia's
Soft Power

CHAPTER 5

WESTERN EFFORTS IN COUNTERACTING RUSSIA'S SOFT POWER

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship shared by Russia and the West is of differences and similarities in which the differences have taken over. As we see in the previous chapter both Russia and West have undergone various kinds of changes in their relationship and it clearly highlights the tussle between them. The West said to be headed by the United States has stood against Russia in most of the matters concerning the international politics. The same can be said of Russia as it has never hesitated to speak up against the West on various occasions. The relationship between Russia and the West and especially United States hit its low during the Cold War period, although 'war' has disappeared from their equation, the word 'cold' still lingers in their relationship, and both have not hesitated to give 'cold shoulders' to one another. The change in the world order after the disintegration of the Soviet Union has on some ways tilted the balance towards the West for obvious reasons as the economy of Russia totally crumbled and with it its Communist influence also faded away. Russia entered the stage when the West already had the confidence of being the winner as its ideology triumphed in the world. Russia being new in the world of capitalism and privatisation did face problems in coping up with the new capitalist world system. The struggle of a country that was broken into fifteen constituents and the crumbling economy did face added problems of corruption and thus further losing the confidence of other countries in the world. The image of Russia in the world had changed from being a superpower country to a failed state and economy. The fact that Russia partly blames the West for this situation, as the West left Russia unaided after the disintegration, makes the relations between them even bitter. Even though the clash of ideologies of Socialism and Capitalism did come to an end, the rivalry between the two countries has not ended. Russia still aims to regain its super power status and the United States being one of the most powerful countries tries to win over the entire international

relations in the name of giving the world the gift of democracy and aiding the countries in conflict.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the resultant problems did affect Russia badly. However Vladimir Putin can be credited in bringing about the country in a state of stability from the state of uncertainty. The economy of Russia began to normalise and its relations with the countries also gradually improved. However, in its struggle to get over the loss it faced and in the process of handling the period of crisis, Russia started losing its influence in the world. While Russia struggled to face its own domestic problems arising out of the whole process of disintegration and the new privatisation process, the West that already had a stable economy and politics to some extent started to win the confidence of countries across the globe. The hegemony of United States triumphed over various countries. The West not only tried to build relations with the leaders of the countries, but also tried to win over the hearts and minds of the people. It used the gift of soft power, the power to make the countries dance to its tune that is through its power to attract rather than using force or coercion.

Although the term soft power emerged only in the 1990s when Joseph Nye brought up this term in his book, 'Bound to Lead: The Changing nature of American Power', it has been used by various countries prior to that. In his book 'Soft power: The Means to Success in World Politics' he further elaborated the term. While there is a debate about soft power being a highly Western centric concept, other non Western countries have also started to use it as an important tool of foreign policy. It is true that Soviet Union has been associated with hard power but it did employ soft power strategies while dealing with countries. The fact that so many countries were influenced by the Socialist ideology of Soviet Union, its literature, its paintings and architecture as well as its image as the champion of the third world countries did display its soft power. However after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russia lost its super power status and with it went away the aura it flaunted among the Socialist sympathisers and supporters. Nevertheless after Russia attained some form of stability it also started diverting its attention towards soft power and to regain its influence over other countries but this time through the power of attraction.

5.2. PORTRAYAL OF RUSSIA'S IMAGE ABROAD BY THE WEST

As we know following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the image of Russia started undergoing significant transformations. Russia under Boris Yeltsin in the 1990s, shares a moderately positive relationship with the West but it gradually stopped generating fruitful results and the relationship started to take a negative turn, especially during the second presidential term of Putin. There has not been much research conducted on the perception of Soviet Union and Russia in the Western countries. However during the Cold War era the situation was quite on the contrary as various scholars showed interest in researching about the images of the West, particularly the United States in the Soviet Union. By studying how the Soviet Union perceived the West they would get to know about the intentions of the former in the international showground. Images of Soviet in the West also achieved great attention in the Western academic literature during the Cold War and thus the foreign propaganda mechanisms of the Soviet Union were thoroughly analysed (Feklyunina 2009). The analysis of Soviet Union by the Western scholars during the Cold War was bound to be prejudiced as the two big blocs the Communist and the Western Capitalist, were in a clash of ideologies. The impact of the analysis by the West on the Soviet Union and Russia is indeed very interesting to study.

Presumably, the interest of the Western scholars on the analysis of Soviet policies and foreign propaganda started to decline with the fall of communism and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The mystery of fear and assumptions wrapping Soviet Union no longer existed and the insecurity of the Western countries, especially the US also started to fade away. The fact that the West viewed Soviet Union as a threat to their ideology kept the Western eyes fixed on the activities of Soviet Union. Russian foreign policy in the post-Soviet era began to change gradually. Russia's focus on the soft power of the country also drew very little attention from the Western scholars as they did not take it too seriously. However the reaction of the West on Russia's pursuit to soft power was that "the enduring goals pursued by Russia through its foreign policy have placed primary emphasis on... enhancing national prestige" and also, "ensuing national security and promoting the economic well-being of the country". The lack of interest shown by the Western scholars in the soft power ambitions of Russia has neither stopped the

country from working towards it, although at a satisfactory pace, nor has it affected the study of the Russian scholars on Russia's quest to improve its image abroad. In fact they have been deploring rising interest in this theme, and especially analysing the various ways through which Russia will be able to achieve its desired goals (Ibid).

The negative image of Russia in the West started to concern the authorities of Russia including the Russian expert community and the mass media right from the late 1990s but it was only in the beginning of the first presidential term of Vladimir Putin was it seen as a major threat to the country's image as a whole in the world. Therefore under Putin, the concern for negative image of Russia did find its way to the foreign policy agenda of Russia. While Russia's image was still faltering under the Western eyes, due to events such as the war in Chechnya, it slowly started to change again when Russian President Vladimir Putin decided to join the US in the war on terror after the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in September 2001. However the relationship of Russia with the United States worsened when Russia tried joining the other Western countries, Germany and France in their opposition to the US- led intervention in Iraq in 2003 (Feklyunina 2009).

The reinforcement of the power of the President as well as the assertive measures taken by the government in Chechnya made Russia look like an authoritative country in the eyes of the world. The West particularly viewed Russia in a negative light after the infamous murder of the journalist Anna Politkovskaya in October 2006 and the death of Alexander Litvinenko in London in November 2006.²⁴ Such back-to-back events certainly did not do any good to the image of Russia and its leadership. However the image of Russia after the dispute between Russia and Ukraine over the gas prices and supplies became that of an 'energy supplier' country, which is also seen by West as

²⁴ Anna Politkovskaya, Russian writer and human rights activist who was popular for opposing the policies of President Putin, especially with regard to the Second Chechen War, was shot dead in the lift on 7 October 2006. This incident led to widespread international reaction and in a way made the democracy of Russia questionable in the eyes of other countries. Her colleagues and friends accused the Russian authorities for their negligence in preventing her murder and this case had a negative impact on the image of Russia.

The infamous death of Alexander Litvinenko, former officer of the Russian secret service caused due to polonium poisoning also added to the negative image of Russia as Russian authorities were again accused of orchestrating the murder.

Russia's aspiration to become an 'energy superpower', because of the dependence of EU on Russia for gas supplies. However the Western media was quick to resort to the image of Russia emerging as that of an energy supplier and used the event of dispute between Russia and Ukraine to raise the alarm for "fears of new cold war as Russia threatened to switch off the gas". Many Western countries used this opportunity to portray Russia as a country that uses energy resources as a political weapon and thereby portraying Ukraine as mostly a victim of the Kremlin's hostility (Ibid).

Some commentators describe the negative image of President which is evident in Western countries as 'Putinophobia' as according to them the policies undertaken by him at home and abroad are sometimes so detrimental to his own country Russia (Feklyunina 2009). Many journalists within Russia differ in their opinion about the way Russia and their leader Putin is portrayed by the Western media. Journalist Daria Sukharchuk believes that the image of Russia has gone down due to the negative portrayal of Russia with regard to Crimea, Ukraine and Syrian issues and that president Putin has often been portrayed as a "cartoonish dictator" (Fleming 2016). Journalist Anna Belitskaya states that the negative portrayal of Russia by the Western media has always been evil since a very long time and she assumes that this could be because of the nature of Russians that involves a direct and a straightforward mindset and that they differ from the West in many respects that might seem offensive to the West as they are difficult to understand. However Adilya Zaripova, another journalist is of the opinion that the image of Russia portrayed by the Western media as a dangerous, big and unpredictable country is exactly what the Russian government also wants people to see. While again journalist Svetlana Shramko believes that the majority of Russians regard Putin as a "powerful and wise president" who defends the country against the aggressions of US and NATO (Ibid).

'Transatlantic Trends' survey based on public opinion, was conducted during the period 2002-2008 by the German Marshall Fund and the *Compagnia di San Paolo* (Italy) in a number of countries- France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania. According to this survey in most of the Western countries the feelings towards Russia was neither exactly warm nor cold. Surprisingly, in the US, warmer feelings for Russia were expressed despite the

negative image in the Western mass media. As expected, more number of respondents expressed negative feelings towards Russia in Poland and in Bulgaria the respondents the results were slightly more positive for Russia (Feklyunina 2009:47).

The West sees Russia as a country that is unable to carry out its work efficiently. The truth is that the Western society believes in the principles of international law, at least theoretically and also follows it to a certain extent, where 'sovereignty' as such takes a backseat. However for Russia sovereignty is unquestionable and it believes in the principles of non-interference in internal matters which is totally opposite to the Western values. Therefore the West sees Russia as its rival and does its level best to portray its negative image to the world by using "planned information campaigns against it" and ignores the positive aspects of Russia altogether (Ibid). During the time of USSR, only the country was viewed negatively by the West and its people were seen as victims of the regime but in the case of present Russia even the attitude towards the people is turning out to be negative. This is so because during the Soviet period, the US blamed everything bad that was happening there as a result of communist ideology. The ideology was the main rival for the West and once they got rid of it, it came out as a greatest victory for them.

Understanding the complex relationship between Russia and the West has occupied the minds of various scholars as well as these countries themselves. Both Russia and the Western countries have been trying to understand their aversion to each other despite the fact that they all are the contributing factors to this complex web of relationship. After the election of Donald Trump as the President of America, and after his coherent statement, "Time to move forward in working constructively with Russia" came as ray of hope for Russia that has been under the heavy weight of economic sanctions, it became a cause of great concern to many Americans that do not fall under the umbrella of Trump's beliefs as well as other Western countries that do not want the sanctions on Russia to discontinue (Narayan 2017). However Russia's accusations of interference in the presidential election of US have made it difficult for the Trump administration to establish cordial relationships with Russia.

Individually the Western countries have their own reasons to sometime maintain a satisfying relationship with Russia as well as to generate a feeling of repugnance. Together as they form the West, opposite to Russian values and ideas it becomes even clear that Russia is the significant 'other' to them. To understand the rationale as to why the West cannot stand Russia, Hari Narayan (2017), in his article, 'Why does the Western world hate Russia', draws examples from the four-part series of Oliver Stone called 'The Putin Interviews' that met with a lot of criticisms from the Western media (Ibid). The series has been shot between June 2015 when the pressure of sanction on Russia by the West had been increasing and February 2017 when the issues of Russia's interference in US presidential elections started to deepen. The series tries to bring forth the view of the average Russians as well as of its leader Putin and helps in understanding Russia from the Russian perspective which is not common amidst the widespread Western perspective of Russia's image. It shows us that in the eyes of Putin, Russia is a victim of aggression rather than being the architect of it. The documentary also highlights the fact that Russia tries to build its influence in its neighbouring areas but it faces challenges such as the expansion of NATO since the end of Cold War. This kind of interference on the part of the NATO and the Western countries in the regions of Russia's interest comes as a threat to its sovereignty (Ibid).

Swiss journalist Guy Mettan's 'Creating Russophobia' talks about the reasons of aversion between The West and Russia. In order to understand it in details, Mettan tries to go to the roots of loathing between the West and Russia, when during the 5th century AD the Western Roman Empire fell and the Byzantium Empire became the focal point in Christianity. This later resulted in the division between the East Orthodoxy and the West Catholicism. However in an age where religious power was seen at par with the political power, Russian Orthodox Church could not gain as much authority as the Catholic Church was gaining. Therefore the Russian Empire in which the Orthodox Church was embedded could not yield the same political power as the Roman and other Western powers and this added to the weakening of relations between the two sides. Mettan also states that apart from the fact that the Western countries view Russia as a 'common threat', there are separate phobias that each Western country has towards Russia, like the French Russophobia, the German, English and American Russophobia. He states that

American dislike for Russia only began in the aftermath of the Second World War. After that the rivalry that the Western countries, especially the United States and the Soviet Union had during the Cold War days is a known phenomenon that the two sides were totally against each other's ideologies and practice (Ibid).

Andrey Bezrukov, associate professor at Moscow State Institute for International Relations (MGIMO University) is also of the opinion that Western perception of Russia by the West is based on such historical experiences that are embedded in the minds of the Western countries and are hard to change. Some of the Western academicians are also of the opinion that it's the West who won the Cold War and therefore Russia is seeking to get back its lost glory and geopolitical status (Mamedov 2016).

The Prague-based think tank European Values brought out a report that covered the official statements of 28 European Union member states over a decade which gives us an overview of how there are differences in the way these European Union member countries view Russia. The countries that changed their responses and attitudes towards Russia after the 2014 invasion of Ukraine, included Finland and Sweden, who aren't NATO members but their proximity with NATO has been increasing to counter Russia. Slovakia and Hungary on the other hand displayed a pro-Russian stance basically for their own purposes, while Greece, Italy and Cyprus do not feel threatened by Russia and are also working for better relations with Russia. There is no country as such that would take a lead against Russia's supposed aggressions but France is one country that although had close ties historically, could take a stand against Russia during the Ukraine crisis and cancelled big arms deal with it as well as strongly supported European sanctions to Russia (Tamkin 2017).

A recent survey called the You.gov survey of 7150 American adults considered the question whether Americans see Russia as a friend or an enemy, and there have been mixed responses to it but the average response was that they either saw Russia as an unfriendly country or as an enemy, that is almost 55 percent of the total people that were surveyed. To further breakdown the 55 percent into precise opinion percentage, it can be said that 33 percent viewed Russia as unfriendly to the US and 22 percent stated Russia as the enemy. There were 22 percent who were unsure about Russia's relationship with

the West and 19 percent viewed Russia as a friend. Russia's image in the US is definitely not a positive one but the majority opinion going for Russia as an unfriendly country shows the failure of Russia in promoting its positive image abroad (Rapoza 2017).

5.3. ROLE OF MASS MEDIA AND THE PRESS: RUSSIAN AND WESTERN

Background

Valentina Feklyunina (2008) believes that the perceptions of a state held by other international actors play a considerable role in the creation of its identity. It is because what a country thinks of itself is shaped by how others perceive it. Russia has always seen Europe or the West in general to be its 'other' and therefore Russian elites have always been conscious of how the West views it. Feklyunina believes that self perception of a state is very important for its significant and positive growth from the inside. If a state's significant other perceives it negatively throughout then there arises a problem of negative self perception, which in turn might affect its performance in the international arena too. Feklyunina quotes Alexander Wendt (1999), to support her view, "one of the basic needs of the state that shapes its vision of national interest is, from the constructivist perspective; the need for collective self esteem". However Feklyunina also asserts that how a country projects itself also does have an impact on a country's positive image. In this process the state should be ready to let go of its rigidity and accept desired features necessary to make an attractive image in the international showground. After it is ready with the changes to be made it can then go forward to adopt measures to improve its image (Feklyunina 2008).

The media can be used both in a constructive as well as destructive ways. The power of media is unsurpassed and its outcome depends on the way it is used. The media in all its forms acts as a channel of communication between any sources. It makes the travel of information very smooth and fast. It helps in informing the people about the affairs of the world especially to those people who do not have access to such knowledge or information. It has the power to shape the perception of people but at the same time it is also up to an individual to interpret it and criticise it. The effect of media in shaping the perceptions or ideas of the people, and about shaping the content of any subject or matter,

it should be kept in mind that there are a lot of factors that are responsible for this. The influence of various privileged sections that act like the producer or financier of the any media house such as any social, political or business interest groups and lobbyist play an important role in the way a particular media house functions. The influential class of any country can use media as a tool to garner legitimacy from its people and thereby bring about the change in the way they desire. However media can also be used by them to shape and even limit the attitude or thinking of individuals (Happer and Philo 2013). Therefore role of media in the international scenario also depends on the way a country uses it and for what purpose. This can accordingly have a positive or a negative impact on the minds of the people regarding any particular issue.

Cinema has been one of the most effective parts of mass media. It attracts the masses to whatever they need to show or whatever message they need to convey. It is not just used for the purpose of leisure or entertainment but it also acts as powerful tool to promote culture or a way of life and to educate the masses on any subject matter. It not only helps in understanding so many aspects of our lives, surroundings but also makes us aware of various social, cultural and sometimes seven political issues. Movies influence us in ways unknown. They make a huge impact in our “observation ability” and stir our mind towards something which otherwise would have remained dormant. An audience with a critical mindset will not accept what is shown to them. They will understand, rationalise and even criticise. However a majority of people will just watch for entertainment purpose but it sub-consciously affects their thought process (Mahmood 2013). However, cinema can be used for the purpose of educating the masses on various issues. People learn best when they visualise something. The values that movies provide to the audience often remains with them for a longer period of time. The plot, the character and the style of the movie altogether make a lasting impression on the minds of the audience (Bahadkar 2010). Hence, the images of a particular country or its people depicted in the movies also have a lasting impact on the people. They tend to unknowingly believe what they see which plays an important role in making a country attractive or vice versa.

During the Cold War period, the American mass media portrayed its own society in contrast to the Russian society by showing to the world the negative aspects of the

Russian society and how different and better the Western society is from that of the Soviet. The Soviet media also did not stay dormant and went ahead to highlight the differences between the two societies and made them very prominent. Therefore the Soviet media dedicated itself in portraying the West as an area of conflict, where there was homelessness, unemployment, social and economic injustice and inequality and in turn portrayed itself as a leading opponent of the capitalist imperialism and against all the social ills that defined the Western society (Wasburn and Burke 1997).

Right from the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the West especially the United States expected Russia to follow the path of democratisation and liberal market policies. While both the policies will be fruitful for Russia in the long run it is also true that it was too early to expect a smooth functioning of its politics, economy and society. The democratisation process is a long process and takes a long time to achieve. The inability of Russia to live up to the expectations of the West led to it being judged by them. Therefore a number of analysts in the US believe that even after a long time of the fading of the Soviet era, Russia has still not been able to complete a successful transition from communism to a stable democratic society. They state that Putin during the 2000s created “managed democracy” where the judiciary, media, political parties and civic rights will be regulated by the government (Gidadhubli 2004). While it is true that in Russia all these have been in various ways managed by the government or rather by the presidency of Putin, it will be interesting to see whether these state controlled apparatus of government and civil society are able to generate a positive image of Russia abroad or not.

Image studies became particularly more pronounced during the 1990s where the studies were usually of applied character and examined the images of countries and the ways the image could be manoeuvred. As the negative image of Russia emerged on the foreign policy agenda mostly spread through the Western mass media, there arose an interest among the researchers to know more about the image of Russia, the reasons behind it and also to give suggestions to improve it in the world. According to many of these research conducted, there is a gap between what is portrayed and the actual reality. Feklyunina (2009) asserts that the reasons for such a discrepancy are numerous. One of the reasons is

historical in nature as many scholars view Russia to be the significant 'other' of Europe since hundreds of years and therefore the negative image attached to Russia has a lot of history behind it and cannot be easily done away with for they constitute a part of European identity. However others who view Russia as separate civilisation from Europe presuppose that the problems between them are due to the differences (Feklyunina 2009).

Mass media and the press have undergone various changes under globalisation where the boundaries between various countries have become permeable and so the flow of global information between the people of various countries has become smooth and easy more than ever before. For a country like Russia which is not so open as compared to the Western societies, how globalisation has been received by it is very interesting to take note of. In the book, 'Looking West? Cultural Globalisation and Russian Youth Cultures' (2003), the five authors make a deep study of how the Russian youth perceive the West in the era of globalisation. The important questions addressed by them include, "how globalisation has impacted Russian youth culture?, have global media and commercial worlds fulfilled their promise?, Do the news media in Russia engage young people in a global consumer based youth culture?, and how has access to the global media reshaped their images of the West?". The findings of the research suggested that Russian youth in the post Soviet era find themselves liberated from the economic and political constraints but the hybridisation and especially homogenisation of global culture is not very much entertained. The study also found out that in the era where cultural globalisation flows from core to periphery, that is from West to East, Russian youths are very proud of their culture. They are happy to experience Western culture but they consider Russian culture to exist alongside the Western culture (Pilkington *et al* 2003). Therefore even in the era of globalisation the Russian mass media has tried to make its way at least to the hearts of its own people and that the global mass media has only made the people more connected to other cultures but has not decreased the respect for one's own culture. In fact Russia's response towards globalisation of culture and mass media can be of challenge to the West as it defies the flow of information being restricted to the concept of core and periphery.

Wasburn and Burke (1997) raise an important perspective on mass media and the press, and discuss how they control the mind of the people and make them think in a fixed way

by seeing the truth through the eyes of the media. They state that the listeners or the audience of the mass media do not retain the order in which the news or any story was presented to them; they only retain little information. Gradually people tend to act on them without reconsideration and without being aware of the social forces that are responsible for their opinion or thinking. They state, “They come to identify truth with a particular learned set of socially shared meanings” (Wasburn and Burke 1997).

Media is also responsible for exaggerating the severing of ties between Russia and the West as nothing could be more captivating for the media houses than the heated up relationship between the two. According to a US poll conducted by the Public Opinion Foundation (FOM) in February 2014, only 18 percent of the Russians viewed the US negatively. While just after few months in November the same poll showed that now 37 percent of the respondents deployed a negative attitude towards the US. Pavel Koshkin (2014) is of the opinion that the polls do not show a very bad state of affairs but it is the media that highlights the poll to be of a major concern by giving a very serious undertone to the headlines. This way he asserts the media fails to give sufficient room to more positive responses, and only highlights the negative numbers. This stands true because the November poll also has figures such as 62 percent of respondents stating bilateral relations between the US and Russia should improve.

It is not just the mass media that makes or breaks the image of a country but the power of literature remains unsurpassed when it comes to forming an opinion in the minds of the people. Many literatures have instead served in portraying a negative image of Russia. The writings of Alexander Solzhenitsyn also became highly critical of Soviet Union. Through the help of his influential words in his books such as the ‘Gulag Archipelago’, he unveiled the brutalities of Soviet Union especially under Stalin. His words attacked the image of Soviet Union massively. It is said that the ‘pen is mightier than sword’ and in this case too his pen acted mightier than the viciousness of the ‘Gulag’ or the labour prison. Solzhenitsyn also received the ‘Nobel Prize for Literature’ in the year 1970 for his contribution to “the ethical force which he has pursued the indispensable traditions of Russian literature” (Nobelprize.org). Even after the disintegration, his writings bring the

horrors of Soviet past in the reader's mind. This highly affected the soft power of both Soviet Union and later Russia immediately after the disintegration.

Andrei Tsygankov, a professor of International Relations and Political Science at San Francisco State University also blames the press for exaggerating the souring of relationship between Russia and the West. He said, "Media on both sides follow the state line with vigour" and also stated that the press is responsible for, "hying up the U.S-Russia disagreements". He went further to state that while the Western media spreads stereotypes about 'revisionist' Russia, the Russian media on the other hand describes US as the "epitome of all geopolitical and cultural problems in the world". Professor of American history and the director of the American Studies Program, Victoria Zhuravleva is also of the similar opinion and states that the American cartoonists, journalists and politicians often represent a value based approach towards Russia. Russia responds to this attitude of the US by using its state-controlled mass media to shape the image of America as the hostile 'other' and fosters anti-American sentiments (Kohkin 2014).

Mass media can also be used as a weapon by states to counter the activities of the other through state controlled media and sometimes even the private ones are either forced to or willingly indulge in the game of countering the actions of the other states. Russia and the Western countries have in many ways launched media attacks on each other indirectly. However in the case of Russia it's more open that the government does get involved in the functioning of media while it is slightly indirect in the case of Western countries. During an interview with the National State Television and Radio (VGTRK), Putin talked about how the West's hegemony controls the global media. When Putin was asked why the world is unable to see Russia's truth about the war in Ukraine, he answered by saying, 'First of all, the world is complex and diverse... some people see it, while others don't want to see it and do not notice it. [The] world media monopoly of our opponents allows them to behave as they do' (Dougherty 2015).

Russia is often portrayed as country that bullies its neighbours and the only reprise that can come to those bullied countries is through the help of Western countries and especially the United States. According to John Mauldin, an economist known for big picture analysis Russia is a huge country and it does not want to get involved into

something very complicated as geopolitical fist fights. He believes that Russians are still trying to recover from the fall of Soviet Union and its ideology. He states that Russia cannot solve the Ukraine crisis through force and as long as Ukraine is taking a neutral stand and not siding with US and NATO, it is not so much of a problem for Russia even though it may not be of great help to it (Rapoza 2017). Russia's economy isn't doing very well and it continues to spend on its hard power resources but it is at this time that Russia needs its soft power to do the magic trick. Russia is continuously facing interference from the Western countries in the matters related to its neighbouring areas and the matter is very fragile as little mistake from Russia can take it farther away from these countries. Russia needs to attract these countries rather than coercing them.

5.4. RUSSIAN MASS MEDIA AND THE PRESS IN PROMOTING ITS POSITIVE IMAGE/SOFT POWER

During the Soviet period, at first for quite a long while the Central Committee of the Communist Party functioned as the highest authority within Russia's state-controlled media system. However in the 1960s, the Central Committee created *Vremya* (time) as the official national evening television news program. As television gradually emerged as the most widely used source of news, *Vremya* started to appear as the most popular source of information, and in the year 1987 according to the government estimates almost 90 percent of the population believed so. However about the same time, Gorbachev initiated a program calling for more openness and restructuring of the existing political process. Therefore the contents of *Vremya* also underwent dramatic changes. Targeting US was now not the sole intention of Russian media and instead it focused on portraying a more realistic picture of Soviet Union by addressing the social, economic and political challenges. It also became more open to social criticisms (Wasburn and Burke 1997).

As we know Soviet film industry was mostly used as a medium of propaganda, so even in the 1920s Soviet Cinema did not reflect the harsh realities of societies. It instead chose to create a kind of utopia where people were made to believe in a world of high ideals and moral standards as well as aimed in creating an atmosphere of positivity and a bright future for the citizens. The 1930s also followed the same trend but now it was also linked with entertainment. This is so because they realised that depicting reality in bright and

vibrant manner was not enough. To attract the audience there was a need for the films to be entertaining too. The situation changed completely after the disintegration of Soviet Union where the film makers chose to show reality in the crudest manner. In order to do so they started understanding the complexities of life of people without attaching it to the idea of spirituality, morality or any form of ideology (Beumers 1999). While trying to create films in this light the filmmakers came in touch with the harsh realities of life faced by the people after the collapse of Soviet Union and its ideology. The reality that the filmmakers and artists now saw was completely in contrast to the films that were deliberately created in positive light; hence they included images such as “beggars on the streets, impoverished prisoners, economic chaos, street crime, Mafia shootings, pornographic magazines and videos, decaying houses and ramshackle communist flats, and the emergence of a new class, the New Russians who adapted quickly and learnt how to make money in a society under construction” (Ibid). Post-Soviet Russia was wrapped in a situation of survival strategies for some and hopelessness for others. Cinema, literature, visual arts or any form of mass media that depicted such a reality of Russia known as *Chernukha*, whose literal meaning was something that is made black (Ibid).

Post-Soviet Russian films and literature thus concentrated on the problems and the lives of the Russians and their survival strategies, mostly highlighting the weak economic status of the country and its own problems rather than focusing on how to compete with its competitors. However earlier during the Cold War period there was a rise in the negative feelings between the West and Soviet Union. Both the sides used media as a weapon to not only promote their own self as the better one but also used media to tarnish the image of the other in the best possible way. Hence, the Soviet media mostly highlighted the Western countries in a negative manner. Russian media tried to depict the horrors of capitalism in form of unemployment and exploitation of workers (Hashamova 2007). In the Cold War period, the image of America thus slowly changed from a war time ally to an imaginary enemy. Soviet cinema covered the theme of anti-Americanism in the later period of Cold War but in a more subtle way, hidden under a robust nationalistic message. The movie *Neutral Waters*, is one such example of portraying Russians as patriotic and dedicated to their country. In the movie, a Russian sailor is ready to drown but not ready to reveal secret documents to American who discover him

on the oceans. The focus here is not on the Americans' portrayal as the enemy but more on Russians as being capable of sacrificing their lives for their motherland. The portrayal of Americans in this film is just a secondary feature of the film as they are just presented as humans unlike the previous movies during the peak of Cold War where they were represented as monsters (Ibid).

Ignatiy Vishnevetsky (2016) however argues that while Hollywood had no dearth of Russian villains in their movies, the Soviet movies did not respond in the similar fashion. Instead the Soviet movies mostly dealt with its civil war and its greatest victory over the Nazis. So, the Nazis were the main villains in the Soviet movies. Even in 1949 when the Americans were actually threatened by the stronghold of communism and were succumbing to anti-communist paranoia, the biggest box office hit in the USSR was *Meeting at the Elbe* which depicted the day advancing Soviet and American troops met in the middle of Germany as allies on the cusp of victory. Vishnevetsky also opines that both Soviet and American mainstream media had a different way of looking at things and the movies also highlighted this fact. While Soviet Union being a big single party state, its main area of concern was factionalism and being unsustainable, hence the Soviet movies tried to work on it by making movies that projected stability and growth and the Americans instead made fantasies of threat. By making movies on the victory over the Nazis, it gave that required boost to Soviet Union and also through these movies it kept reminding the world of its might and capabilities. *Seventeen Moments of Spring*, Soviet Union's most popular TV miniseries was about a Soviet spy in Nazi Germany and also highlighted Soviet pop culture to the world. The other movies such as *On Thin Ice*, '*The Shield and the Sword*' and *Teheran* were top grossing movies of 1966, 1968, 1981 belong to the similar category of Soviet movies. *White Sun of the Desert*, a popular Soviet movie was about the Red army soldier fighting bandits during the Russian Civil War. So it can be said that even during the peak of the Cold War, the enemies in the Soviet movies were all in the past (Vishnevetsky 2016).

If we look at Russian cinema, we get great examples of what Russia has undergone and how it sees itself. The collapse of the Soviet Union brought with it great horrors of uncertainty and instability. As mentioned earlier the country's social and psychological

problems were highlighted in the Russian cinema. During the early 1990s, Russian film makers disregarded past ideological constraints and presented a bleak picture of Russian reality. Films such as Pavel Lungin's *Taxi Blues* (1990) and *Luna Park* (1992), Vladimir Khotinenko's *Makarov* (1993) and *Moslem* (1995), Georgii Daneliia's *Passport* (1990), and Alexandr Sokurov's *The Second Circle* (1990) highlight nationalist obsession, psychological problems, violence, chaos, poverty and crime. Movies like these portray an image of Russia that has suffered a great loss with its social structure in complete dismay. However contrary to what the first half of 90s cinema had to show, Russian cinema of late 1990s provide the viewers with a different picture. The Russian identity in these films has a different social, cultural and national facet. It portrayed Russia's identity as one that is capable of and is recovering from its state of disarray and confusion and is in search of alternative paths to success (Hashamova 2007).

Russian cinema of the early 1990s also produced movies such as *Window to Paris, A Patriotic Comedy* (1992), *You are My Only One* (1993), and *American Daughter* (1995) that depict the life and times after the dismantling of the Berlin wall and the opening up of opportunities for Russians to explore the world, especially the Western world. However scholars have noticed a new trend followed in these movies whereby a fantasy is created in which Russians have got some kind of opportunity to leave Russia for better fortunes in the West but they refuse to do so for the love of their country even though the country is edged with a heap of problems. The American culture is portrayed in a stereotypical manner with symbolic representation of capitalism highlighted in the background in the form of Mc Donald's and also the representation of traditional American symbols such as the 'Statue of Liberty'. They just appear on the screen to depict that the scene is taking place in America. However what is special about such movies is that even though the movies highlight the tempting aspects of American culture the protagonists of the movie often seem to be unaffected by it. In contrast, these movies highlight Russia's traditions and culture as being rich and exotic and thus stressing on its uniqueness. Russian bathhouse, Russian ballet and the delight over the abundance of vodka all portray Russia's image as an out of the ordinary place attracting the American tourists (Ibid).

Russian cinema whether during the Cold War period or in the aftermath of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, has portrayed Russian culture and society opposite to the Western societies. While the portrayal of Western countries has undergone changes depending on the situations and relations with Russia, Russia's own image has been one and the same throughout. This is to say that Russian cinema portrays an image of Russia that may have suffered a loss economically, politically or socially but its patriotic values have remained unchanged. The disillusionment of Russians, after the disintegration with the present and the future that did not provide them with security found them an escape in the fantasies created by the movies. The pain and suffering of the people found solace in the hypothetical victories and the love for the country.

Although Russian constitution protects the freedom of speech and of the press, mass media in Russia is exactly not free and independent from State control. Recent changes in the laws related to mass media in Russia explain this phenomenon in a perfect manner, whereby the State seeks to put limitations on foreign ownership and certain type of advertising. The Russian law on mass media was amended in the year 2014 to "prohibit all direct foreign ownership of 'mass media organisations', as well as indirect foreign ownership of more than 20 percent, and other means of foreign control of such organisations". The year 2015 saw Russia banning advertising on pay-television channels supposedly to increase competition in the television broadcasting market (Zimble 2015). These changes also depict that Russia is now being conscious of the way its image is perceived by the world. These Amendments dealing with the restrictions on foreign ownership over Russian media houses is heading towards noteworthy changes in the foundations of the media sector. The most recent action taken with regard to strict regulations on foreign agents in the media sector is that the Duma, that is the lower house of Russia's parliament, approved the first reading of a bill that dealt with the restrictions on foreign agents in Russia. According to this bill, any media outlet if identified as a foreign outlet has to set up a Russian subsidiary to distribute its product as well as to inform the clients that the materials come from a foreign agent within one month after being listed as the foreign agent. It also clearly mentioned that if any kind of irregularities is to be found in the activities of these foreign agents then they will be given warning to

rectify any mistakes being made and if not the authorities will take staunch actions against such foreign agents (Xuequan 2018).

The structures of propaganda for promoting Russia's soft power abroad underwent noteworthy changes in two ways. On the one hand a lot of new bodies were created such as the 'Russian World Foundation' and some old bodies of the Soviet period were retained but they launched new kinds of projects. On the other hand new ways were deployed to improve the co-ordination of foreign propaganda activities by changing the chain of command of the actors involved in projecting Russia's image abroad. Apart from bringing about these changes, under Putin the task of promoting Russia's soft power went a step ahead and the Information and Press Department responsible for the same task became one of the largest departments under the Ministry of Foreign affairs that is in turn responsible for providing adequate information support for Russia's foreign policy. The main responsibility of the department included work with the Russian and foreign mass media and international news agencies. Likewise, even the various embassies in different parts of the world carried forward the task of portraying a positive image of Russia in their respective countries by supervising the reporting of Russian politics (Feklyunina 2009).

However although Russian cinema tried to survive the harsh transition period it could not gain the previous glory and soft power capabilities it enjoyed during the Soviet days even though films were mostly used for propaganda. The 1980s bore witness to average Russians visiting the cinema halls almost fourteen times a year, which is quite a record in the whole world (Menashe 2001). Post-Russian cinema unlike the Soviet cinema did not revolve around a positive story providing moral values and guidance according to the way the State wanted but it portrayed the truth even though it was bitter to the audience. However Russian cinema still becomes one of the important medium of Russia for promoting Russia's positive image abroad but it still cannot meet the characteristics of Hollywood industry that sell American dream and Western values in the best possible way without acting as a propaganda. Russian cinema can still act as an important source of Russia's soft power by promoting its positive image as well as attracting viewer's attention to Russia's culture and society. Nevertheless the problem of infrastructure and

financial crunch that Russia faced during the transition period also delayed the process of its cinema reaching to a position where it could come to a position of competing with the Hollywood industry (Ibid).

In order to promote Russia's positive image abroad, Putin presidency recognising the value of Russian language declared the year 2007 as the year of Russian language. This was followed by a number of events that helped in promoting Russia's soft power abroad, although the term soft power as such wasn't officially included in the official documents then. In June 2007, Putin signed a decree that established a new organisation *Ruskii Mir* (Russian World) Foundation to popularise Russian language and to spread Russian studies programme abroad, both of which are important steps towards strengthening of Russia's soft power (Feklyunina 2009). It was Mikhail Lesin, head of the Ministry of Culture and Mass communication from 1999-2004 who brought to notice Russia's negative image abroad, hence calling for a revival of foreign propaganda. In the year 2001 he even declared that the Ministry was planning to spend a considerable amount to rectify Russia's image especially in the USA. His dedication and hard work made him the Adviser to the President in 2004. The Ministry of Culture, in particularly its specialised Agency of Press and Mass Communications engaged in a variety of projects for improving Russia's international image (Ibid:77).

The editor in chief of 'Echo of Russia' in an interview stated that the war in Ukraine made Putin's faith in the media stronger and that he uses all the instruments of medias to foster his desired goals. He follows a two way path in undertaking this task. At home, his government targets all the internal communications to reach out to the people including the TV, newspapers, radio station and the internet. The state owned media outlets are flooded with state's messages and the independent ones are also pursued in the same direction. Abroad, his government tries to reach the audience through RT, previously known as Russia Today basically to bring about an alternative to West's viewpoints. According to Dougherty (2015) media thus becomes the weapon of choice to spread the information that the government wants the wide audience to know. However he states that such kind of information war launched by Putin administration through the help of media can affect the free media houses, which have to publish what the government

wants even though they are supposed to be free. Dougherty also mentions that Putin in an interview to RT stated that “Russia’s global broadcasting aim is to break the ‘Anglo Saxon’ monopoly on global information stream” (Dougherty 2015).

While it is true that media has been used to promote Russia’s image positively, many are critical of the way Russia uses this tool or rather takes control over it thus taking away its independence and credibility. Critics have been mostly concerned about the way Putin takes control over Russia’s Television channels and other sources of mass media to feed the minds of the people with the national and international political decisions that they deem is right or incorrect. According to Eline Gordts (2015), this trend has been increasing since the beginning of the Crimean conflict. According to Nataliya Rostova, author of Gorbymedia.com as well as the correspondent at the Moscow-based online magazine Slon.ru, everything that flows through from the mass media of Russia is basically the voice of Putin. She states that with regard to Russia’s intervention in Syria, Russian media has been portraying whatever Putin wants or demands. She goes further to state that almost all the major news and TV hubs have come under Putin’s control including the ORT (now known as First Channel) and NTV in the year 2001, and RTR (now known as Rossiya 1). Putin appoints the editors, directors of such TV stations and even the director of VGTRK which is the biggest state media holding owning Rosssiya 1, Rossiya 2 is appointed through Presidential decree. Even the social media where people can enjoy their slightest freedom is not so much of a source of information that will reach the people as it is limited to minority (Gordts 2015). Therefore Russian media is slowly losing its independence stand and this does not act as an effective source of soft power even though it is used to promote Russia’s positive image abroad. Had the news and other mass media been completely free, this in itself would make Russia a more transparent country and thus automatically increasing its soft power abroad.

Another important tool of Russia’s mass media responsible for promoting Russia’s views to the world is the Voice of Russia. Despite the fall of the Soviet Union, the Voice of Russia remained a strong player and with the size of its audience exceeding by 100 million people in 160 countries by the year 2007. By broadcasting its programmes in 32 languages, the Voice of Russia succeeded in reaching to the third position among the

largest international radio stations that is after the BBC and the Voice of America. RIA Novosti is another important tool of Russia that aims in improving Russia's image in the crucial regions of the world. Working in close collaboration with a privately owned company CROSS, the RIA Novosti works to prepare reports on Russia's image in foreign TV as well as a separate report on its image in the national mass media in the CIS. RIA Novosti's two important projects so far have been 'Russia Profile' and 'Valdai Discussion Club'. While the Russia Profile project is to create a new English language media outlet targeting small group of Russian watchers the Valdai Discussion Club was created in 2004 "to create an international expert venue, where top federal and regional officials could share trusted information on the country and society's development with home and foreign leading specialists studying various aspects of the Russian life" (Feklyunina 2009:79-82).

The idea to create a printed foreign propaganda channel was that of Presidential Adviser Mikhail Lesin. Thus, project '*Trendline Russia*' was initiated which took the form of newspaper supplement inserted into a number of foreign newspapers such as the *Washington Post* in the USA (approximately 1 million copies) and the *Daily Telegraph* in the United Kingdom (about 500,000 copies). According to the chief editor of *Trendline*, the aim was to cover as many as 20 countries including, Bulgaria, Poland, Germany, India and China in the near future. Its objective however was to improve Russia's attractiveness as an investment destination. The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade also aimed at promoting Russia's image in the eyes of potential investors. Thus, in the year 2006 it published 'Investor's Guidebook to Russia' (Ibid).

RT channel is the most important instrument of mobilisation for Russia and Margarita Simonyan is the editor in chief. RT was created in 2005 as Russia Today and its objective was to try explaining the about Russia as a country to the rest of the world but Simonyan soon gave up on that effort as it did not prove to be effective (Dougherty 2015). The budget of Russia Today in the beginning was supposed to be 30 million dollars. The project covered Europe, North America, Mexico, Asia, Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Thus it is evident that one of the main concerns of the channel was the size of its audience (Feklyunina 2009). The RT channel now broadcasts in various languages that

include English, Arabic, and Spanish and also has a website that works in Russian, French, and German. The channel exceeded two billion views on YouTube recently. Simonyan goes further to state that the main target of RT is not US or any other Western country but it surely is to counter the 'mainstream media' which for long has been providing biased news and information to the global audience. She even goes forward to state that the mainstream media has never published anything positive about Russia. She states that the Western media is to a large extent responsible for the conflict in Ukraine. Putin also believes that through RT he will try to counter western attempts to "brainwash the world" (Dougherty 2015).

Dmitry Peskov, Russian president's press secretary mentions how president Putin himself gets involved in the process of new ways of exercising influence in the world with the help of mass media and press. Peskov also talks about the way the process is carried out. He states that many workers indulge in creating TV digests for Putin because it is difficult for the president to read all the news. Hence these digests are the summary version of news. Putin views these digests in his car, plane, and helicopter. Putin makes sure that he has control over all the media houses whether they are state owned or privately owned. In October 2014 Putin went to Argentina for the launch of RT's Spanish language broadcasting and stated, "The right to information is one of the most important and inalienable human rights" and went on to state that certain countries try to monopolise the truth and in such times there is a need for an alternative information and that alternative is RT (Ibid).

However the way Russian government handles the civic rights and the mass media has time and again come under the attack of the Western commentators. The International Organisation of Human Rights Watch states that the way the present legal system is functioning in Russia reflects the "roll back of civic rights" under Putin administration. It also condemned the Putin administration for using repressive measure in order to prevent the Russian citizens from accessing the unbiased reporting of world events (Gidadhubli 2004). To improve the negative image of Russia there have been various approaches brought to the forefront but there has not been a unanimous decision taken. This is so because some believe that the image would improve by itself if there are proper changes

brought about inside the country as external efforts without actual democratisation process inside will not prove to be fruitful in the long run. However there are others who believe in the miracle of propaganda and state that sincere efforts for improving the image can work wonders for Russia (Feklyunina 2008).

Some Russian scholars however believe that some Russian media houses are responsible for the negative image of Russia abroad by providing added resources for Russia's opponents abroad (Ibid). Whether it is the Western media that is trying to tarnish Russia's image or Russia's attempt to counter such acts by the West by forming an alternate way to reach to the world, Dougherty (2015) believes that today Russia internally is facing a situation where a lot of undemocratic practices are being undertaken when human rights that the government boasts about with regard to right to information, is taking a backseat. A real variety of viewpoints according to Dougherty is fast disappearing (Dougherty 2015). When the government talks about alternative standpoint with regard to information in the world, it should also keep in mind that the voice of the opposition is also an alternative and a very important perspective in a democratic society. The assassination of Boris Nemtsov in February 2015 has killed the scope for alternate viewpoints within Russia.

To Russia, the urge to promote its positive image through its mass media also involves the fact that it sees it as a battle against the Western perception of Russia. Many Russians feel uncomfortable with the way they or their country is portrayed by the Western media. Some of the top Russian officials are of the opinion that the West is trying to frame a well planned 'informative war' against Russia. The head of Russia's Investigative Committee, Alexander Bastrykin has even gone a step forward to write about the 'hybrid war' launched by the West against Russia (Mamedov 2016).

The way Russia handled the FIFA World Cup and how it dealt with rumours, negative remarks and criticisms shows that Russia has learnt a lot about dealing with negative image as well as the right way of capitalising soft power. Compared to Sochi Olympics period, Russia effectively projected its soft power during the FIFA World Cup. It even utilised its mass media to the best of its capacity in order to promote its positive image to the world. To show the world that Russia is beyond the stereotypical image as depicted

by the Western media. The RT channel did not have the rights to cover the games but it used its potential to focus on promoting Russia's soft power abroad. It highlighted the hospitality of Russians towards the guests and covered many stories such as the US fans supporting Russia, the respect paid by England fans to the sacrifice made by Russians during WW II. The RT has also tried to show how the fans from the Western countries have tried to forget the differences between them and the host countries (Crilley 2018). Although the RT highlighted the fact that the Western media had been very critical in the beginning but overall it maintained its neutrality and covered the events without being anti-Western like it has often been accused of. By doing so Russia has tried to show its unbiased coverage of events, its hospitality, its culture and a chance to let people know that Russia has a different positive side not very known to people.

5.5. WESTERN MASS MEDIA AND THE PRESS IN COUNTERING RUSSIA'S EFFORTS IN BUILDING ITS SOFT POWER

Although the image of Russia in the West has mostly been negative, it is worth noting that even during the Soviet period USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev had quite a positive image in the West. They were impressed by the changes being brought about by him. The popularity of Gorbachev among the Western elites and the mass media was reasonably impressive which led to some of the commentators describing this characteristic as 'Gorbymania'. A similar interest was shown by the West in the first president of Russia, Boris Yeltsin although not to the extent of the popularity of Gorbachev. However it is also worth noting that Russia's image under Yeltsin was quite positive. During the 1990s under Yeltsin, Russia was seeing the dreams of following the Western path of market policy and development. It was a long way but the Russians hoped for a speedy recovery from the aftershocks of the market policies and political changes imposed on Russia with the help of the West. The West viewed the 90s' Russia positively because they assumed that Yeltsin's regime was the only alternative to Russia's return to communism; which they did not want at any cost. The Washington Post for example praised Russian voters who "showed wisdom and fortitude to vote against the greater of evils" (Feklyunina 2009:39).

The negative image of Russia in the West starting from the mid 90s, owed to both social and economic factors including the war launched by Russian authorities in the breakaway republic of Chechnya, widespread corruption and crime and the staggering economy. During this phase the foreign policy of the Kremlin also began changing as it became more assertive and independent from the West; contrast to what the West had expected from a newly emerged Russia. The changes in the foreign policy were brought about by the newly appointed foreign minister Evgeny Primakov. All these together made the West look Russia once again through the prism of pessimism concerning Russia's road to democratisation and liberal policies (Ibid).

After the so called victory of West and especially of the US in the Cold War against the Soviet Union, the West has taken it as their moral duty to promote their values across the globe. A sense of superiority has taken over them. The West has tried to democratise many countries. While it is true that the meaning of democracy remains the same despite the various ways in which the countries in the world view it and practice it. The Western liberal democracy has been portrayed by the West as the model type for various countries to adopt. However democracy in many countries including Russia has not been of the western prototype. The criticism of the Western countries faced by Russia with regard to 'undemocratic' practice and means, as seen by them has not been received very well. The Russian officials view it as interference and not just in Russia but also elsewhere, as they believe that 'democracy' has just been used as a pretext to cover their ulterior motive. According to Virginia Rusakova, who works at Russia Today, Sputnik Radio News Agency in Russia believes that it is still working towards perfection and does not entertain the idea of changing other countries and likewise is strongly against the idea of other countries trying to change Russia. This according to her is the best part about Russia that it does not try to change other countries by trying to show its superiority over others (Interview 3 2018).

The superior complex faced by the West is also clearly seen through a study conducted by the Council of Foreign and Defence Policy of the Russian Federation that examined the image of Russia's business community in the Western mass media. According to the study, Russian business houses were a victim of several kinds of stereotypes that revolve

around Russia. The most noteworthy ones were- “a military threat of new type” (that is the threat caused by weak states control over nuclear arms), “a criminal and corrupt state”, and “Russia’s inability to conduct reforms without guidance from the West” (Feklyunina 2009:40). These stereotypes concerning the country that the Western mass media portrays to the rest of the world builds an image of Russia that has an unsuitable environment to do business thereby discouraging other countries in doing business in Russia. Not only does it try to pose a threat to Russia’s business sector, it also undermines the country’s soft power building efforts. Such kinds of stereotypes highlighted by the media also show the insecurity of the West over Russia’s possession of nuclear arms and weapons. It also shows the West’s disapproval in a country’s independent stand in world affairs without the help of the West. The West sees itself as the caretaker of weak states and thus slowly tries to gain control over such states but Russia even though suffered a decline in the 90s has the old pride of being a super power once and believes in taking its own stand, and sometimes even against the West (Ibid).

Another event that affected Russia’s image abroad was the arrest of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, head of the Yukos oil company on the charges of fraud and tax evasion. The West obviously perceived this event as an assault on the opposition and as a way to punish them. This impacted the image of Russia not only in the West but also elsewhere as the Western media portrayed it to the rest of the world as an undemocratic and unethical step taken by the Russian authorities on the business sector. *The New York Times*, for example, reported that “investors and Kremlin watchers said they (were) not convinced that the government’s prosecution of M. Khodorkovsky would be its last confrontation with Russia’s business elite” (Ibid). Such a statement by the New York Times brought to the notice of people in the business world that dark times are making its way towards Russia. Apart from the New York Times, other news papers also highlighted the case of Mikhail Kodorkovsky. ‘Russia on trial’ was the title of the write up in the *International Herald Tribune* on 16 June 2004. Bob Dole of the *Financial Times* also contributed a piece on the same date under the title ‘Russia has put itself in the dock’ (Gidadhubli 2004).

The run up to the parliamentary elections of 2007 in Russia gave Russia a tint of authoritarian element by the West and their mass media. *The Guardian*, for instance, wrote how “fraud, intimidation and bribery” tainted the 2007 parliamentary elections campaign. This is a major setback for Russia’s soft power as it highlighted the demeaning political values there. This was followed by how Russia followed authoritarian practices not only in its domestic arena but also in the international sphere. *The Financial Times* did not hesitate to comment on Russia’s assertive policies in the post-Soviet space and thereby on behalf of the many Western countries articulated the opinion that “the West must resist Putin’s claim on the old Soviet space”. Evocative examples of how Russia tries to control the post-Soviet countries started to make rounds in the Western mass media. It also highlighted the fact that Russia expresses discontent towards these countries by trying to make attempts to punish them when they follow pro-Western foreign policy strategies rather than pro-Russian (Feklyunina 2009).²⁵

Any attempt by Russia to reclaim its lost status in the international arena is seen as a threat by the West as they see it as incapable of handling power. Russia’s aim towards a dominant foreign policy has not been taken in good spirit by the Western media. The title of an article in *Financial Times*: ‘A Cruder Kremlin: How Russia is Reasserting Itself as a World Power’, shows the insecurity of the West with regard to Russia’s rising ambitions. The Western media once again portrays Russia as a threat not just to the West but to the rest of the world powers too. It is not just the dominant image of Russia that is of concern to the Western media; the dominant position of Vladimir Putin also time and again makes the rounds at the Western media circle. The *Economist* competently describes the dominant image of Putin at the end of his second presidential term and writes, “There is a prickly KGB officer in the Kremlin. He suppresses dissent at home and (...) abroad. He obstructs America’s foreign policy, sells arms to its enemies and

²⁵ Russia-Ukraine dispute over natural gas prices that had begun from 2005 became severe and Russia accused Ukraine of not paying for the gas and instead diverting that which was actually supposed to be sent to European Union. However Ukraine did admit that the gas which was supposed to be sent to European countries was retained for domestic purpose. The dispute however worsened in 2006 leading to Russia cutting off the all gas supplies passing through Ukraine. However later the gas cut was revoked.

cosies up to its rivals (...) He uses his country's vast hydrocarbon reserves to bully the neighbours" (Feklyunina 2009: 43).

When the relations between Russia and the West hit a low phase during 2007 and 2008, some commentators in both Russia and the West went ahead to describe the events between them as an indication to 'New Cold War'. An example of this can be the book written by a correspondent of the *Economist*, Edward Lucas, titled, 'The New Cold War' (2008). While the Western elites and the mass media disregarded these claims of a new cold war, relationship between Russia and the West continued to be that of antagonism. The relationship between them during that time was described by The New York Times- "no Cold War, perhaps, but surely a lukewarm peace" (Ibid). The Western mass media leaves no stones unturned to project a strained relationship between the West and Russia and aims in keeping the topic 'Russia' in news for mostly the bad reasons.

Russia under Putin began to focus on the country's geopolitical visions. To this end, the country started to stress on the concept of 'Eurasianism', where Russia's focus of interest would be both on Europe and Asia. These steps taken by the Russian government make the West worry about the ambitions of Russia in the international scenario. This also indicates the strengthening of the Russian power even though the West always regards it as being authoritarian. Despite the fact that the Western media seems to be concerned with such 'authoritarian' tendencies showed by Russia, the Russian officials do not seem to be bothered much by it (Ibid). However Putin did try to look in to the matter by trying to devise a way where it could look less authoritative in its approach. He therefore focused on building a system which will be different from the Western standards of democracy but will still be democratic in nature. The Western media have also not given up on their efforts to highlight the undemocratic nature of Russia's political system but according to the National Security Concept of the Russian Federation (2000), "the attempt of certain countries to oppose the strengthening of Russia as one of the centres of influence in the multi-polar world, to hinder the realisation of its national interest" has been regarded as one of threats to Russia's security (Feklyunina 2008).

By stressing on the part that in Russia the government is still not willing to take its hands off the judiciary, which is important for democracy to flourish, various newspapers went

ahead to highlight government's greed for power and control. *International Herald Tribune* brought out a report expressing the state of democratic practices in Russia in the first week of June 2004. It stated that an open-minded judge was removed from the case of an appeal made by the Yukos Company. This act of the government was heavily criticised by International Herald Tribune by stating that such an act represented the undemocratic character of government as the judges are subservient to the government and there is no apparent independence of judiciary in Russia (Gidadhubli 2004).

The Western media's portrayal of Russia during the year 2007 mostly used the phrases, "rising threat", "Cold War", "troubled democracy" and "partnership" while discussing its relationship with the Western countries as well as other countries in the world. The Associated Press based in New York and the BBC used "rising threat" frame quite recurrently (Ibid). Some researchers and scholars studying the way the Western media perceives Russia highlight the 'tone' of these media houses while discussing about Russia. The tone was studied to be either negative or positive and the researchers found out that about 50.7 percent of the news stories about Russia were presented from an unbiased point of view while almost 45.6 percent were presented from an unfriendly angle.

The negative portrayal of Russia by the Western mass media can be best understood by the way Western movies present Russia. Hollywood is one such example and one of the best soft power tools of the United States and it gives strength to US hegemony. The Hollywood has been selling the American dream to the large parts of the world population. The audience to Hollywood tend to yearn for the American and western way of life. The picture drawn by Hollywood is often believed by the people and what they depict on the large screen is taken at face value by some. Hollywood thus has won not just the hearts but also the way of thinking of the people. Hollywood chooses a wide range of topics that are highlighted in the movies whether they are social or political in nature. During the Cold War period, both the Soviet Union and Russia tried their best to depict each other in a negative light and this included the movies too which were a great tool to reach the mass audience and to portray the other negatively. Virginia Rusakova of Rossiya Segodnya under Sputnik Radio News Agency believes that soft power has a lot

to do about perception and how a country or its people view the other country also has a lot of impact on its image which in turn affects its soft power. She states that Western movies, especially Hollywood has on many occasions portrayed Russia in a negative light. Although such portrayal of Russia or Russians as villains or in their stereotypical manner might have been undertaken for entertainment purpose but she states, it does affect Russia's image and in the long run is detrimental to its soft power. This is so because she believes that movies affect people's mind in a psychological way by subconsciously creating an image of how that country is portrayed. This also contributes in shaping people's judgment or opinion when any event occurs in the international or domestic arena. Therefore according to her negative image of Russia in Hollywood movies certainly affects Russia's image. She mentions that Hollywood also highlights Russians suffering under the Russian system or government policies and practices. However she goes further to state that the negative portrayal of Russia in Hollywood only depict their fear of Russia as they might have seen some kind of potential in it (Interview 3 2018).

After the end of Cold War, The US emerged as a more powerful nation and gained its dominance in the Western society. The US along with its political agenda started to use culture as an important tool in carrying out the country's ideals. The tension between the two sided ended and two countries stopped using the movies as a propaganda machine but even after the end of Cold War, although not as propaganda but the Hollywood continued to portray a negative image of Russia. Whether it is solely for the purpose of entertainment and money or whether it still intends to use it deliberately as a propaganda tool, it sure does have an impact on the image of Russia in the world and also in a way counters the soft power building efforts of Russia. This can be understood by the fact that Russia, the largest country in the world was seen as a threat to the American Dream and the idealistic society (Brook 2014).

Whether it is the role of a "sadistic former KGB operative" in the movie *The Avengers* or just a simple Russian evil doer in the movie *A Good Day to Die Hard* it cannot be denied that Hollywood is full of Russian villains. James Chapman, Professor of Film Studies at the University of Leicester states that Russians have long been represented as the threat to

the West even before the Cold War but the Cold War frame added the dimension of clash of ideology to it. Some scholars however tend to see the Russian President Vladimir's tough demeanour and stance as the reason behind in the increase of Russian villains in the American movies, even after the end of Cold War. Tom Brook (2014) states that Hollywood's depiction of Russians as villains can have concrete and tangible consequences. Likewise, Russian filmmakers and politicians have displayed a feeling of displeasure towards such movies. There also has been the threat of Russia boycotting Hollywood movies. The Russian news agency *Interflex* reported that Batu Khasikov, a member of the culture committee at the upper chamber of the nation's federal assembly stated that, "movies where everything related to Russia is overtly demonised or shown in a primitive and silly way should be banned from theatrical distribution" (Ibid).

However it stands true that the showing of absurd Russian reality does not make American movies credible but still Russia has become an important market for Hollywood products. Top rated Hollywood celebrities including Tom Cruise, Megan Fox and Will Smith have gone to Russia for the purpose of promoting their movies. Even so the depiction of Russians in a stereotypical manner has continued to be prevalent in Hollywood movies. Igor Zhizhikin, a Russian actor but who has lived in the US for almost 25 years shares his experience to depict the way, American movies try to depict Russia. He stated that he had to argue with the director during the shooting of the movie, *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of Crystal Skull* about the too obvious accent of the Russian characters. The actor also stresses the fact that those responsible for making films do not pay much attention to such aspects of stereotyping and sometimes they are unintentional. Erik Sarkisian, a supervisor of the cinema archive at Moscow Province Ministry of Culture, expresses his anger by stating, "How can Hollywood be so blind when it portrays a Russian cosmonaut in *Armageddon* as a drunkard wearing a fur cap? They should have added a bear and a nesting doll!" He believes that such mentality of Hollywood help it to prove its dominance in the film industry (Raevskaya 2012).

Viktor Alisov, Russian film producer argues that such kind of depictions of Russians on Hollywood big screen is the fault of media rather than Hollywood. He goes further to state the fact that the portrayal of stereotypical image of Russians is because of how the

media portrays the image of Russia and how it affects the mindset of the people; while the Hollywood just tries to show that which it feels will entertain the public and to show them what they really want to see. Actor Igor Zhizhikin also believes that while Hollywood continues to portray Russians, the communists, Russian Mafias as the number one enemy to the West, the Russians should not feel agitated as it builds a strong character of Russia and still promoted the image of Russia as a superpower (Raevskaya 2012). The depiction of Cold War and the Soviet Union as the villain in the Hollywood movies does in fact bring back the memories of Russia being a superpower earlier. It shows that the communist ideology of the Soviet Union had really made them feel insecure which further shows that the Soviet Union could challenge the West and especially US in its hey days. This can indeed be taken in a positive note by Russia that they still have the potential to rise as a strong power capable of being a competitor to not just the West but to all the emerging strong powers of the world. However it also cannot be denied that the depiction of Russia in the movies has been in a negative light and to a certain extent it affects its soft power. The audience believe what is shown and thus the stereotypes surrounding Russia never fade away this way (Ibid).

Some of the movies that create a negative image of Russia in the world can be discussed briefly to understand the gravity of the matter. The first movie that can be discussed is *Red Heat* (1988), a movie which stars actor Arnold Schwarzenegger playing as *Ivan Danko* is set in Soviet Moscow. The title of the movie itself suggests communism as a danger. However in Russia the movie gained popularity due to the humorous depiction of regular policemen in Soviet Russia, where bus chase and Russian sauna are shown as a daily routine of Russian law enforcements. Second, the movie *Armageddon* (1998) depicts a stereotypical image of a Russian astronaut wearing astrakhan hat, a tee shirt with a five star and the word USSR written on it, and appears to be naturally drunk. Third, the movie *Hitman* (2007), depicts the character of *Veronika Voronina* as a Russian prostitute who witnesses an assassination attempt on the president. This movie shows the way the Americans view the Russian women who are often stereotyped and objectified. Fourth, the movie *Madagascar* is an animated movie that has a character of a Russian Circus tiger, *Vitaly* who is depicted as a rude bumpkin. His fur was burned during an act in the circus. Like any bitter Russian, *Vitaly* drowns in his sadness with a typical ‘borscht

soup' rather than vodka as it is a children's movie. His character likes to stay in solitude and does not trust the light-hearted American Lion, Alex. However finally, Alex is successful, in making *Vitaly* happy by giving him a fur conditioner (Raevskaya 2012).

These are few of the movies in which the Russians have been portrayed in a stereotypical manner. Some of the themes about Russia and the Russians that can be found in these movies are, "the fear of communism", "the stereotypical image of Russians as being rude and cold in demeanour", "the objectification of Russian women", "the need for US help" (Ibid). While all these were done in the name of entertainment, it surely gives a dull and gloomy image to Russia and its people. People from different parts of the world are audience to such movies and the people in general who are not well aware of the international affairs tend to blindly believe what is shown to them. It does not seem offensive at first but the stigma of Russia being a place of mafias, land of former communist who according to them were mass murderers, un-welcoming people, stays with Russia forever. It does affect the image of Russia; in contrast to the bright picture of US and the West where the outsiders are welcome and supported by them.

It is not just the big screen movies that have portrayed Russia in a negative and a stereotypical manner; in fact there are a lot of television serials and soap operas that have a huge contribution to make. Some of these television serials do not even revolve around Russia but they just make a quick comment about Russia and its people every now and then to add humour to the serials, or they have some characters who are Russians but of course with unnecessary Russianness. Both American media and the television have given rise to three Russian archetypes, "the KGB monster, the Prostitute, and the Pessimistic drunk". First, the KGB prototype is found in TV serials, *Allegiance* and *Americas*. In the show *Allegiance*, a detective specialising in Russian affairs has a direct contact with the KGB. The show 'Americans' is about the firsthand account of KGB officers, following a KGB couple living undercover in Washington. The show is about Russians and still the Russians are portrayed as enemies to the West. This is not surprising because when it comes to Russian men they are either KGB villains or Mafias in the eyes of the Americans scriptwriters. In the show *Sons of anarchy*, even the mafia is often portrayed as extremely cruel and evil. Second, the 'prostitute' stereotype that

revolves around Russian women is found in a couple of TV shows. This stereotype holds the view that “a beautiful, blonde hair, blue eyed beauty is either caught up in the world of adultery or chooses it herself”. High rates of prostitution and women trafficking in Eastern Europe and Slavic countries are reasons behind such stereotypes for Russian women (The Artifice 2015). The show ‘Two Broke Girls’ mentions about a waitress ‘Paulina’ who was fired from her job because of her indecent behaviour at work. *Svetlana*, a 2010 TV show revolves around the story of a brothel madam and a prostitute. The show revolves around amusing comments Svetlana makes about her prostitution. Third, the archetype “the drunk pessimist” serves the purpose of portraying Russians leading an unhappy and irresponsible lifestyle. As in Russia, the consumption of vodka is very high they are often considered as drunkards. The pessimism is attached to Russians having a cold nature which in turn correlates to cold climate in Russia (Ibid). In a show called the *Big Bang Theory*, one of the characters named Howard is commissioned to go to space to work on the Russian space station. There the main Russian astronaut with Howard has a husky voice with thick Russian accent and constantly boasting on his ability and superiority to withhold a lot of alcohol and extreme colds. In the show *Sex and the city*, one of the main characters Carrie dates a Russian guy, who is portrayed in a stereotypical manner as being very cold and having a tough love persona. He reacts coldly on hearing that his girlfriend’s friend has cancer. Carrie explains her boyfriend’s cold nature by attributing to him being a Russian rather than just stating it as his general character. He is shown to be violent in the show (The Artifice 2015).

Another entertainment show the *WWE or World Wide Wrestling* has become a showground for stereotyping Russia. It is a world famous show and has a great number of audience and fans. The show around the time 2004 when the situations between Russia and the West were going a low phase, launched one of its allegedly Russian players named ‘Alexander Rusev’ who is often accompanied by his valet ‘Lana’. While Rusev is said to be of Bulgarian origin and Lana is an American, the show insists on Lana being born in Russia. The show has groups of players either categorised as ‘heels’ or ‘the baby face’, represented as villains and heroes respectively. Rusev is a heel and in the show he proudly represents mother Russia and its leader Vladimir Putin. In a statement, the spokesperson to the WWE stated that President Putin has given them good materials to

create a story for the show. Rusev is not the first Russian wrestler. There have been American wrestlers playing as Russians and almost as villains in the show. Even in Britain, *World of Sport*, viewers could see the red-trunked *Red Ivan* get “body splashed” by crowd favourite Big Daddy. Earlier in order to be a good Russian heel, all that need was for person to be “abnormally thick-set, brutish looking, with a goatee, moustache, and bald head: the circus strongman look” (Teeman 2014). All the characteristics that are present in a Russian wrestler in WWE in a way portrays Russia’s hard power as the demeanour of the wrestler mostly represents a strong body look compared to other wrestlers although the whole show is about strength. The villain portrayal of such Russian wrestlers shows Russia also as having a negative image in the international showground.

5.6. CONCLUSION

Mass media and the press have an imperative responsibility of determining how any country is portrayed and perceived in the world. The way a country is perceived by the others depends a lot on the way the media of that particular country or that of other countries portray it. The image of Russia in the world is mostly understood through the help of Russian media as well as that of Western media. The hegemony enjoyed by most of the Western countries and especially that of the US make its media quite popular and widespread. The rapport Russia shares with the West determine the way it is portrayed by the Western mass media and press. Russia’s image underwent a huge transformation with the disintegration of the Soviet Union. From superpower status to that of a failed country in terms of its economy as well as politics, Russia’s image got affected negatively throughout the world. Russia partially blames the West for this situation as it left Russia unaided during its transition period. This fact remains a deep scar in Russia’s relationship with the West. The situation of Russia did slowly start to stabilise in terms of its economy but in its process of doing that it slowly started to lose its grip over the foreign relations. Its influence was no longer powerful as it used to be during the Soviet period.

While Russia was trying to regain its stability, the West made best use of its so called victory of capitalism over communism. It started to spread its influence around the world. The West used its soft power to gain attraction and to win the hearts and minds of not just

the leaders but especially the people of various countries. The Cold War period witnessed a lot of research done by the West on the way the Soviet Union perceived the West and especially the US. This is because such studies would help in understanding not just the intentions of that country but also would help the Western countries understand their image and how it is being portrayed to the world by their competitors. However not much has been researched on the way the West perceives Russia. This could be due to the fact that the mystery that wrapped the Soviet Union made the West very inquisitive for anything related to it but with the disintegration Russia was almost transparent in the eyes of the West. No mystery or fear was attached with Russia anymore.

However Russia has often been portrayed in a negative light by the Western mass media and press. The soft power of the Western countries makes them accessible to many countries in the world. What these countries sell, whether it is idea or even the way of living is easily bought by many countries that are under the influence of the West. This way the portrayal of Russia by the West also affects or influences the way the other countries perceive Russia. Russia has become conscious of this fact and from the beginning of President Putin's term there have been some necessary steps undertaken to tackle the negative image of Russia. The complex relationship shared by Russia and the West keep both the sides intrigued by the actions of the other.

The role of media is very important in shaping the minds and perception of the people of the world. The media can present the truth in the way they want the target people to see it. Likewise with regard to the severing of ties between the West and Russia can also be due to the contribution of media exaggerations. However in many cases the exaggerations are not baseless. It is also true that Russia does entertain policies that sometimes are detrimental to the country and other countries. Russia's attempts to tackle its negative image abroad mostly spread by the Western mass media include its own measures involving its mass media and press. To this effect Russian news channels and cinema have been active in promoting a positive image of Russia and thereby strengthening its soft power. However the West is very critical of the way Russia uses its mass media. They claim that rather than using its media the Putin administration tries to control it fully. While the West may also be guilty of affecting Russia's negative image, it remains

true that controlling the media houses by the Russian government takes away the independence and credibility of media. This affects Russia's soft power.

While it is true that the Western mass media and the press do portray Russia in the negative light, the question that comes to the fore is whether it totally affects Russia's soft power. A country's soft power depends on the way that particular country is able to attract others or not. It can be based on how a country can make its values, culture and even policies magnetic for others. It is true that Russia has often been portrayed in a negative light and the Cold War legacy of portraying Russia as the villain still continues. Such portrayal of Russia does affect its soft power but it is not solely based on the way the Western media portrays it. Russia's domestic policies have been very narrow and rigid where human rights take a backseat. It is true that Russia cannot be judged on the basis of the Western standards of democracy but soft power cannot thrive where there is too much of governmental control. The negative portrayal of Russia by the West does affect Russia's soft power but it also depends on Russia to counter such attempts by the West.

Conclusion

CONCLUSION

6.1. ELUCIDATION

Soft Power for any given country is a power that forms the solid foundation on which the country depends. Power that relies on credibility, attraction, persuasion and consent has always given a country the sustenance which is not possible by sole reliance on hard power. Russia has always been known as a country that is quite efficient in the use of its hard power resources. It has the image of a country that boasts of its strength, its military capability and a strong ruler at the top. The perception that people in general have of Russia is that of a country that will not entertain or tolerate any kind of opposition or interference. Russia is often seen as a 'cold' country not just in terms of the weather but mostly in terms of people's attitude. This unwelcoming, cold, dull and mysterious picture is one of the most common stereotypes of Russia and the Russians. Other stereotypes associated with words and phrases such as 'land of Mafia', 'snow covered region', 'bears', 'vodka', all create a perception in the minds of the people that generate a picture that does highlight the true attributes of the country.

Russia is often perceived as being very grim and rigid at the same time. While such an image of Russia gives it an advantage of not being taken for granted and no country would dare to mess with it; it certainly does not create an attractive image. Fear can only act as a defence but in order to achieve a desired result, in a world where many countries are emerging to be equally powerful one needs to build an attractive and approachable appearance too. The countries of the world have gradually started realising the power of attraction over coercion. By appearing more approachable, friendly, safe environment for business and work, many countries have opened the floodgates for more cooperation and opportunities.

Realising the importance of soft power, Russia too has welcomed it with open arms albeit with slight modifications that the country thinks suits best for it. Understanding Russia has been quite a colossal task for the Western countries. The past experiences between Russia and the West have often clouded their judgment about each other. Hence,

understanding Russia's approach to soft power too has not been quite easy for the West. Soft power being a Western construct and propounded by a Western scholar Joseph Nye, gives the West a sense of feeling of having a better understanding of this concept than other countries, and especially its counterpart Russia.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the collapse of its ideology, the fear of the West also decreased as they viewed themselves as being victorious. Russia after the disintegration was thus viewed as a "failed state" incapable of challenging the Western hegemony. However the international scenario changed in a way that posed a challenge to the hegemony of the West and especially that of the United States. This is so because Russia gradually began to recover from the shambles of weak economy as well as the international arena started witnessing the rise of other great countries too.

The changing of the world order coupled with globalisation has made the countries of the world dependent on each other in many aspects. While globalisation has its own perils, it certainly has not only shrunk the world but also the ego of all the countries that enjoyed the fruits of their hard power. The present world has been tuned to adopt soft power as their means to achieving their desired goals. Keeping in mind the image of Russia which is mostly associated with hard power, the study of Russia's soft power approach gives us an opportunity to see the other side of Russia that is not talked about much.

What makes the research on Russia's soft power even more interesting is to find out the response of the Western countries that have always been a staunch critique of Russia. Russia has often complained about the way the West perceives it as well as how it portrays it to the rest of the world. The thesis has therefore tried to study in great details about the kind of reaction given by the West with regard to Russia's soft power and whether or not it affects Russia's image. It helps us in understanding Russia's take on soft power better as it clears away all the unnecessary confusions surrounding it. Russia's soft power is in its initial stages and it differs from that of the West in many respects. Russia's history therefore helps in understanding its present day take on soft power. The chapters in the thesis have highlighted the very fact that Russia has believed in 'attraction' but it has always been thought to be 'safe and secure' under a strong ruler.

Russia's soft power has been different from that of Joseph Nye's notion of soft power in that he stresses on the fact that soft power relies less on the state or government actions in promoting a positive picture but more on the actions, values and policies undertaken by the State that in itself makes the country attractive to others. Russia however depends more on the government and Putin forms the guiding force for the rest. What the government does to portray a positive picture of Russia has often been seen as propaganda by the West. This is similar to the Cold War days when any action of the Soviet Union related to making the country attractive was seen as propaganda by the West. This is so because the West is of the opinion that what the State portrays to the world is not in alignment with the happenings inside the country. That is to say that what a government promotes does not take into account the unattractive side of Russia. However the governments of every country can be accused of the same fact as this way every country is guilty of some propaganda business. This in a way becomes the duty of the State to promote and boast its attributes. As long as Russia is able to attract the countries of the world without coercion and is able to get its desires or goals fulfilled, it partially fulfils Nye's notions of soft power. Power is after all the means to achieve the desired outcomes. It becomes soft when coercion is missing from it and consent makes it look attractive.

For any country, mass media plays an important role in either making a positive image or a negative image. The thesis therefore has examined the role of mass media in Russia's quest for soft power as well as the role of Western mass media in portraying Russia in a negative light to the rest of the world. Russia has often blamed the West for viewing it in a negative light with regard to its domestic as well as foreign policy. It remains a fact that the West has been very critical of Russia in many respects. Considering the events in Russia's history that led to the present state of Russia, it does not quite belong to the type of society that the West has. Since the Russian society is different from that of the West, the way of handling the domestic policies also does not seem familiar or even attractive to the Western world.

The Western mass media has on many occasions portrayed Russia as a country that does not give freedom to its citizens in the right measure, where human rights take a backseat

and democratic practice in any field is quite low. Overall the West provides a very grim picture of Russia where the citizens are but a mere puppet at the hands of the ruler. Even with regard to the foreign policies, the Western media has not hesitated to cover all the negative aspects in an exaggerated way. Apart from the news channels that portray Russia negatively, other aspects of Western media such as the entertainment industry, Western movies and soap operas have on many occasions portrayed a negative image of Russia. Hollywood is the biggest example where Russians appear as villains, Mafias, as cold and rude people; and always the nuisance maker.

The stereotypical image of Russia may be just created for the purpose of entertainment but it does harm the image of the country in various ways. Movies, art and literature always generate some kind of ideas and it helps in stirring up the minds of the audience. It can be used for a good purpose and make people conscious of various social and political issues but it also can have a negative impact in the minds of the people regarding any particular thing. Most people believe what is shown to them and a vast majority do not question or try to see the larger picture. The mass media and press thus helps in either constructing or deconstructing a particular image. It would be wrong to state that only Russia has been the target of Western mass media but this study has focused the perils of such portrayal of Russia and how in the long run it affects Russia's image in the world.

Such negative portrayal by the Western media certainly does affect Russia's image negatively and makes the task of building its soft power slightly difficult. Most of the countries in the world know mainly about Russia through the Western mass media. The negative perception of Russia by the West gets transferred to the countries that follow it. The result is often that people fear Russia more than being attracted to it. While it is true that the West is partly responsible for creating such an image of Russia, the basic fact cannot be ignored that it is up to it to counter that negative image by focusing more on soft power rather than just involving in the hard power aspects of power.

The changing world scenario and globalisation has made the boundaries of the countries porous. The countries are now connected to each other in various ways on different levels. Now, it is not just the governments that are in contrast but there is a rise in people to people contact through the help of social media, exchange programmes and various

facilities that were unavailable earlier. If it is easy to tarnish the image of a particular country with the help of mass media, it is also easy, compared to earlier times to build one's own positive image. What a country does is not fully hidden in the present world. It is up to the countries to use the mass media in the right and more constructive way.

While there are disagreements happening between Russia and the West, it certainly has come out of the Cold War phase. The West and especially the US does not fear any particular ideology to take over theirs. However economic and other political and social differences do creep in time to time. During the Cold War period, the West and the Soviet bloc viewed each other with distrust and portrayed each other negatively. There has certainly been a change in the way the West now sees Russia as compared to the Cold War period as well as the period after disintegration when Russia was seen as a failed state. Russia has tried to fight its way through such an image and has shown the world that it still has the strength and ambition of a super power. It at least aims to be an energy superpower. Russia is now slowly making a comeback by trying to rebuild its image and make it appear more attractive. FIFA 2018 and Sochi Winter Olympics 2014 are events that have acted as opportunities for Russia to counter its negative stereotypical image and replace it with a positive and attractive one.

Russia's soft power ambitions is budding slowly and it is mostly concentrated in its 'Near Abroad'. The mechanisms used by it are mostly to attract and win the hearts of its ethnic minorities in those regions so as to build a strong support system. Language is a major factor that helps Russia to create a strong hold in the region. This is coupled with common cultural practices and traditions. Russia also tries to provide them with aid and create various opportunities for the people of these regions. Many people even come to Russia in search of work and brighter future. The fact that many of the post Soviet countries look up to Russia for their betterment is in itself, a great source of soft power.

However Russia fears the increase of Western dominance in this region as they feel that the West is trying to interfere into the matters of disputes between Russia and the post-Soviet states which is seen by the latter as its 'zone of privilege'. The West tries to side with the countries that show any kind of resentment with Russia and it tries its best to take it out from Russia's zone of influence.

Russia's soft power elsewhere other than its Near Abroad is in its nascent form. This is in a way is good as it can start a fresh mechanism to make itself appear appealing and attractive. The various cultural and technical centres in different parts of the world help promoting Russia's culture, which forms an important part of soft power. Apart from strengthening the economy, tourism also works at an advantage for Russia's soft power as people come and witness its sources of attraction and this can help in countering the negative image of Russia.

Lastly, it can be said that to understand Russia's soft power it is imperative to understand its history. The history of Russia explains us in great details that every event forms a particular layer covering Russia. Hence, when we try to understand present day Russia's take on anything we need to peel off each layer and try to get into the depth of it. The second chapter of the thesis is totally dedicated to it. The chapter highlights all the important layers that in a way explain as to why Russia is the way it is. While each event has its own contribution, the basic common thing in all the stages of Russia is the reliance on a strong ruler.

From the early periods to the Tsarist period and from the Soviet period till present there always has been the hand of a strong ruler trying to bring the country out from the muddle. It is deeply entrenched in the minds of the Russians that it is always a strong ruler that can safeguard their country. They have trusted that ruler in the past and the trend is being followed still. It is against this backdrop that we have to understand Russia's quest for soft power and how it differs from that of the West. The West however needs to understand this that unlike the Western notion of soft power, the role of State/government or a ruler is quite visible. It totally depends on the leader of Russia since he is the decision maker for all the important matters for making the country look attractive to others. Every country has its own right of making a country attractive and acquiring soft power and especially the emerging powers have their own path to soft power; it might be different but it does not mean they are incorrect.

6.2. TESTING OF HYPOTHESES

The thesis is based on three hypotheses that cover the period from the Cold War to present. These hypotheses have been reflected and tested throughout the chapters and have helped in forming the basic tenets of conclusion for the thesis. The first hypothesis mentioned in the first chapter talks about too much interference by the state or government in the affairs of Russia, and that it affects Russia's soft power negatively. The West however enjoys its hegemony over various parts of the world and that itself acts as a boost for its soft power. This hypothesis has been tested in almost all the chapters as the involvement of the highest authority or the government is visible in almost all the periods of Russia. While Russia has always felt the need for a strong authority to rule and bring the country in a stable condition, its hard power, economic status and even political condition to a certain extent improves but its soft power weakens. This is so because there is little scope for dissent. The ruler/government rules with "an iron fist" and serves the country from breakdown but sometimes at the cost of the liberties of the individual and disregarding the values of the country.

For soft power to flourish it is required for a country to rely on factors or institutions other than state funded or related ones. Attraction comes when its values, culture and policies are reflected naturally and does not look as a mere propaganda of the State. Of course government involvement is necessary because only a good government can create an atmosphere of change, freedom, progress and development but it should let other organisations and institutions flourish on their own without being fully answerable to the state. The West and especially the US on the other hand enjoys hegemony and it draws the global population to admire their culture and ideas through their mass media; thus enhancing their soft power. It is this hegemony that the West enjoys is also used to portray Russia's image to the world. Therefore the hypothesis stands justified to a certain extent as Russia's image in the world is mostly to do with who the ruler is and how strong he is, and the power of the government or the state. This gives the image of a country that relies on hard power more than soft power. However this hypothesis cannot be fully justified as it is the interference of the State that has brought about the desired results regarding Russia's attraction in the world. Soft power cannot have a narrow

outlook and cannot be understood from Western perspective. Countries like China and Russia rely heavily on the government on various matters; yet these countries have managed to win the hearts of many across the world through various attractive policies and promotion of culture and values. While the values and ideas that they promote may not be in congruence with many countries, it certainly does attract those who either benefit from such programmes, policies or values or are connected to the country in some ways. The involvement of state in the West is less perceptible but it is heavily involved through various organisations and groups and subtly promoting their ideas to the world. It is just that the involvement of State is more pronounced in the case of Russia.

The second hypothesis states that even after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the fall of its ideology the West continues to portray Russia in a negative way, hence apparently the communist ideology was not the greatest threat to the West. Perhaps the criticism of the Soviet Union and the present day Russia reflects the fear of West with Russia; with or without its ideology. The fear that the West had or has is actually the rise of Russia in any form because it sees in it a potential to challenge the Western hegemony. While it is highlighted in the chapters that the West through its mass media does try to portray a negative image of Russia, it cannot be totally correct to state that it partially negates Russia's soft power. It is true that the hegemony of the West is quite impressive and outreaching and that majority in the world see through the prism of Western standards. However it is up to Russia to build its soft power. A negative image of Russia in the world cannot damage the country if it uses the combination of soft power and hard power as its shield. Hence, the hypothesis cannot be justified fully on the above mentioned grounds.

The third hypothesis highlights how Russia's soft power in the former Soviet states and the rest of the world depends on how Russia promotes its language and common factors in the case of the former and other aspects of popular culture as well as values in the case of the latter. We have seen through the chapters of the thesis that the focus of Russia's soft power is mostly concentrated in its near abroad and it uses the past, common cultural affinity and language to the best of the ability to gain support in this region. By gaining

support it tries to familiarise its policies and programmes to these countries and makes it look attractive for them to follow the same trend.

As discussed earlier, soft power in Russia involves a massive role of government in promoting its positive picture. While the government uses its media and press to reach out to the people in the post-Soviet region and carry forward its message, it is not exactly the case in the rest part of the world. It is true that Russia is famous for its rich culture as well as its skills and talents in areas such as art, ballet and even in some sports, but the reach of Russia's potential and skill is not up to the mark in other parts of the world. One reason could be the fact that Russia has not exploited its potential in the area of soft power or the fact that too much of reliance on hard power has forced soft power to take a backseat. It could also be the fact that everything in Russia needs the involvement of government and that has overwhelmed it making it unable to handle all the spheres efficiently.

The NGOs and other civil society actors maintaining a just civil society would have lessened the burden of the government had they been flourishing in great numbers. However the '*silnaya ruka*' or the strong ruler continues to take charge of all the affairs. It is also a fact that the strong ruler in Russia has been steering the wheel so far and like in the past it did bring out Russia from the shambles of crumbling economy and stagnation to the position of almost creating an alternate discourse of power parallel to that of the Western hegemony.

The thesis also highlights on the fact that the reason behind Russia's not so efficient soft power abroad could be due the hegemony of the West and its mass media and diplomacy that unknowingly has crept into almost every society and even the minds of the people at large. The West has been selling their way of life, their model of democracy, freedom and rights. Hence, anything other than that would seem a little unfamiliar for the people to digest. The Western hegemony makes the people see and understand things from Western perspective without letting them know that they are being forced to think in that way. The West promotes what it has to promote through consent and this forms one of the strong basis of their soft power.

However with the rise of many countries such as China, India and even Russia, there is a rise in multitude of views on various aspects covering the politico-social, economic and international issues. The Western values do not remain unquestioned. Russia even after undergoing a series of changes right from the Tsarist period is still trying to challenge anything that interferes with its way of dealing with various issues.

6.3. FUTURE TRENDS FOR RUSSIA

The present world is more about attraction, charisma, persuasion, and less about force, coercion and compulsion. While atrocities in the world are still continuing, it has become imperative for the states to tackle the new threats in a tactful manner. History has shown that the use of force and coercion has only led to bloodshed. The present international scenario is faced with problems that are not limited to any country. These problems and threats require combined efforts from the capable powers of the world. However this does not give them the right to exploit any other small or victim countries in the name of change, development, freedom or democracy.

At present the role of Russia too has been increasing. It is in a position to help a lot of countries with their problems and emerge as a hero. The advantage that Russia has is the numerous big events that it underwent. Experience is the greatest teacher and the history of Russia is full of such examples. As mentioned earlier, Russia's soft power is in its nascent form although the Soviet Union and Tsarist Russia enjoyed their own form of soft power. Russia has not fully exploited its capabilities in the field of soft power. Its rich cultural heritage is known to all but so many have not really understood the taste of it.

Soviet Union enjoyed its own form of attractions where its ideology was in itself a great source of its soft power. Many countries were attracted to the Soviet Socialist way. It gained its popularity among the Third World countries by providing them with aid and amenities. Present day Russia may not have the socialist ideology but it still has the capabilities to aid and assist its former republics and other developing countries. However Russia should not be using these countries for its own ulterior motives alone.

Russia should invest more on cultural institutions, its institutions such as *Rosstrudnichestvo*, *Ruskiy Mir* and the various Russian Cultural and Scientific Centres abroad that are responsible for promoting Russia positive image. Soviet cinema and literature was quite successful in winning the hearts and minds of the people across the globe. Even till today so many Soviet era books and movies are read and seen in various parts of the world. Russia should continue the trend and should not only promote the earlier literature but should also encourage more of literary activities and art work. Such literature and movies should then be translated for the non-Russian speaking populations. Events such as Sochi Olympics and FIFA have given Russia an opportunity to win the hearts of the masses from various parts of the world, and also to burst the clouds of doubts, stereotypes and negative image in the minds of the people.

Russia's quest for soft power should continue despite the obstacles such as being portrayed negatively by the Western world. The responses of the Western countries will not matter so long as it continues to strive hard to achieve its soft power goals, and as long as it does not itself involve in activities that are detrimental to its image.

Russia should never underestimate the power of its own people. The greatest support Russia can achieve against all the criticisms arising from the West and other parts of the world is by gaining the legitimacy from its own people. However the support should not come out of mere fear and helplessness when people have no other option but to support its government. When the citizens of any given country are happy in true sense with the functioning of the state then that is soft power in true sense. This is because the values it will uphold at home will reflect even in its foreign policies. When the condition inside the country is good it shows on the outside without government propaganda.

Russia is striving for a better future and it will definitely change socially, politically and economically in the foreseeable future. Change in Russia will take time due to many factors but it will happen eventually. Russia's trust in a strong ruler coupled with its national character and its deep rooted history all make change slightly difficult for it. The present day ruling class must understand that Russia needs to invest on soft power as much as it does on hard power. A strong civil society, a sound business environment, reducing corruption, providing citizens their basic rights and creating a safe and fair

political environment are areas that Russia needs to work more on. By focusing on these areas along with its existing potential, Russia will definitely reach the place it aspires to reach.

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