

# **What makes Russia so popular in Serbia?**

## **Origins of Russian soft power**

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## Abstract

This thesis tests a new methodological approach to investigating and measuring the capacities for soft power, i.e. a country's ability to get the desired outcomes not through coercion or payment, but through attractiveness of its culture, domestic values and foreign policies. The main theoretical argument of this work is that the hallmark of soft power is not uniformity of application, but its variation. This means that globally and even regionally generalized conclusions about soft power have very little practical utility. Therefore, this thesis suggests switching the focal point of research from countries eliciting attraction, to those subjected to it. I argue that this type of research has higher practical utility, while at the same time it overcomes various problems of index-based measurements of soft power used to-date.

Two main research questions are answered in this work. Primarily, which elements of foreign countries' soft power people in Serbia consider most important when formulating an opinion about them, and, secondly, which elements of Russian soft power contribute most to this country's image among the Serbian population. An online survey of 442 people in Serbia shows that Serbs tend to be most strongly attracted to countries whose population is linguistically and religiously similar to Serbian, whose athletes are quite successful, and military power globally respected. On the other hand, Russia most strongly attracts those Serbs who regard important the attractiveness of a foreign country's art, cuisine, education and touristic offer, while, on the contrary, it repels those who deem important the geopolitical relevance of a country when formulating an opinion about it.

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# Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The Balkan Peninsula has probably been the most unstable region in Europe over the last 150 years. In less than a century, starting from the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia in 1908, and two Balkan wars – the first in 1912-1913, the second in 1913 – across World War I (1914-1918) and World War II (on the Balkans from 1941 to 1945), and ending in several bloody civil wars during the 1990s and the NATO aggression on Yugoslavia in 1999, this part of the world has come through many serious geopolitical changes.<sup>2</sup> During this period, new countries arose, while others declined in power or disappeared. Their number changed from only two sovereign states in 1870 (i.e. two empires – Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman) to nine in 2006, when the last one of them emerged (alphabetically: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYR of Macedonia, Greece, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey).<sup>3</sup>

Interestingly enough, only one country was involved in every single aforementioned war that took place here – Serbia.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, not surprisingly, Serbia is probably the only country on the Balkan Peninsula that even today still has disputes with almost all of its territorial neighbors. Some of these disputes are territorial (e.g. the Serbian-Croatian border), while others are based on religion (e.g. with Macedonian and Montenegrin Orthodox Churches), ethnicity (e.g. the dispute with Romania concerning the Vlach national minority), or different interpretations of historical events (e.g. Serbia not recognizing the genocide in Srebrenica).

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<sup>1</sup> Some ideas from this chapter were previously used in my article “Contemporary Disputes between Serbia and Croatia: Roots and Perspectives” (Kosović 2015a).

<sup>2</sup> Eric Hobsbawm (1995) used the term “short twentieth century” to describe the period from 1914 to 1991. He argues that as many events occurred during the twentieth century as usually occur within an epoch, which makes this period “short”.

<sup>3</sup> There are different opinions on where the borders of the Balkan Peninsula are. Thus, some theorists consider Romania and Slovenia to be Balkan countries as well, while others exclude even Croatia. Moreover, Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia in 2008. However, since this territory is still under dispute and is not a member of the United Nations, it will hereby not be treated as a sovereign state. Therefore, when I write in this paper about the Balkan Peninsula, I have in mind nine aforementioned countries.

<sup>4</sup> During the wars in the 1990s, and especially during the war in Kosovo, the involvement of Montenegro, which was part of FR Yugoslavia at the time, was minimal.

Additionally, Serbia lost all wars in the 1990s, while a significant, disputed part of its territory – Kosovo – is still trying to gain full recognition of independence. Finally and consequentially, the foreigners often portrayed Serbian people and politicians as “bad guys” of the Balkans, which caused senses of both shame and injustice among the Serbian population. Therefore, it seems reasonable to argue that Serbia was and indeed still is the main factor of stability and one of the biggest potential dangers when it comes to war and peace issues in contemporary regional politics in the Balkans.

The international community and many countries from beyond the Balkans also played an ever so important part in conflicts mentioned previously. Starting from both World Wars, to civil ones between 1991 and 1995 and the illegal military campaign of NATO against Yugoslavia in 1999, most of the world’s leading forces had their share of action in the Balkans. They both caused some of them and contributed to the overall peace and reconciliation, especially since the 1990s. The parts these countries played ranged from deliberately supporting one side in the conflict, to supplying them with weapons, imposing sanctions and even openly intervening in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding military and civil missions. Moreover, many foreign countries tried – and still do – to accomplish their own national interests through a more or less open influence on decision-making processes in all conflicting entities with the use of both sticks and carrots. In some places, like Croatia, this influence had positive outcomes for the local population, with this country recently becoming a member of the NATO and the European Union (EU). On the other hand, many citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina agree that the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords, written mostly by the officials of the USA and signed by the representatives of all sides in the conflict, were only successful in establishing peace, while at the same time failing to bring about a functional, stable and prosperous future to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIRN 2015).

From this short introductory discussion about the regional politics in the Balkans stems the importance of understanding the means through which foreign influence is achieved in this region. As shown previously, the consequences of this influence in such an unstable part of the world can vary from spurring wars and ethnic cleansings to efficiently contributing to reconciliation and overall political, economic and social prosperity. Moreover, any issue of influence is an issue of power. Influence without power is an oxymoron. Winning over a person that you like, making coalitions in politics or occupying a part of other nation's territory – all these ventures need power and, through it, influence on hearts, minds and bodies of others. Therefore, understanding which factors determine whether a country will have more or less success in getting the desired outcomes of its regional politics – positive or negative for local countries and their citizens – becomes a crucial point in more than simply understanding conflict and peace in the Balkans. Which elements of a certain country's culture, foreign and maybe even internal, national policies matter for being positively assessed in the eyes of the local population? What are the sources and bases of one nation's powerful influence on another, which sometimes leads to a successful – legal and legitimate – redirection of the latter's sovereign politics? These are the points this thesis will aim to address through conducting a case study of Russian influence in Serbia.

This thesis investigates the origins of Russian popularity among Serbian citizens and answers the question of what makes Russia so well regarded there. In doing this, it provides insights into which elements of Russian culture, internal political values and foreign policies influence (both positively and negatively) its image among the Serbian population. Additionally, this research identifies elements of any foreign country's soft power that Serbs regard important when formulating their opinion about them.

The analytical lens, through which these questions are tackled, is the theory of soft power, hereby understood as closely related to *popularity* of one country among another's

population. Joseph S. Nye Jr. (2004, x) defined this concept as the ability to influence the behavior of others to get the desired outcomes not by using force, coercion or payment (which would be the forms of “hard power”), but through *attractiveness*. Therefore, the more attractive a country is, i.e. the more foreigners favor it, and i.e. the more popular it is among them, the bigger its potential for using soft power. This argument also speaks in favor of differentiating between *capacities for* and *outcomes of* the use of soft power, whereas the former term would only imply potential influence, while the latter would encompass its results. This thesis focuses solely on soft power capacities (or capabilities, potentials, sources) due to methodological and empirical hardships in investigating the outcomes. Namely, it seems rather unlikely that any decision a country makes can be regarded as a directly induced outcome of another’s use of soft power, so researching and obtaining evidence of a clear, strong connection between the two would be quite an accomplishment.

On a purely abstract base, understanding the origins of soft power, i.e. the causes of a country’s popularity, is useful in several ways. First, theoretically, these findings would serve the purpose of showing that soft power indeed matters as a part of countries’ foreign policies, although some authors consider it a poor tool for achieving national geopolitical interests (Fan 2008). Additionally, they would also explain that, on the one hand, not all factors of soft power matter equally, but, on the other, also point to the necessity of finally establishing a clear, theoretically comprehensive, yet reasonably narrow, list of national traits that can be considered elements of soft power. On an even broader theoretical scale, the issue of soft power and image formation is closely related to various other fields of political science and international relations. To mention just some of them, investigating the ways favorable images of foreign countries are presented in the media and their later effect on these countries’ popularity could attract equal attention of media scholars, as well as those interested in political communication. Moreover, researching the effectiveness of the use of a country’s or organization’s soft power

in establishing and preserving peace in conflict societies is already becoming a popular area of security and peace studies (Jenne 2015). Finally, but not exhaustively, the soft influence and attraction of a certain country or organization can have a significant impact on many areas of economic, social and even cultural life of societies subject to it, so the findings obtained through this kind of research would represent a contribution to the existing literature on these scholarly areas as well. Therefore, the issue of understanding the bases of soft influence is a matter of great relevance not only for the broad field of political science, but can also be used in various multidisciplinary approaches. Hence, the aim of this research is to go beyond political science and become a useful and meaningful cornerstone for various research in many other disciplines that deal with one country's influence on politics and events in the other.

Secondly, the empirical significance of such research stems from the fact that they contribute to a better understanding of political situations in various countries. For instance, the hereby-conducted analysis provides an insight into complex contemporary politics in Serbia – a country that is a candidate for membership in the European Union, yet still maintains very tight relations with Russia, sometimes even opposing the opinion of the EU.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, these investigations are useful as a policy-oriented research, since they determine which elements of soft power matter to particular populations, e.g. Serbs in this case. By obtaining these data, decision makers receive information about which aspects of soft power they should focus on most, and which of them would represent a waste of resources. Additionally, this kind of research and its results show why – in some cases, at least – countries that invest far more money into building a favorable image (e.g. the USA, France, Germany or the UK) do not have that much success as others (e.g. Russia), which invest a lot less. Finally, research of this kind is useful for broader audiences as well, since their results might imply the real strength of bilateral and multilateral relations between the observed countries. Consequentially,

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<sup>5</sup> As with not imposing sanctions upon Russia, or sending Serbian soldiers to the Victory Parade in Moscow in 2015, although the EU advised Serbia to do completely the opposite.

investigating the origins of one country's soft power in another could lead to useful policy recommendations even in cases of complex political and social situations in the observed countries.

The main aim of this thesis is to explain the bases of Russian soft power in Serbia and thus contribute to the existing literature about this part of Russian foreign politics, which can currently be divided into two groups. The first one deals with broader theoretical discussions about the ways in which Russian local elites understand – or misunderstand (Nye 2013) – the concept of soft power and its role and significance in international relations. Thus, Nye (2013) writes that both Russia and China make “the mistake of thinking that government is the main instrument of soft power,” while at the same time neglecting and overlooking the importance of civil society and non-state actors in promoting the country and eliciting positive attraction. Additionally, Jeanne Wilson (2012) argues that Russian elites have dualistic, biased views on soft power. On the one hand, they see it as a potentially useful tool for achieving foreign and domestic political goals, but at the same time, “as a potential danger, an instrument of Western penetration that threatens the sovereignty of the state and challenges its ideological premises” (Wilson 2012, 1171), on the other. Consequentially, some authors argue, this misconceptualization of soft power among Russian elites has led to “Moscow ignoring ‘soft power’ in relations with its neighbors (...) and preferring the use of hard policies of ‘carrots and sticks’, thus risking the loss of even the last bits of positive image Russia has among the peoples surrounding it” (Bobylo 2013, 133). Just two of many possible reasons for these misconceptualizations are the lack of a unified theoretical approach to soft power among both theoreticians and practitioners of soft power in Russia, and the inexistence of a clear unified decision-making center about these issues other than the president (Levina 2016). There are, of course, contrary views to these. Thus, some authors argue that the Russian understanding of

soft power is simply different in content than the one in the West, but it is still, nevertheless, soft power (Tsygankov 2016).

The second part of the existing literature on Russian soft power deals with empirical case studies of its use in various countries. Understandably, the most widely discussed cases are those of the Russian “near abroad”, i.e. the former Soviet republics. An overall impression that prevails in most of these works is that one of the “serious structural limitation[s] of Russia’s policy and its soft power abroad is the absence of a well-articulated idea of partnership” (Bogomolov & Lytvynenko 2012, 15). Many authors would agree that

Russian strategists fail to appreciate that most American and European global soft power comes from the West’s capacity to forge productive partnerships and create new opportunities. Instead, Russian policy-makers have concentrated on mobilizing loyal constituencies (...). If soft power is to be understood as ‘getting others to want what you want’, then Russian practitioners have been doing that in the most economical way – by trying to locate and mobilize those who already want it. (Bogomolov & Lytvynenko 2012, 15)

However, when it fails to do so – at least to a large enough extent – “the Russian state and business entities characteristically mix hard and soft approaches, often making it difficult to distinguish between Russian soft and hard power, diplomacy and intelligence activities” (Grigas 2012, 2). Kristina Liik’s (2013) comparative analysis of Russian soft power in Moldova and Armenia provides an important insight into this matter. While, on the one hand, Russian soft power has strong bases in long common culture and common values that the peoples of both countries individually share with Russia, it is often hindered by the third element, as defined by Nye – foreign policies (Liik 2013). This country’s role in the frozen Transnistrian conflict as well as the Armenian military and economic dependence on Russia, often used by the latter as a tool for what can be seen as threats and extortions that undermine Armenian independence, seriously damage the overall perception of Russian soft power in both countries (Liik 2013). Therefore, Liik rightfully concludes that “[a]s long as Russia undermines its soft power potential by imposing harsh measures (hard power) on the target countries and at the same time neglecting the situation and problems at home, it has a limited opportunity in enhancing its soft power” (Liik 2013, 80).

However, regardless of potential problems in means, Tsygankov (2006, 1080) argues that “Moscow’s policies [in the post-Soviet area] can be interpreted as an effort to preserve existing influence in the region for the purpose of its greater stabilization, rather than imperial control,” which seems a legitimate claim. Russia has, on the one hand, immense possibilities for building a favorable image among the countries of the near-abroad (and not only them), mostly based on the long common past, but also due to the fact that it is still the leading economic and – what may be even more important – military power in the region. As such, it can guarantee both economic and military security to its partners, which is an important part of any big country’s soft power. On the other hand, as Tsygankov also rightfully notes, Russian soft power is geographically limited, most importantly since the values it cherishes and promotes are “based on Eastern Christian ideals predominantly popular in Eurasian and East European regions” (Tsygankov 2013, 260).

This thesis is partly driven by the fact that Serbia belongs exactly to this part of the world, and is, as such, expected to share the same values as Russia. Therefore, this work contributes mostly to the second, case-study area of literature by investigating the bases of Russian soft power in this country. The main research object of this work are the elements of Russian soft power that matter most in Serbian people’s formation of opinion about this country. In other words, I investigate which areas of Russian culture, political values and foreign-policy behavior have the strongest effect in eliciting attraction among Serbian citizens. First – and this is the main theoretical and methodological contribution of this thesis to the literature – I suggest a new approach to quantifying soft power sources, capacities and capabilities for influence. Instead of the subject-based approach in quantifying the sources of soft power, which was used in most analyses of this issue to date (see: McClory 2010, 2011, 2012), I suggest measuring soft power elements through *object-oriented research*.

My main argument is that the hallmark of soft power is not uniformity of application, but its variation. In practice, this means that some elements of soft power that are useful for Russia in its relations with Belarus, or for the USA in Mexico, might not be equally effective between Russia and Ukraine and the USA and Canada. Therefore, the investigation and measurement of origins – or sources, capabilities and capacities – of one country’s soft power should be based on determining its applicability in certain political, economic, and societal contexts. Hence, the key question that needs answering in order to measure the potential for soft influence of one country on another is *which elements of soft power (culture, political values, and foreign policies) members of a particular society consider most important when assessing their overall opinion about a foreign country or its leader.*

This thesis obtains this information through an online opinion poll among the Serbian population ( $n=442$ ). The questionnaire containing 29 questions is used to gather data on two main questions. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of 23 questions investigating the importance of 23 different elements of soft power: 8 that dealt with cultural aspects, 9 dealing with domestic values and 6 about foreign policy behavior of foreign countries. Respondents assessed the importance of each of these elements in their formation of opinion about foreign states. Three separate within-subject analyses of variance (ANOVA), combined with Bonferroni post hoc tests, are used to identify the differences in importance within each of the three groups of elements and, thus, show which aspects of soft power matter most for Serbs. As hypothesized, statistically significant differences occur in all three components of soft power. However, contrary to commonly established beliefs, the research shows that Serbs most often do not form an opinion based on foreign policy elements of countries’ soft power. In practice, this means that people in Serbia are not significantly influenced by the behavior of these countries in global affairs, the quality of economic cooperation between them and Serbia, or even whether or not they support Serbia in its disputes with Kosovo.

The second part of the questionnaire asked the respondents to list three foreign countries that they favored most, or, in other words, that had the strongest power of attraction (soft power) for them. The obtained data is used, first, for providing evidence of Russia's high popularity in Serbia and, secondly, for profiling people that feel attracted to this country. Along with five demographic characteristics (age, gender, education level, household income and employment status), the influence of 23 elements of soft power (recomputed through factor analyses into 6 standardized continuous variables) on people's favorability to Russia (measured through a binary "Russia/non-Russia" variable, depending on whether people listed this country among the three to which they feel most attracted) is investigated in a logistic regression analysis. Again interestingly, the analysis shows that those Serbs, who regard important a country's cultural attractiveness in a narrow sense (i.e. the attractiveness of its art, cuisine, education and tourism), and not national linguistic and religious similarities, as might have been expected in this case, are more likely to be attracted to Russia. Additionally, people who regard important the geopolitical relevance of a country when formulating opinion about it are significantly less likely to be attracted to Russia, which might imply that Russia still has to work on building its image of one of the main world powers.

The thesis consists of three chapters. The main theoretical and methodological contributions to the literature are discussed in the first. It starts by providing an overview of the main debates about soft power, its advantages and disadvantages both as a theoretical concept and in terms of measurements. These discussions serve the purpose of establishing a clear theoretical framework for analyzing (Russian) soft power capacities in Serbia. The following part of the first chapter suggests a new, *object-oriented*, approach to quantitative analysis of these elements of soft power. It explains the main disadvantages of indices used in similar analyses to date and argues for changing the focal point of research from countries trying to elicit attraction to local populations' perceptions about these attempts.

The second chapter answers the question of what matters to Serbs when formulating an opinion about foreign countries. It begins with an in-depth explanation of the research design and the data gathering process, while the findings of statistical analyses determining which elements within each of the three components of soft power matter most for Serbs, along with practically significant conclusions drawn from them, are presented in the last three subchapters.

The third chapter deals with empirical analyses of Russian soft power capacities in Serbia. Its first part is dedicated to short overviews of historical relations between the two countries and existing literature and narratives on this topic, before the hypotheses for quantitative analyses are established. Finally, the results of statistical data transformations and analyses are presented, thus providing evidence of feasibility of the newly suggested methodological approach.

The concluding remarks of the thesis contain an overview and recapitulation of the main findings and contributions to the literature, as well as suggestions for further research in this area.

# Chapter 1

## The Theory of (Soft) Power<sup>6</sup>

Power is a central concept in most interpersonal relationships, including business and politics, education and sports, preserving security and committing crimes, and even making friends and making love. These are all various forms of power, with different means of expression, different goals that are to be achieved, and different subjects that use them. For this reason, a clear and encompassing definition of power “remains a matter of controversy” (Waltz 1986, 333). These forms of power also differ in their normative and societal acceptability, whereas, for instance, teachers’ higher level of education and expertise in comparison to pupils is a widely acceptable source of their power to grade the younger generations, while, on the other hand, the physical power of a rapist over his victim does not legitimize this power’s use. Furthermore, the subjects that use power differ on various grounds – these can be individuals and groups, regional authorities and states, small companies and multinational corporations, supranational entities and international organizations, etc. Finally, what is common for most forms of power is that it is practically impossible to quantitatively measure its amount subjects have at their disposal. As Nye once wrote, “[p]ower, like love, is easier to experience than to define or measure” (Nye 1990a, 177). What is even more important is that even when this is in fact the case – as when it is possible to count all the men, guns, tanks, airplanes and battleships a country has in order to compare its military power with others – the effectiveness of use of this power is still under question. In other words, the outcomes of the use of any form of power are rarely – if ever – fully predictable. Thus, there is no guarantee that bigger military power will win the war; many other forms of power are also needed for this – tactical, to mention just

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<sup>6</sup> An earlier version of this chapter was previously published in my article “Methodology of Measuring Soft Power: A New Approach,” (Kosović 2015b). It was also presented at a conference entitled “Framing Soft Power for the 21st Century,” held in Berlin, Germany, in July 2015.

one. Still, even with finely developed tactics, educated leadership, trained manpower and way bigger military, neither the USA was able to win the war in Vietnam, nor was the Soviet Union able to get what it wanted in Afghanistan.

This short introductory discussion serves the purpose of explaining the variability of power that determines the relations between individuals, groups and states. It also allows us to call attention to several important theoretical points that will be of great use for answering the main research questions of this thesis. First of all, no definition of power, or even certain forms of power, can be regarded as all-encompassing, nor can it avoid many criticisms from various theoretical and empirical standpoints. Acknowledging these facts, this thesis rests on an assumption made by Hans Morgenthau, who believed that, regardless of concrete objectives, “[power] always entail[s] control of the actions of others through influence over their minds” (Morgenthau 1948, 14). In other, Robert Dahl’s, terms, “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do” (Dahl 1957, 202–203).

Secondly, this work regards power as intertwined with legitimacy or societal approval of its use. Coercion or use of force against others might not seem acceptable from perspectives of both the objects of power and the “wider audience”. These forms of power often cause resistance, which can hinder the successfulness of their use. On the other hand, more seductive, tolerant and respectful forms of power usually seem more adequate in terms of their acceptability by those under its influence. Therefore, legitimate power is also more likely to achieve the intended outcomes without significant resistance from objects exposed to it.

Thirdly, the subjects that have some form of power can be observed on multiple levels. For this work, the most important one is the state level. This thesis follows the view of power as the central, although at the same time “one of the most troublesome [concepts] in the field of international relations” (Gilpin 1981, 13). Moreover, this paper is based on an assumption that “[i]nternational politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power” (Morgenthau 1948, 13).

Although it is often hard to draw clear cut-points between various levels of power, especially in politics, where personalities of political leaders usually play significant roles in determining whether and how successfully certain power will be used, only relations between countries will hereby be observed.

Finally, the effectiveness or the achievement rates of the desired outcomes can never be guaranteed no matter how big a power might seem. Even the biggest powers do not always achieve their goals, nor are the smallest ones always defeated.

Nye (2009) argues that there are three basic ways to influence other people's hearts and minds in international politics: coercion, payment and attractiveness. This differentiation allowed him to separate what he calls "hard" power from the "soft" one. While the first stands for military and economic powers (or "sticks and carrots") the latter refers to a co-optive form of power that "can be seen in the attraction exerted by a given agent and his capacity to define political agendas" (Zahran and Ramos 2010, 12). The concept of "soft power" will be of central interest for this thesis.

## **1.1. Competing views on soft power**

Before discussing the origins of Russian soft power in Serbia, it seems necessary to explain to the reader the notion of "soft power", as well as to point out to some of its main theoretical advantages and disadvantages. This subchapter is intended to show the importance of this foreign policy tool in contemporary international relations, but also to draw attention to the underlying theoretical framework of this thesis; namely, what can be considered an element of soft power in its initial, original meaning.

Although relatively new, the term "soft power" is becoming increasingly popular in both political science and international relations. It was first mentioned by Nye (1990a, 32) in his book "*Bound to lead – The Changing Nature of American Power*," though the most well-known definition of the term was provided only in 2004, when Nye (2004, x) wrote that soft power is

the ability to influence the behavior of others to get the desired outcomes not by using force, coercion or payment, but through attractiveness. In 2011, Nye refurbished the original definition, when in *“The future of power”* he stated that soft power is “the ability to affect others through the co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuading and eliciting positive attraction in order to obtain preferred outcomes” (Nye 2011, 13). Moreover, Nye (2004, 11) defined three main sources of a country’s soft power: “its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when others see them as legitimate and having moral authority).” More specifically, for Nye,

[c]ulture is a set of values and practices that create meaning for a society. (...) When a country’s culture includes universal values and its policies promote values and interests that others share, it increases the probability of obtaining its desired outcomes because of the relationships of attraction and duty that it creates. Narrow values and parochial cultures are less likely to produce soft power. (Nye 2004, 11)

The importance of the universalistic character of national culture is also pointed out by David Shambaugh (2013) in his book *“China Goes Global: The Partial Power”*. He writes that it does not matter what is unique in a country’s culture, but what is or can be universal about it (Shambaugh 2013, 212). He adds that “[t]his is the essence of soft power: to possess national attributes that transcend one’s own country and appeal to others” (Shambaugh 2013, 212). The other two sources of soft power, according to Nye (2004), are political values manifested at home and abroad, as well as consistent and legitimate behavior in international arena. He argues that policies of racial segregation negatively influenced the image of the US across the globe, as did the Iraq war in 2003 (Nye 2004, 14-15). On the other hand, the democratic character of the US society, international cooperation in various areas, promotion of human dignity, rights and liberties across the globe – all these efforts positively affect the US soft power. In other words, political values and foreign policies, as well as culture, can both enhance and severely damage a country’s soft power.

Nye argues that soft power has several important advantages in comparison to hard. First of all, it is a lot cheaper; when “you can get others to admire your ideals and to want what

you want, you do not have to spend as much on sticks and carrots to move them in your direction,” he states and adds that “[s]eduction is always *more effective* [italics – N. K.] than coercion” (Nye 2004, x). Moreover, “in contrast to hard power, which the government controls through military and economic policies, soft power is available to any actor that can render itself attractive to another” (Bially Mattern 2005, 590), which makes it more appealing to non-state actors. Finally, soft influence might seem morally more acceptable than threats, coercion or sanctions. All this led to soft power having successfully “challenged the default dominance of hard power in world politics” (Bially Mattern 2005, 589).

Through time, the term “soft power” was effectively further developed, but also heavily criticized in many authors’ books, articles, researches and commentaries (Nye 1990b, 1990c; Bially Mattern 2005; Lukes 2007; Lebow 2007; Hall 2010; Philips 2013). Primarily, the main issue with this concept is its vagueness. As Nye argues that soft power is an influence on others based on attraction, it is rather hard to get a grip as to what the latter term refers. The perception of attractiveness is subjective, so what might be appealing to one person, might at the same time be the opposite to another. Moreover, attractiveness is tightly related to tastes. Therefore, the same behavior or values that one person finds acceptable in any way – morally, politically, socially – and thus perceives as an element of soft influence, might be completely unacceptable for someone else. It is very hard, if not impossible, to determine the basis of what makes one particular culture, political value or foreign policy attractive. This also has significant implications for policymaking, especially at the state level. The unspecifiability of attractiveness implies that policymakers need to be very much aware of regional and even national differences between various countries on which they would like to have influence. All this makes soft power policymaking a rather difficult task and requires great efforts for it to be achieved successfully.

Secondly, the problem of vagueness is also seen in the *contents* of the concept of soft power. It seems to be very broadly defined, so that practically anything that can have an ability to shape the preferences of others without explicit coercion is an element of a country's soft power. This is even confirmed by Nye himself, when he argues that economic and military resources can produce both soft and hard power (Nye 2007, 168). For instance, it could be argued that guaranteeing collective security is the main source of NATO's attractiveness and soft power, while economic prosperity is what drew so many European countries to aspire membership in the EU. Similarly, the US war on terrorism surely led to an increase of this country's soft power around the world, while the financial crisis of 2008 that started in this part of the globe hindered it. Moreover, Alexander Vuving (2009) states that even some typical soft power elements such as moral values can be used as hard power, for instance in cases when they are used to build social pressure.

These ideas pose several serious problems for the very concept of soft power. Primarily, the border between soft and hard influence based on military and economic resources is blurry. Furthermore and again in connection with the question what attraction is and what can be regarded as attractiveness, the perception of the same processes by different actors can lead to an increase in soft influence on the one hand, and its simultaneous decrease on the other. For instance, the US war on terrorism probably resulted in an increase of the American soft power in most of the Western world, while at the same time producing negative consequences for its attractiveness in some predominantly Muslim countries.

For all these reasons, Todd Hall (2010) strongly criticizes the concept for being based on attractiveness. He goes as far as to write that soft power as a term has far more political than analytical utility (Hall 2010, 195). In other words, due to such a wide definition of attraction-based sources, when practically anything and everything can be considered an element of soft power, and especially due to such an extensive popular use, which is not restricted to academic

and scholarly debates and works, but spreads across almost all areas of everyday life, soft power cannot be regarded as a category for social science analyses. For these reasons, Hall (2010) suggests a complete rethinking of soft power and, most importantly, distancing its understanding from the notion of “attractiveness”.

Although, as previously noted, attractiveness is indeed a problematic part of the whole theory of soft power, this thesis argues against discarding “attractiveness” as the underlying concept, and suggests a clear a list of elements that constitute soft power instead. This solution overcomes the worries expressed by Hall (2010) and guarantees an even bigger societal and, more importantly, scientific (or analytical) significance to soft power. This thesis achieves this through defining a list of 23 elements of any country’s soft power in Serbia.

Another important part of soft power that is criticized is that, as Steven Lukes (2007, 91-92) puts it, no theoretical distinction can be found “between different ways in which soft power can co-opt, attract and entice those subject to it, between different ways in which it can induce their acquiescence.” In other words, how “soft” is this power resource in reality? Lukes argues that

‘the ability to shape the preferences of others’ is a troublingly obscure phrase which fails to discriminate between those causal processes which limit and sometimes undermine individuals’ capacities to judge and decide for themselves and those which require, facilitate and expand such capacities. (...) When analyzing practices and arrangements that involve the “shaping of preferences” or subjective interests, we need, at the very least, to distinguish between those which are, in the sense indicated, disempowering and those which are empowering in their effects. (Lukes 2007, 95)

However, Nye sees this critique as a matter of different approach: while he chose agent-focused, Lukes observed this issue based on a subject-based approach (Nye 2007, 163). Thus, while from the subject’s perspective indoctrination and “disempowering” might seem morally unacceptable, from the agent’s this still fits into Nye’s definition of soft power. Besides, Nye never wrote about soft power as a normative concept. He mentions on several occasions that even terrorist leaders, like Osama bin Laden, or dictators such as Hitler, Stalin and Mao all possessed a vast amount of soft power, although they rarely, if ever, used it for normatively good causes (Nye 2007, 168).

This thesis draws an extremely important conclusion from this discussion. Namely, its main theoretical and methodological contribution is an approach to quantifying the sources of soft power that resembles Lebow's morality critique. Put simply, I argue that measuring soft power – as well as giving judgments about its use, which falls beyond the scope of this work – should be conducted from the viewpoint of those subject to it. Namely, whether a national trait of a certain country can be regarded as a positive or negative factor in its overall soft power should be assessed in separate, individual countries. This means that Scandinavian welfare-statism might be attractive to several countries in Latin America that have socialist-oriented elites, but perhaps repellent to more liberal-minded Brits or Americans. Therefore, the hereby-suggested approach makes it possible to identify even those elements of soft power that have the ability to attract masses, but may be politically, morally, socially or in any other way unacceptable or inappropriate, thus overcoming the problems many indices developed to date fail to address.

Finally, Nye's concept of soft power is also criticized for its imposition of values on other societies. Thus, Bially Mattern (2005, 588) is "disappointed" that "Nye says nothing about why universal values are the 'right' ones or how one acquires such values." Richard Ned Lebow is even harsher, when he states that

Nye takes it for granted that the American way of life is so attractive, even mesmerizing, and the global public goods it supposedly provides so beneficial that others are predisposed to follow Washington's lead. Like many liberals, he treats interests and identities as objective, uncontroversial and given. (Lebow 2007, 120)

However, Nye (2007, 163) again refutes these critiques by arguing that his intention was not to promote the values of American society as permanently dominant, universally accepted and necessary for all countries to develop. He rightfully points out that "attraction to the prevalent ideas in any given era can be treated as a given, but these ideas are not necessarily universal or immutable" (Nye 2007, 163). As democracy was not the dominant idea in some past eras, unlike in the contemporary one, it might not be so in the future. In his response to Lebow's claims, Nye (2007, 164) justifiably repeats that there are and there always will be "areas and groups that are

repelled rather than attracted by American culture, values and policies,” so to provide evidence that he never believed American attraction to be permanent and given. On the contrary, it can indeed be diminished if not taken good care of, as in case of the aforementioned war in Iraq.

Again, as in the previous case, this discussion allows to draw several important conclusions for this thesis. Most importantly, it is indeed necessary to avoid the problems of interpreting soft power as an “imposition of values”, as criticized by Bially Mattern (2005). The hereby-suggested approach to measuring soft power capabilities avoids this problem by being sensitive to national and even intra-national differences in terms of acceptability of certain aspects of foreign country’s soft power. For instance, this approach allows to determine whether and, if so, for which parts of the Croatian society the Turkish behavior during the refugee crisis had a positive and for which a negative impact on this country’s image and soft power.

There are, of course, many other critiques of the concept of soft power. Thus, for instance, Alexandre Bohas (2006) is quite harsh in calling Nye’s concept “shallow” for not realizing the importance of non-state actors in the shaping of foreign societies, while Layla Saleh (2012, 31) argues that Nye fails to explain “how exactly soft power operates in a clear and theoretically logical way.” Lawrence Sondhaus (2007, 214) claims that “soft power not supported by hard power is no power at all,” while Niall Ferguson (2003) adopts a more moderate approach and simply states that the problem with soft power is its “softness”, which fails to give valuable policy results. However, these and such critiques are not of much importance for this thesis, mostly because they deal with outcomes of the use of soft power, which fall beyond the scope of this research. This thesis is limited only to discussing capabilities or potentials for using soft power resources. Whether or not these resources will be used effectively and produce the intended policy-related outcomes often depends on factors that are empirically quite hard, almost impossible to observe. Therefore, although theoretically important on a larger scale, critiques from this paragraph will not be further addressed at this point.

## 1.2. Methodological issues: How to measure soft power?

The critical conceptual part of soft power is that neither Nye nor any other writer has provided any – at least not widely accepted – methodological instructions on how to measure the amount of soft power a country has at its disposal. What is more, it is often hard to differ between soft power capabilities or capacities, on the one hand, and soft power outcomes, successfulness and powerfulness, on the other. As Steven Lukes (2007, 84) puts it, “merely possessing or controlling the means of power is not the same as being powerful.” The main difference that will also be applied in this thesis is that sources, capabilities, or capacities for soft power do not necessarily imply the change in the behavior of other people. Capabilities only suggest the possible means how soft influence could be achieved, as well as those areas of soft power that might need to be further developed. On the other hand, outcomes imply the result of the use of soft power and strongly depend on the ability of foreign policy makers to use the potential they have. However, it seems very hard to assess the direct causal relationship between the use of soft power and the change in behavior, which is why this question should be addressed at some other time. This work will, therefore, concentrate mostly on soft power capabilities.

Due to these reasons, there have been very few attempts to achieve the goal of more objective and punctual measurement of soft power. Hence, many authors have thus settled for a descriptive method of observing it (Oguzlu 2007; Kurlantzick 2008; Lee 2009; Parmar and Cox 2010; Purushothaman 2010; Shambaugh 2013), while only few have conducted research on how countries’ soft powers influence their relations (Vyas 2010). Thus, when writing about the soft power of South Korea, Geun Lee (2009, 213) has determined two main sources of its soft power: “Korea’s experiences of successful modernization and democratization within a very short period of time; and the so-called ‘Korean Waves’ in many parts of East Asia.” However, even though the author provides general comments about these two sources, he does not discuss them in terms of bilateral relations with any other country. On the other hand, Uma

Purushothaman (2010) wrote about tens of sources of Indian soft power. However, it would be more useful for policy makers to be acquainted with the narrower picture of the issue in order to develop particular aspects of these “power resources”. Moreover, it is very probable that different sources can and should be applied in different countries, and this kind of approach would have been more significant. This was attempted to be achieved in the book about the use of soft power in China-Japan relations, written by Utpal Vyas (2010). In it, the author conducts three case studies of the use of Japanese power in China, each of which is observed on a different level – state (the Japan Foundation), sub-state (Kobe city) and non-state (the Japan-China Friendship Association) (Vyas 2010). However, he does not discuss the origins of Japanese soft power in China, nor does he observe any other of its sources, such as the culture or political values. There were also, although few, attempts to quantify the soft power resources countries have at their disposal. Thus, Johnatan McClory (2010, 2011, 2012) made three separate attempts to quantify soft powers of several countries in his publications “*The New Persuaders*”. In them, he expanded Nye’s definition of elements of soft power by defining five pillars of soft power – business/innovation, culture, government, diplomacy and education, and used 50 indicators for measuring them (McClory 2012, 5-7). However, these indices are not broadly accepted by scholars or policy makers. Although some of them acknowledge positive sides of this methodological approach, even McClory himself is aware of its limits:

The subjective nature of soft power makes comparison across all countries difficult. Moreover, the intricate bi-lateral dynamics of foreign relations – where soft power is brought to bear – cannot be fully rendered by a comparative index. Finally, the index is unable to capture flashpoint events in real-time. (McClory 2012, 10)

Moreover, these indices are criticized for lacking certain elements of soft influence, such as personalities (Mflash16 2012), for mixing soft power resources and outcomes (Trunkos 2013), and for lacking utility for policy makers (Marcrambeau 2012). Therefore, there are both methodological (means to measure soft power) and empirical (observing the most developed sources of soft power in contemporary bilateral relations) “dark holes” in the literature. Due to

this fact, investigating the origins, contemporary manifestations and perspectives of soft power in bilateral international relations would be an important contribution to it. This is one of the main focal points of this thesis.

### 1.3. Introducing the new approach

This thesis suggests a new approach in measuring soft power. Instead of the subject-based approach in assessing the capacities for soft influence, which, to the best of this author's knowledge, was used in all attempts to quantify soft power to date (McClory 2010, 2011, 2012), it is hereby suggested that the only way to realistically measure the amount of soft power a country has is to conduct *object-based researches*. The main argument here is that the hallmark of soft power is not uniformity of application, but its variation. In practice, this means that some elements of soft power that improve the image of Russia in its relations with Serbia, or of Germany in France, might not be equally effective between Russia and Slovenia and Germany and the United Kingdom. Moreover, it is very much possible that based on most methodological approaches that have been developed so far, personalities like Adolf Hitler or Joseph Stalin, or organizations such as Al-Qaeda or the Islamic State would be shown to have very little soft power. However, in some parts of the world they were – or still are – incredibly attractive to some. This is, among others, the main flaw of currently existing methodological approaches. Therefore, the investigation and measurement of origins – or sources, capabilities and capacities – of one country's soft power should be conducted on a case-by-case basis by observing specific elements and their concrete application in bilateral relations.

Which elements of soft power matter for a certain population? Does cultural similarity between two societies always positively affect, i.e. increase the attractiveness of one of them for the members of the other? Are there any universal political values that are equally appealing across the globe? Which, if any, foreign policies are generally regarded as “the good ones”? Neither of these questions can be answered so to satisfy the tastes of all the peoples of the world.

What is appealing for Macedonians might not be so attractive for Bulgarians, although the two countries have – in a way, at least – more or less similar cultures.<sup>7</sup> In order to be able to give any policy recommendations, one needs to know the answer to a key question – *what matters for the members of a particular society*. This can be achieved through conducting an opinion poll among the citizens of the country of interest. This opinion poll should address all three aspects of soft power, as defined by Joseph Nye. Since all of these aspects can be further divided into separate sub-elements, the questions should ideally address all of them. Therefore, the questionnaire would need to contain questions about *the importance of different soft power elements for determining the opinion about other countries*.

Among these elements, one could suggest the acquaintance with and the availability of one country's popular culture in the other, their historical relations, linguistic and religious similarities, one country's attractiveness for tourists, immigrants and qualified labor from the other, the similarity of generally adopted values in the two countries, etc. This way of investigating soft power further implies greater possibilities for useful policy recommendations.

After this first and at the same time the most important question of *what matters* has been answered, based on the already existing measurements of some soft power elements, a country would have the possibility to assess its potential for soft influence. For instance, if people in Spain would consider long historical relations between Spain and a foreign country important, the Portuguese could enhance this historical discourse in trying to gain more influence on the behavior of the Spaniards. On the other hand, if Croats would regard important the democratic character of a country, Iran would need to improve its ranking on the Freedom House measurements in case it wanted to have more soft power in Croatia. In case Latvians would think of successes in sports as the crucial criteria, then the number of Olympic medals

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<sup>7</sup> Although this kind of statements might seem inappropriate and, of course, disputable, there are indeed many similarities between the two. To mention just some – the two nations speak similar languages; they are both mostly Orthodox Christians; and they are historically very much intertwined.

the United Kingdom has won recently would be a good indicator of this country's soft power capacities in Latvia. Using the same pattern, for most of the soft power elements an already existing indicator could be found that would then be used to assess the capabilities for using this kind of influence in a certain country. Therefore, the question of *what matters* is the crucial one for assessing the possible basis for soft influence. By combining answers to this question and corresponding existing measurements into an index, one would also be able to assess the capabilities of any world country's soft power in one particular state. Again, if democratic character would be important for Croats, the USA would have more potential soft power than Iran. On the other hand, if, for instance, citizens of another country would lean more towards preferring authoritarian rulers, then Iran would have more soft power capabilities *in this area* in this country than the USA. Nevertheless, only by combining all answers and their indicators, one could make his final decision about which country has the largest potential to softly influence the country of interest (but only this *one*). This is why it is impossible to say that either Iran or the USA has more soft power capabilities *in general*.

An additional way of methodologically observing the issue of soft power are interviews conducted with members of political, economic and societal elites. What is more, in some cases, interviews can have more explanatory power than quantitative methods, especially when it comes to discussing soft power outcomes, or the results and effects of one country's use of soft power. For instance, conducting interviews with political leaders of a certain country could – at least in theory – reveal under whose influence from abroad an important foreign policy decision was made, or in what manner and how strongly the behavior of a foreign state influences internal politics. Additionally, when investigating the current situation with a particular country's efforts to apply its soft power, interviews with people from state agencies and non-governmental organizations, whose main aim is to popularize the observed country, could again provide

valuable insights. Their opinions, own findings, and explanations of strategies used for this purpose could testify whether there are areas of soft power to which not enough attention is paid.

Therefore, based on these two types of interviews, a researcher could find out information about very important elements of the current state of affairs in application of one country's soft power in another. First, he could get an insight into which parts of soft power a foreign state pays most attention to, which could, again, imply certain conclusions about their opinion on *what matters* to a certain population. Secondly, based on interviews with local elites and in combination with on-site surveys, a researcher could put the former (i.e. foreign) opinion to the test and assess how successful the foreign country's soft power is in reality. Consequentially, the researcher can give a founded opinion on the aspects of soft power, the application of which could be expected to give results in one particular country. Again, as in the previous case, it is the opinion of this author that no generalization can be made, nor that the many countries' soft power capacities can in any way be objectively ranked on a global scale. For the same reasons as previously discussed, case-by-case studies are necessary in order to obtain valuable results and to make feasible policy-recommendations based on these results.

Although interviews could have given many valuable insights, this thesis uses only the newly suggested quantitative approach to observing soft power. Thus, the data obtained through an online survey of 442 Serbian citizens serves three main purposes. First, it provides evidence of feasibility of the suggested methodology. Secondly, it answers the question of what matters to Serbs when formulating an opinion about foreign countries, and, thirdly, it allows us to clearly determine the elements of Russian soft power that make this country so popular in Serbia. Since the author of these lines is Serbian, participant observations of different processes within this country's society will also be used as one of the main methods in the following interpretation of results. These analyses are the main topic of the following chapter.

## Chapter 2

### Soft Power in Practice: What Matters to Serbs

According to the hereby-suggested methodological approach, the first step in exploring the origins of any country's soft power in another is to determine which elements of this form of power have the strongest influence on the local population's formation of opinion about foreign states in general. This chapter quantitatively explores this issue and answers the question of which elements of soft power matter most to Serbs.

#### 2.1. Data gathering, description and methodology

Data for research was collected through a paid online opinion poll among Serbian citizens between 6 and 7 May 2016. The total number of surveyed people by the local analytical agency "Your Attitude" (*Serb.* "Tvoj stav") was 442 and each respondent received EUR 1 for filling out the questionnaire. On average, it took respondents little less than 7 minutes to fill out all four parts of the survey.

The first part of the questionnaire asked people to assess the importance of 23 elements of soft power in determining their opinion about foreign countries. The general form of questions was: How important are these factors in your formation of opinion about a foreign country? The questionnaire was divided into three parts, with 8 questions concerning cultural elements of soft power, 9 about internal political values of foreign countries and 6 about their behavior in international politics (see: Appendix 1). The respondents assessed the importance of each of these elements on a five-point scale, with 1 meaning not at all important and 5 being very important.

The data obtained through these questions serves two major purposes. First, three within-subject analyses of variance (ANOVA) show whether there are any differences within the sample in terms of how important these elements of soft power are in the formation of

opinion of Serbian citizens about foreign countries. Moreover, where these differences are found, Bonferroni post hoc tests allow us to identify and separate more important factors from less important ones. Secondly, the answers to the first question serve as bases for factor analyses and later independent variables in logistic regression analysis, which determines the kind of people that is most probable to be attracted to Russia.

Secondly, and to the point of this research, in order to provide evidence for the general assumption of Russia being the most popular country among Serbian citizens, people were asked to name three countries that they favored most. These findings are also used in the logistic regression, whereas a binary variable (Russia mentioned – 1, Russia not mentioned – 0) is coded and used as the dependent variable in several regression models. These analyses, as previously mentioned, help determine the type of Serbian people most probable to have a favorable opinion about Russia.

Thirdly, the questionnaire contained five questions determining the demographic characteristics of the sample, namely the respondents' gender, age, highest obtained level of education, employment status and level of monthly income per household member. The sample encompassed 276 women and 166 men, with an overall average age of almost 34.5 years, with the youngest participant being 16, and the oldest 74 years old. Moreover, 240 people in the sample were employed, while the remaining 202 were either pensioners, students, or unemployed. The distribution of income per household members was close to normal, with most people falling within the categories of RSD 10,000-25,000<sup>8</sup> (140, 31.6%) and RSD 25,000-50,000 (155, 35%) with only 4.5% of people with no income, and another 4% with more than RSD 100,000 per household member. The sample diverged from population in the overall level of education of respondents. Almost 300 people (64.25%) of people had obtained higher education (Bachelor's degree and higher), whereas 35% had secondary education.

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<sup>8</sup> On 17 May 2016, 1 Euro was worth 122.5 Serbian Dinars.

Problematically, only 2 participants stated their highest obtained level of education to be elementary, while there was no one without any formal education. This bias most probably occurred due to the fact that the survey was conducted online, which means that one should be careful when making inferences to general population and drawing conclusions based on it.

Finally, before proceeding to performing any statistical tests, the reliability of scales used to measure the three elements of soft power was examined. For this purpose, Cronbach's Alpha values were computed for each group of variables. The results are presented in Table 1. As shown in the table, all three groups show satisfactory levels of internal consistency, with the first one being at the reasonably strong point of around 0.7 for all variables, and the remaining two groups being highly reliable, with values of Cronbach's Alphas between 0.84 and 0.90. Although there is no strict rule about the lower threshold of acceptability of values of Cronbach's alpha, since the analyses conducted hereby are exploratory in their character and were, as such, not conducted previously, even the lowest value of 0.67 can still be considered satisfactory. Based on this, I conclude that the scales used to measure each of the three elements of soft power, as well as the variables included into them, are highly reliable. Therefore, these variables and scales represent consistent measures of all three elements of soft power and are eligible to be used in further analyses.

*Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha measure of reliability of scales*

<b>Cultural elements</b>		<b>Internal values elements</b>		<b>Foreign policy elements</b>	
Variable	Cronbach's $\alpha$	Variable	Cronbach's $\alpha$	Variable	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Art	0.71	Democracy	0.85	History	0.88
Cuisine	0.71	Human rights	0.85	Global behavior	0.90
Self-identification	0.70	Rule of law	0.84	Financial aid	0.87
Religion	0.68	Environment	0.85	Humanitarian aid	0.86
Language	0.67	Economy	0.85	Kosovo	0.87
Education	0.69	Military	0.87	Economic cooperation	0.86
Sports	0.67	Media	0.84		
Tourism	0.70	Corruption	0.85		
		Leadership	0.87		

## 2.2. Results and discussion

Three within-subject analyses of variance (one for each group of elements: cultural, internal values, foreign policies) are used to identify the existence of differences in mean values of importance of 23 elements of soft power, with Mauchly's test checking for sphericity, as one of the main theoretical assumptions of these models. Additionally, Bonferroni post hoc tests specify the observed differences in terms of their statistical significance and size.

Affirmative hypotheses for all three ANOVAs are that  $H_1$ : there are statistically significant differences in means of the observed variables, while their corresponding null-hypotheses are that  $H_0$ : there is no difference in the importance of elements within the three groups. In other terms, these null-hypotheses state that Serbs regard all elements of foreign countries' soft power equally important.

### 2.2.1. Cultural elements

The results of the first within-subject ANOVA along with the means of 8 variables pertaining to cultural elements of soft power and the Bonferroni post hoc test are given in Table 2. Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated,  $\chi^2(27) = 275.27$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . Therefore, degrees of freedom were corrected using Huynh-Feldt estimates of sphericity ( $\epsilon = 0.841$ ). The results of ANOVA imply that we can reject the null-hypothesis of no difference and state with 95% confidence that various elements of cultural soft power of foreign states matter differently to Serbs,  $F(5.88, 2595.3) = 156.56$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Bonferroni post hoc test in combination with mean values show the direction and significance of these differences. Linguistic similarities between Serbian and a foreign language are clearly the cultural element of soft power that matters most to Serbs. The only statistically insignificant difference between the obtained means is that between the importance of linguistic similarity and the success of athletes coming from foreign countries. In comparison to all other cultural

Table 2. ANOVA and Bonferroni Post Hoc Test of cultural elements of soft power

<b>Means</b>							
Art	Cuisine	Self-identification	Religion	Language	Education	Sports	Tourism
2.210	2.502	2.468	3.124	3.355	2.140	3.308	1.986

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<b>Mauchly's test of sphericity</b>						
Mauchly's W	Approximate Chi-Square	Df	P-value	Epsilon		
				Greenhouse-Geisser	Huynh-Feldt	
0.534	275.274	27	<0.001	0.828	0.841	

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<b>Within-subjects ANOVA</b>					
Source of Variation	(corrections)	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	F	P-value
Variables	Sphericity assumed	929	7	156.56	<0.001
	Greenhouse-Geisser	929	5.799	156.56	<0.001
	Huynh-Feldt	929	5.885	156.56	<0.001
Error (Variables)	Sphericity assumed	2616.75	3087		
	Greenhouse-Geisser	2616.75	2557.379		
	Huynh-Feldt	2616.75	2595.306		

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<b>Bonferroni post hoc test</b>								
	Art	Cuisine	Self-ident.	Religion	Language	Education	Sports	Tourism
Art	–	0.292*	0.258*	0.914*	1.145*	-0.070	1.097*	-0.224*
Cuisine	-0.292*	–	-0.034	0.622*	0.853*	-0.362*	0.805*	-0.516*
Self-ident.	-0.258*	0.034	–	0.656*	0.887*	-0.328*	0.839*	-0.482*
Religion	-0.914*	-0.622*	-0.656*	–	0.231*	-0.984*	0.183	-1.138*
Language	-1.145*	-0.853*	-0.887*	-0.231*	–	-1.215*	-0.048	-1.369*
Education	0.070	0.362*	0.328*	0.984*	1.215*	–	1.167*	-0.154
Sports	-1.097*	-0.805*	-0.839*	-0.183	0.048	-1.167*	–	-1.321*
Tourism	0.224*	0.516*	0.482*	1.138*	1.369*	0.154	1.321*	–

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$

elements, language is both statistically significant and substantively more important to Serbian population, as represented in the sample. These differences vary from relatively small (between linguistic and religious similarities: 0.231) to substantively large (between linguistic similarity and the quality of education offered by a foreign country: 1.215, and especially between linguistic similarity and touristic attraction: 1.369).

Another interesting finding is that touristic attractiveness of foreign countries plays the least important role in the Serbian population's formation of opinion about them. With the lowest mean value of 1.986, this element of soft power received statistically significantly different (i.e. lower) value from any other, except the quality of education offered by foreign countries.

These findings lead to several interesting conclusions. First, any country wishing to increase its soft power capabilities should not pay much attention to presenting itself as an attractive touristic destination. It is highly likely that this kind of steps would be a waste of resources and would most probably not bring any significant increases. On the other hand, since sport successes matter that much to Serbs, one could assume that investing more resources into national clubs and teams, as well as individual sportsmen and their successes could improve the perception of a country's image in Serbia. A slightly discouraging fact for most world countries wishing to have more soft influence on Serbian people is that the population of this country (as represented here) regards as highly important the elements of soft power that could be identified as those confirming national similarities, such as linguistic and religious resemblance. These two variables received the average grades of 3.355 and 3.124, which means above "neither important nor unimportant" category of assessment and towards the "important" part of the scale. Since these characteristics are impossible to change, it could be argued that either Orthodox countries or those in which Slavic languages are spoken have most chances to build a positive image in Serbia. However, as previously mentioned, whether or not these opportunities will be seized depends on many factors, which fall beyond the scope of this research.

### 2.2.2. Domestic values

The second within-subject analysis of variance was conducted in the case of a country's domestic values. This analysis was intended to show which values, if any, Serbs regard to be most important when formulating their opinion about foreign countries. The results of ANOVA along with mean values of 9 variables pertaining to this element of soft power and the Bonferroni post hoc test are presented in Table 3. As in the previous case, Mauchly's test of sphericity is statistically significant,  $\chi^2(27) = 648.63, p < 0.001$ , which testifies that sphericity assumption is violated, so degrees of freedom again had to be corrected. This time, since the epsilon value was below 0.75 ( $\epsilon = 0.71$ ), the Greenhouse-Geisser estimates of sphericity were used. The results of this ANOVA show that there are statistically significant differences in mean values of 9 variables, so we can reject the null-hypothesis of no difference,  $F(5.7, 2513.56) = 140.72, p < 0.05$ . This means that there are differences in the importance of various elements of a country's internal politics in Serbs' formation of opinion. Bonferroni post hoc test reveals these differences.

Unlike in the previous case, this analysis allows to clearly identify two of the most important elements of countries' internal politics that have influence on the opinion of Serbs. The most important one is country's military power, with a mean value of 3.101, which is statistically significantly different from and obtained substantively higher grade than any other element in this area. Another important thing to notice here is that this element is the only one which received an above "neither important nor unimportant" grade, which means that it could be regarded as the only substantively important factor of influence.

The second element of internal politics that matters most to Serbs when formulating an opinion about foreign countries is the perception of the personality of the leader of a foreign country. This element received the second largest mean value of 2.776, which puts this element closer to the "unimportant" part of the scale, but is still worth mentioning for its statistical significance and a clear second place on the "importance scale".

Table 3. ANOVA and Bonferroni Post Hoc Test of internal values as elements of soft power

<b>Means</b>								
Democracy	Human rights	Rule of law	Environ. Protection	Economy	Military	Media	Corruption	Leadership
2.221	1.798	1.683	2.054	2.067	3.101	2.201	2.038	2.776

<b>Mauchly's test of sphericity</b>						
Mauchly's W	Approximate Chi-Square	Df	P-value	Epsilon		
				Greenhouse-Geisser	Huynh-Feldt	
0.228	648.626	35	<0.001	0.712	0.723	

<b>Within-subjects ANOVA</b>					
Source of Variation	(corrections)	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	F	P-value
Variables	Sphericity assumed	723.127	8	140.717	<0.001
	Greenhouse-Geisser	723.127	5.700	140.717	<0.001
	Huynh-Feldt	723.127	5.783	140.717	<0.001
Error (Variables)	Sphericity assumed	2266.383	3528		
	Greenhouse-Geisser	2266.383	2513.563		
	Huynh-Feldt	2266.383	2550.223		

<b>Bonferroni post hoc test</b>									
	Democr.	Human rights	Rule of law	Environ. protection	Econ.	Military	Media	Corruption	Leader.
Democracy	–	-0.423*	-0.538*	-0.167	-0.154	0.880*	-0.020	-0.183	0.554*
Human rights	0.423*	–	-0.115	0.256*	0.269*	1.303*	0.403*	0.240*	0.977*
Rule of law	0.538*	0.115	–	0.371*	0.385*	1.419*	0.518*	0.355*	1.093*
Environ. Protection	0.167	-0.256*	-0.371*	–	0.014	1.048*	0.147	-0.016	0.722*
Economy	0.154	-0.269*	-0.385*	-0.014	–	1.034*	0.133	-0.029	0.708*
Military	-0.880*	-1.303*	-1.419*	-1.048*	-1.034*	–	-0.900*	-1.063*	-0.326*
Media	0.020	-0.403*	-0.518*	-0.147	-0.133	0.900*	–	-0.163	0.575*
Corruption	0.183	-0.240*	-0.355*	0.016	0.029	1.063*	0.163	–	0.738*
Leadership	-0.554*	-0.977*	-1.093*	-0.722*	-0.708*	0.326*	-0.575*	-0.738*	–

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$

Finally, two elements with the least influence on Serbian people's formation of opinion are the rule of law (i.e. equity of all citizens before law; mean value of 1.683) and the quality of protection of human rights ( $\mu=1.798$ ). These two factors are clearly at the bottom of the list, though the statistically insignificant difference between them does not allow us to claim which one is less important. Important information, though, is the fact that these two elements are the only ones located between the "somewhat unimportant" and "not at all important" categories.

Three very interesting findings stem from this discussion. First of all, Serbs tend to be attracted to military power far more so than economic (difference between the means is both statistically and substantively significant 1.034). This tendency can partly be explained by the fact that Serbia is a rather small country with little military power, and this type of countries often search for protection from bigger ones. Therefore, it would be reasonable to expect Serbs to be most strongly attracted to world's biggest military powers, such as the USA, Russia, or China. However, it is important to underline once more that the importance of these factors can quite hardly be observed independently from the others. Thus, empirical evidence confirms that, although NATO is the largest military organization in the contemporary world, Serbs have rather negative attitudes towards it.<sup>9</sup> This speaks to the fact that military power, as any other element listed in this work, should not be treated as fully independent when drawing general conclusions from the data. Nevertheless, it certainly points to a certain direction, as discussed above.

Secondly, the image a country's leadership projects about itself is also important to Serbs. However, since the data obtained in this research does not provide more detail about the type of personality people are attracted to, one is not able to draw conclusions about the kind of leadership, democratic or autocratic, that would produce the best outcomes in terms of a country's popularity. One could only assume, based on Serbian historical experience with

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<sup>9</sup> In October 2015, The New Serbian Political Thought reported that 81.1% of people are against Serbian membership in NATO, whereas only 9.9% would support it (Vukadinović 2015b).

strong leaders, that the local population would be attracted to strongly personalized political systems and strong leadership figures.

Finally, rather low mean values of importance of such elements as the rule of law, protection of human rights and levels of corruption in a country may imply that improving the overall quality of liberal and democratic rule would most likely not lead to a significant increase in country's image among the Serbian people. Therefore, because these elements play little role in assessing foreign countries, people in Serbia might be equally attracted to both democratic and authoritarian states.

### 2.2.3. Foreign policies

The third within-subject analysis of variance was conducted on 6 variables dealing with foreign politics of states and their influence on Serbian people's formation of opinion. The results of this analysis, as well as the mean values for each of the 6 variables and the results of the Bonferroni post hoc test are presented in Table 4. Again, as in previous cases, Mauchly's test reveals that the sphericity assumption was violated,  $\chi^2(14) = 291.36, p < 0.001$ . Nevertheless, within-subject ANOVA with a Huynh-Feldt correction ( $\epsilon = 0.81$ ) shows the existence of statistically significant differences within the sample at the significance level of 95%,  $F(4.06, 1788.76) = 40.47, p < 0.05$ . Hence, we can reject the null-hypothesis of no difference, and argue that Serbs regard various elements of a country's foreign policy behavior as unequally important. The post hoc test with Bonferroni correction again reveals differences registered by ANOVA.

From the results of this post hoc test, we can observe that the financial aid for Serbian non-governmental organizations (NGO) with a mean value of 2.995 is statistically significantly different from all other variables except humanitarian and economic aid to Serbia. This puts this variable at one of the first, most important places in the amount of influence they have on Serbs. On the other hand, the foreign country's significance and behavior in international relations

Table 4. ANOVA and Bonferroni Post Hoc Test of foreign policies as elements of soft power

<b>Means</b>					
Historical relations	Global behavior	Financial aid	Humanitarian aid	Kosovo support	Economic cooperation
2.697	2.328	2.995	2.873	2.618	2.577

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<b>Mauchly's test of sphericity</b>					
Mauchly's W	Approximate Chi-Square	Df	P-value	Epsilon	
				Greenhouse-Geisser	Huynh-Feldt
0.515	291.358	14	<0.001	0.803	0.811

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<b>Within-subjects ANOVA</b>					
Source of Variation	(corrections)	Type III Sum of Squares	df	F	P-value
Variables	Sphericity assumed	121.789	5	40.473	<0.001
	Greenhouse-Geisser	121.789	4.015	40.473	<0.001
	Huynh-Feldt	121.789	4.056	40.473	<0.001
	Sphericity assumed	1327.044	2205		
Error (Variables)	Greenhouse-Geisser	1327.044	1770.456		
	Huynh-Feldt	1327.044	1788.755		

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<b>Bonferroni post hoc test</b>						
	Historical relations	Global behavior	Financial aid	Humanitarian aid	Kosovo support	Economic cooperation
Historical relations	–	-0.369*	0.299*	0.176	-0.079	-0.120
Global behavior	0.369*	–	0.667*	0.545*	0.290*	0.249*
Financial aid	-0.299*	-0.667*	–	-0.122	-0.378*	-0.419*
Humanitarian aid	-0.176	-0.545*	0.122	–	-0.256*	-0.296*
Kosovo support	0.079	-0.290*	0.378*	0.256*	–	-0.041
Economic cooperation	0.120	-0.249*	0.419*	0.296*	0.041	–

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$

of global scale are statistically significantly different from all other variables. With a mean value of 2.328, this variable is the least important for Serbs in their formation of opinion about foreign states.

However, it needs to be stated here that, although statistically significant, these differences are substantively not that important. The largest difference between the means in the sample is that between financial aid and global behavior (0.667). This means that the difference between the least influential element of soft power on the formation of opinion and the most important one is only two-thirds of a point on a five-point scale. Additionally, the means of all 6 variables analyzed hereby are located between values of 2.328 and 2.995, meaning that all of them are located between categories of “somewhat unimportant” and “neither important nor unimportant” for a country’s attraction. Therefore, the differences between these 6 elements of soft power, although statistically significant, should be interpreted with great care, since empirically they may not mean too much. Therefore, the most important finding from this analysis is that, when it comes to countries’ foreign policies, Serbs tend to be reluctant towards formulating an opinion based on these elements of soft power.

Based on the analyses presented to this point, one can reasonably argue that an ideal country to which Serbs would be most strongly attracted is the one whose population is linguistically and religiously similar to Serbian and whose athletes are quite successful. Additionally, it would need to have significant military power and be ready to provide financial assistance to the Serbian non-governmental sector. These findings are one of the main contributions of this thesis to the existing literature. Not only do they prove the feasibility of the newly suggested quantitative methodology, but they also point to certain directions for further research of soft power in Serbia. Comparing these findings with the actual favorability of the Serbian population for certain foreign countries can show which elements currently contribute to their popularity the most and, through that, which parts of soft power they can

further develop in order to increase their potential for soft influence. An example of this is shown in the following chapter, where the discussion about the causes of Russian high popularity among the citizens of Serbia is presented.

Additionally, a special value of this novel research design is that it shows great potential for future developing. For instance, conducting similar analyses cross-nationally could show whether and, if so, to which extent various populations differ in ascribing importance to different elements of soft power. Possible uses of this cross-national data in academic works abound. Just one of many research topics, where it could be used, is in comparing the levels and quality of international cooperation of various states with one particular country, whereas the importance the latter's population ascribes to different elements of soft power would serve as an independent variable. Additionally, potential longitudinal data obtained with this design could help demonstrating whether and due to which domestic or international events the importance ascribed to various elements of soft power by certain populations changes. Making it possible to even think about these future developments is indeed an important achievement of this thesis, which could even be regarded as a cornerstone for many coming researchers.

## Chapter 3

### Russian Soft Power in Serbia

The key step in analyzing one country's capacities for soft influence in another is to find out which components of its soft power contribute most to its positive image, on the one hand, and which of them hinder it, on the other. This can be achieved through profiling the characteristics of people who are most likely to be attracted to a particular state of interest. Additionally, by combining these findings with the ones about the importance of individual elements of soft power obtained previously, many useful policy-oriented conclusions can be drawn. This is the main focal point of this chapter, which explores the causes of high Russian popularity in Serbia.

#### 3.1. A short case history<sup>10</sup>

Although the feasibility of the suggested methodology could be tested in the case of any two world countries, the case study of origins of Russian soft power in Serbia was selected because, first, Russia has been interested in the Balkan region for many centuries. This interest culminated in mid-19th century when Russia was directly involved in a war against Turkey in a successful attempt to liberate Bulgaria. Ever since, there was no major confrontation, problem nor question that could have been resolved without the involvement of this country.

Secondly, Russia is probably the only great force in Europe that has influence on politics in the Balkans, which Serbia never militarily opposed in its history. There were, of course, several disputes and disagreements between the two (e.g. Tito's confrontation with Stalin), but never an open armed conflict. These two reasons make it reasonable to expect that Russia has

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<sup>10</sup> Some parts of this subchapter were previously published in my article "Methodology of Measuring Soft Power: A New Approach" (Kosović 2015b).

the bases for and probably often uses soft power in its relations with Serbia. Namely, as also previously stressed, Serbia is still one of the most important players in international arena for any foreign power wishing to influence the region. As many authors agree, “the politics of Serbia, the region’s largest country surrounded by states which have large Serbian minority groups, is a guaranty of stability in the Western Balkans” (Szpala 2014, 1). Thus, one can arguably state that Russia, as one of many interested parties in the events in the Balkans, has been influencing all direct participators in them and, among those, Serbia. Therefore, returning to the fact that there was never an armed conflict or even negative pressures (i.e. threats) from the Russian side, this means that the Russian influence on Serbia has other – soft – bases. The issue of what these bases consist of is investigated in this chapter.

Russia is only the eighth biggest investor in Serbia in the period 2005–2012 (“FDI in figures” 2013), while its donations to Serbian NGOs and governmental offices are among the smallest of all Serbia’s foreign partners (Information system for coordination 2015). Nevertheless, Russia is still perceived among citizens as one of the biggest donors and most important economic partners for Serbia (Femić 2014). For instance, a survey conducted by the Serbian government showed that 47% of people believe Russia to be the biggest donor of developmental aid (Serbian European Integration Office 2014, 20), while in fact 89.49% of the funds come from the US and the EU (Szpala 2014, 3). Moreover, apart from an unquestionable support Russia provides concerning the Kosovo issue, there was very little *concrete support* in Serbian geopolitical disputes during the years 1990–2008 (before Kosovo declared its independence). Furthermore, Russia is often seen as a highly personalized political system, but current events in Serbia show a growing resemblance in this regard. Finally, if you ask people in Serbia about their opinion on which country is the most popular there, most probably you will hear the answer: Russia (Radun, 2012). Therefore, this part of the thesis quantitatively discusses the origins of the popularity or attractiveness – or soft power – of the Russian

Federation in Serbia. Hence, it primarily seeks answers to the question: “What makes Russia so popular in Serbia?”

### 3.2. Previous soft power research and prevailing narratives

There are not many scientific works on Russian soft power in Serbia in the existing literature, though quite a lot has been written about it in newspapers and addressed in public speeches. One of the works that address this issue from an academic point of view is that of Christopher T. Barber (n.d.), who defines three main elements of Russian soft influence on the Balkan Peninsula. The first element are “historical narratives of ethnic and religious solidarity, which becomes fundamental in preserving cultural empathy and transnational credibility” (Barber n.d., 1). The author argues that both Russian political and religious elites have been playing the card of ethnic and religious similarity in order to nurture the sense of historical ties between Serbs and Russians and, through that, increase the strength of Russian influence on Serbian political elites.

The second element of the Russian strategy Barber (n.d., 1) claims to matter is the presentation of Russian “untransparent, restrictive system of government controlled by corrupt oligarchs to leaders of Balkan nations”. He states that top-down diplomatic approach to popularizing the rule, which promotes “common political values, such as those that express pan-Slavic, xenophobic, anti-homophobic [*sic!* what is meant is homophobic], anti-Semitic, and anti-Western beliefs” (Barber n.d., 6), has produced nothing but negative effects for local democracies. However, this argument seems a bit too harsh. Describing majorities or even significant parts of local populations as xenophobic, homophobic and anti-Semitic, which is what Barber does at several points in the text, is at the very least problematic and surely not correct.

The problem here is the stance and viewpoint taken by Barber. He observes the issue, first, from the subject’s point of view (i.e. the one trying to improve the image, in this case

Russia), and, second, in an ideal setting in which all people have full information about Russian politics. Furthermore, he also builds upon the stance of local populations having extremely negative views on any differences, which has been established after the wars in 1990s. An alternative explanation of why the Russian system of government might be popular, if observed from the object's point of view (i.e. the one receiving messages and deciding about the acceptability of other side's image, in this case Serbia), could be that people in Serbia, or at least most of them, do not have enough information about the real events and situation in Russian internal politics. Moreover, it might be that Serbs perceive the sources of information about human rights violations in Russia as lacking credibility, which leads them to refuting this narrative. Alternatively, maybe they simply have strong affections towards the anti-Western part of Russian elites' ideology, which could mean that Serbs strongly condemn human rights violations, but still support the overall setup of Russian society, as opposed to Western capitalist systems. Barber fails to notice these potential differences and the main reason for this is the approach to the matter he had taken. This again provides evidence for the necessity of changing the research perspectives when discussing soft power.

Finally, the third element of Russian influence, as described by Barber (n.d., 1), "is Russia's economic commitment via increased investment, energy contracts, and humanitarian aid." However, the facts mentioned previously about Russia not being among the biggest investors speak contrary to this. This argument fails to explain why Russia is still perceived so positively even though many other countries' records in this regard are significantly better. And again the problem is the perspective from which the issue is observed and the discussion would be similar as in the previous case – local population's perception is what matters.

Another scientific work about Russian soft power in Serbia was written by Siniša Atlagić (2015), who singles out one main cause of this country's high popularity in Serbia – the historical narrative. He argues that

Russian military, political, financial and educational support to Orthodox Serbs in their fight for liberation from Turkish Empire's yoke in 18th and 19th centuries, as well as cultural and spiritual closeness of two peoples remains even today the basis of Serbian sympathies towards Russians and the basis of Russian image of "protector", "older sister", "savior of Serbia, the Serbs and Orthodox spirit", etc. (Atlagić 2015, 115)

However, it seems rather unlikely that this kind of high popularity can be explained merely by historical narratives, even if they were so deeply embedded in a society as this one in Serbia. This becomes even less likely after it was already shown that the quality of historical relations does not really matter that much to Serbs when formulating opinion about foreign states. Therefore, the hereby-presented analysis puts the validity of such ideas in an indeed specific Russian case to the test, but also evaluates the importance of other elements which make Russia so highly regarded in Serbia.

### 3.3. Hypotheses

The general assumption, which this thesis tests, is that Russia is the most popular and attractive country among the Serbian citizens. Many surveys and opinion polls were conducted that tested one aspect of this idea. For instance, one of the leading Serbian websites, which specialize in political analyses, the New Serbian Political Thought (*serb.* Nova Srpska Politička Misao – NSPM) – and not only them, of course – twice a year asks people to state whether they support the membership of Serbia in the EU and the NATO, on the one hand, and if they would raise hands for "an alliance with Russia", on the other (Vukadinović 2015a). Although the numbers over the years have constantly been in favor of the latter, this kind of question is not of much help for this thesis for at least two reasons. First, the formulation "an alliance with Russia" is more than vague. Although this kind of construction is used in many other opinion polls in Serbia, it remains unclear what kind of alliance this question refers to. Secondly, these three formulations, "Do you support the membership of Serbia in the EU?", "Do you support the membership of Serbia in the NATO?", and "Do you support an alliance with Russia?" are of little help for comparing the popularity of Russia to other countries, let alone their soft power

capacities. Only one of the many reasons why this is practically impossible is simply because both the EU and the NATO are international organizations consisting of many countries. Moreover, the main goal of this thesis is to compare Russia to other states and not international organizations, although a separate research could indeed be conducted on this topic, as well. Therefore, since this kind of questions are the only ones currently available, the research conducted for purposes of this thesis represents yet another contribution to the existing literature.

The second aim of this thesis is to quantitatively identify specific elements of Russian soft power that have the strongest influence in the formation of a positive image about this country among Serbian citizens. The prevailing narratives exposed previously, combined with the findings about what matters most for Serbs, allowed me to formulate hypotheses for each group of variables about the type of people attracted to Russia. First of all, it is expected that H<sub>1</sub>: people who regard important national similarities between Serbs and Russians (i.e. those variables that speak to their cultural similarities, such as religious and linguistic similarities as well as the possibility of self-identification) will be more likely to feel attracted to Russia than those who do not. Moreover, it is hypothesized that H<sub>2</sub>: people who feel attracted to military power and leadership image will also be more likely to favor Russia, than those who do not. Finally, H<sub>3</sub>: those who deem important Russian support to Serbia in its territorial dispute over Kosovo and the overall quality of historical relations between these two countries are also expected to have a more favorable opinion about Russia, than those who do not care about these elements of soft power. The null-hypotheses in all three cases are that H<sub>0</sub>: there is no relationship between the specified elements of soft power and the Serbian favorability for Russia.

### 3.4. Data transformations

For the purposes of performing a logistic regression, a binary variable Russia/non-Russia was computed, whereas all those people in the sample that stated this country to be among their three favorites were assigned 1 and those that did not list it – 0. This variable is used as the dependent variable, while additional data transformations were necessary in order to use the surveyed 23 elements of soft power as independent ones. Namely, three exploratory factor analyses served the purpose of reducing the number of variables to a reasonable extent.

These analyses were conducted for each group of variables. First of all, a factor analysis was conducted in the case of 8 variables dealing with cultural elements of soft power. The results are shown in Table 5. As can be seen from the table, the two factors explain the total of 35.6% of variance of these variables, which can be regarded as a satisfactory number since the analysis reduced the number of variables from 8 to 2 latent variables. Additional increase in number of factors did not show significant improvement for at least two reasons: 1) it either did not lead to a significant increase of cumulative variance explained (three factors explained 46.1%, while four were able to explain 54.9%), or 2) the division of variables depending on

*Table 5. Factor analysis of cultural elements of soft power*

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2
Art	0.044	0.537
Cuisine	0.088	0.459
Self-identification	0.441	0.146
Religion	0.761	0.100
Language	0.764	0.145
Education	0.216	0.500
Sports	0.407	0.437
Tourism	0.138	0.509
Proportion Variance	0.200	0.157
Cumulative Variance	0.200	0.356

their factor loadings across the groups was impossible to support and interpret theoretically. An additional issue that can be noticed from Table 5 is that the factor loadings of the variable describing the role of successes in sports in the formation of opinion about foreign countries is almost equally divided across the two factors (0.407 and 0.437). For this reason, as well as since the theory that can be used to support the remaining distribution of variables cannot be employed in case this variable is split in this way, it was excluded from the sample, and the analysis was repeated. The results of this factor analysis are given in Table 6.

The newly computed factors show a higher value of explained variance in the sample than previously (36.2%), all variables' loadings are above the threshold level of 0.4, and the division of variables across the factors can be theoretically supported. This division is shown in bold numbers in the table and implies that the first factor grouped answers on three variables pertaining to national similarities, namely those that assess the importance of self-identification of respondents with other country's nationals, and religious and linguistic similarities. For that reason, in the following analysis we refer to the newly formed variable (Factor 1) as "national similarities". The second factor combined four variables that speak to what can be understood

*Table 6. Repeated factor analysis of cultural elements of soft power*

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2
Art	0.047	<b>0.534</b>
Cuisine	0.097	<b>0.576</b>
Self-identification	<b>0.448</b>	0.206
Religion	<b>0.816</b>	0.097
Language	<b>0.709</b>	0.130
Education	0.225	<b>0.460</b>
Tourism	0.121	<b>0.440</b>
Proportion Variance	0.207	0.156
Cumulative Variance	0.207	0.362

as cultural attractiveness in a narrow sense. Namely, based on respondents' answers, it groups variables that describe the importance of quality and availability of foreign country's arts and national cuisine, its touristic attractiveness and the quality of education it offers. Therefore, this factor formed another variable used in logistic regression analysis – the “cultural attractiveness”.

The second round of exploratory factor analysis was conducted on 9 variables that explored the influence of domestic values on the Serbian population's formation of opinion about foreign countries. The results are shown in Table 7. The two hereby-obtained factors together explain 55% of cumulative variance of observed variables, which can be regarded as highly satisfactory. Any further increase in number of factors does not produce significantly different results (three factors explain 61% of variance), and the current distribution of variables across the two factors makes sense from a theoretical point of view, so these two factors were saved and exported as variables for logistic regression. Based on variables' factor loadings, the first factor can be understood as the one describing the importance of democratic nature of

*Table 7. Factor analysis of domestic values as elements of soft power*

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2
Democracy	<b>0.645</b>	0.225
Human rights	<b>0.866</b>	0.108
Rule of law	<b>0.867</b>	0.125
Environment	<b>0.639</b>	0.274
Economy	<b>0.432</b>	<b>0.506</b>
Military	0.094	<b>0.744</b>
Media	<b>0.650</b>	0.342
Corruption	<b>0.598</b>	0.381
Leadership	0.194	<b>0.622</b>
Proportion Variance	0.371	0.179
Cumulative Variance	0.371	0.550

foreign countries in Serbs' formulation of opinion about them, so it is referred to as the "democratic nature" variable. This factor combines variables such as the level of development of democracy, the quality of protection of human rights, the rule of law, the quality of environmental protection, media freedom, levels of corruption, as well as marginally important levels of economic development (factor loading of 0.432). The last variable is associated with both factors, which makes sense, since the level of economic development is indeed often associated with both levels of democracy, and military power as the major variable in the second factor (loading of 0.744). Apart from these two variables, the second factor also includes the importance of people's perception of a foreign country's leader. Therefore, this new variable is referred to as "domestic power", since it combines elements of both economic and military powers as well as the state leader's personality.

Finally, the third factor analysis was used to reduce the number of variables in the part about foreign policies as an element of soft power. The two obtained factors (Table 8) explained 67.5% of variance in these 6 variables, and grouped them in a theoretically meaningful way, thus making it possible to extract the factors as two new variables for logistic regression. The first factor combined variables that assessed the importance of foreign financial aid to the NGO sector and humanitarian and economic donations, which are in relation with economic cooperation between Serbia and a foreign country, which explains the division of this variable between both factors. Therefore, since all three variables within the first extracted factor are related to financial matters, it is referred to as the "financial element" variable in logistic regression analysis. The second factor encompassed four variables, all of which had factor loadings above 0.6: the importance of historical political and military relations between Serbia and the foreign country in term, the importance and behavior of a foreign country on the international arena, the support for Serbia in its dispute over Kosovo, and the quality of economic

*Table 8. Factor analysis of foreign policies as elements of soft power*

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2
Historical relations	0.279	<b>0.728</b>
Global behavior	0.257	<b>0.619</b>
Financial aid	<b>0.808</b>	0.335
Humanitarian aid	<b>0.867</b>	0.390
Kosovo support	0.471	<b>0.638</b>
Economic cooperation	<b>0.539</b>	<b>0.638</b>
Proportion Variance	0.343	0.332
Cumulative Variance	0.343	0.675

cooperation between Serbia and the foreign country. Therefore, the second extracted factor is referred to as “geopolitical relevance” and, as such, used in the logistic regression analysis.

The three exploratory factor analyses discussed above reduced the total number of independent variables in the sample from 23 to 6, with two newly computed variables per each element of soft power. Thus, the variables included in the logistic regression analysis are “national similarities” and “cultural attractiveness” for cultural part of soft power, “democratic nature” and “domestic power” for domestic values part, and “financial element” and “geopolitical relevance” for foreign policies component of soft power.

Finally, the last step in data transformation, but the one of great importance, was the standardization of six newly obtained variables. In order to be able to meaningfully interpret the coefficients of potentially significant variables obtained in the regression analyses, every value of these variables was recomputed so to fit the scale where the mean is equal to 0, and standard deviation is equal to 1.

### 3.5. Results and discussion

The underlying assumption of this work is that Russia is the most popular foreign country in Serbia. This assumption is tested by the data obtained through the second question in the survey, which asked the respondents to name three foreign countries that they favor most. The connection between favorability, attraction and soft power capabilities was explained previously. In short, the more people favor certain foreign countries, the more attractive they can be regarded and, consequentially, the bigger the possibilities for their soft influence on the local population.

The surveyed sample of people led to 71 different country being mentioned in the poll. The data shown in Figure 1 clearly speaks in favor of confirming the general hypothesis about Russia being the most popular foreign state in Serbia. Out of 442 respondents, 189 of them (42.76%) listed Russia as one of their three favorite countries. The second most often-occurring country in the survey was Greece, with 131 different people (29.64%) mentioning it, while

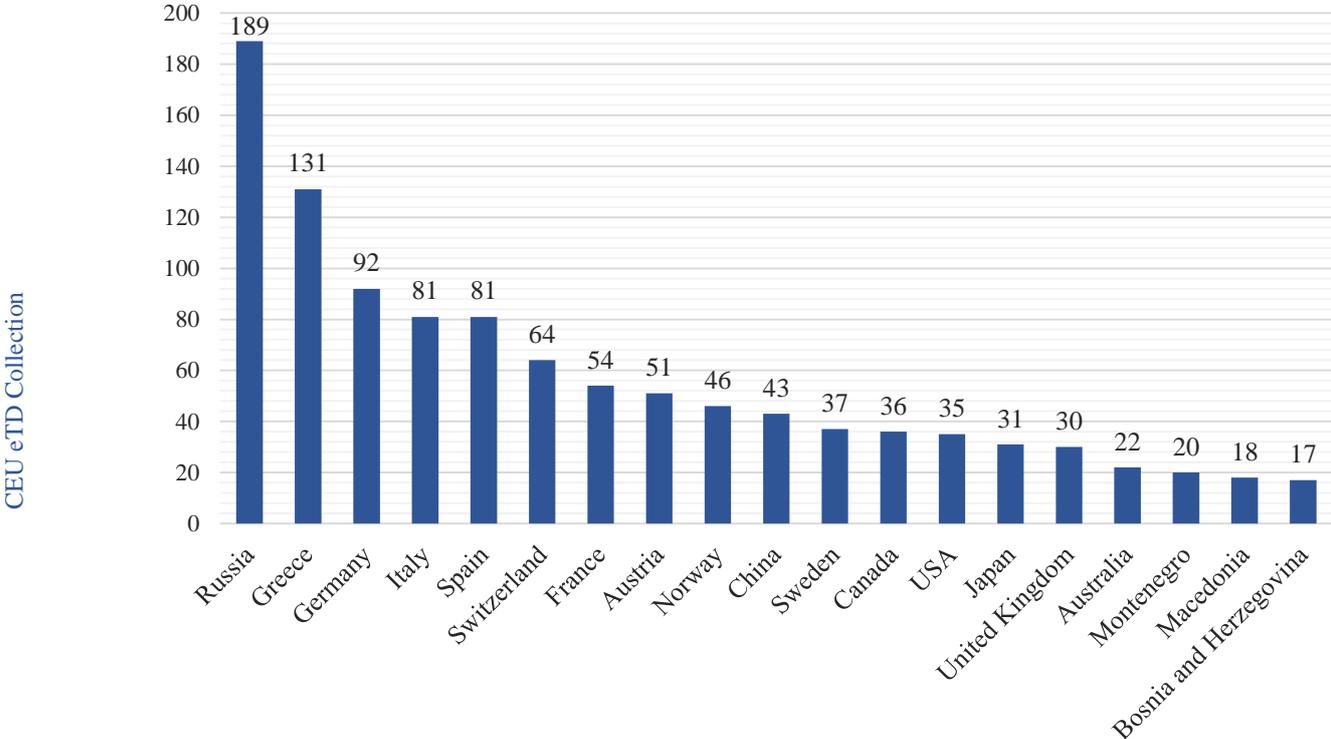


Figure 1. Number of mentions per country.

Germany (92 mentions; 20.8%), Italy (81; 18.32%) and Spain (81; 18.32%) came third, and forth/fifth, respectively. In other words, almost 45% more people mentioned Russia rather than Greece who made it to the second place, and more than twice as many more people mentioned Russia than Germany. Clearly one can conclude that Russia is by far the most popular country among the citizens of Serbia.

What makes this country so popular? Which elements of Russian soft power contribute to this popularity most? Who are the Serbs most strongly attracted to it? All these questions are hereby answered through a logistic regression analysis, which determines the characteristics of people that stated Russia as one of their three favorite countries.

The results of nine logistic regression models are presented in Table 9.<sup>11</sup> The table shows regression coefficients of different variables included in each model, along with their levels of significance and standard errors. Moreover, the bottom part of the table provides insights into several different measures of fit of each of these models, as well as their null- and residual deviances. As there is little consensus in the existing literature about which measure of goodness-of-fit should be used in case of logistic regressions, the table presents several of them. The first one is McFadden's (1973) pseudo- $R^2$  (occasionally denoted as  $\rho^2$ ), higher values of which imply better fit. Unlike the  $R^2$  measure used in OLS regressions, however, McFadden (1977, 35) writes that "values of .2 to .4 for  $\rho^2$  represent an excellent fit." Secondly, the area under the receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curve (AUC) is also given, whereas, when comparing the goodness-of-fit of two models, higher values correspond to the better fitting one. An ideal model, according to this measure has the value of 1, while the poor one's AUC is equal to 0.5 (Freeman & Moisen 2008, 13). Thirdly,  $p$ -values of the le Cessie-van Houwelingen-Copas-Hosmer (CHCH) unweighted sum of squares global goodness-of-fit tests for each model

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<sup>11</sup> The initial analysis of data for logistic regression showed low cell-counts for two categories of the "Education" variable ("No formal education", and "Elementary"), so two respondents, who initially fell into them, were excluded from the regression analysis. Thus, the final sample for the logistic regression consisted of 440 respondents.

are listed (Hosmer et al. 1997). These values are interpreted in such a way that all models, whose  $p$ -value is below 0.05, poorly fit the data. Finally, the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) is also given for all models. Although the values of AIC cannot imply goodness-of-fit of each individual model, they serve the purpose of comparing one model's fit to another. The lower the value of AIC, the better the model fits the data. Since AIC is probably most widely accepted measure of fit of all presented hereby, this thesis draws most conclusions about the goodness-of-fit based on it.

As can be observed in the table below, the first two models (1, 2) tested the influence of only two variables, whose influence was expected to be statistically significant, the “national similarity” and “domestic power”. As confirmed by the data, these expectations were grounded in both cases, though at different levels of significance, both with and without demographic control variables. However, one should not jump to conclusions and interpretations of coefficients at this point. As soon as the third variable that was hypothesized to be significant (“Geopolitical relevance”) is added to these models (3, 4), the statistical significance of the former two disappears. Additionally, a significant decrease in AIC values is also notable (from 590.2 to 558.5), which implies that the second group of models fits the data a lot better. Additionally, this is confirmed by the rise in values of both AUC and McFadden's pseudo- $R^2$  (from 64.37% to 71.26% and from 0.05 to 0.1, respectively). At this point, the statistical significance of several demographic control variables should also be noted. Further additions of variables to the model gave even better results in terms of goodness-of-fit. Thus, a model involving all variables from the sample (5) had an AIC value of 544.3, McFadden's pseudo- $R^2$  of 0.137 and AUC value of 74.41%. However, and this is an example of why there is little consensus about the validity of any of these measures of fit, unlike in previous cases, the CHCH global goodness-of-fit test showed at this point a  $p$ -value of 0.02 (i.e.  $p < 0.05$ ), implying that this model fits the data poorly. Nevertheless, it should be noted that two out of six variables

Table 9. Tested logistic regression models

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Constant	-0.307*** (0.099)	-0.222 (0.494)	-0.341*** (0.103)	-0.218 (0.519)	-0.236 (0.539)	-0.101 (0.412)	0.018 (0.208)	0.016 (0.206)	-0.359*** (0.106)
National similarity	-0.295*** (0.108)	-0.284** (0.111)	-0.153 (0.115)	-0.142 (0.119)	-0.128 (0.125)				
Domestic power	-0.196* (0.109)	-0.188* (0.112)	0.131 (0.127)	0.140 (0.129)	0.162 (0.144)	0.139 (0.141)	0.134 (0.140)		
Geopolitical relevance			-0.753*** (0.137)	-0.773*** (0.141)	-0.953*** (0.154)	-0.984*** (0.151)	-0.988*** (0.149)	-0.909*** (0.130)	-0.903*** (0.129)
Cultural attractiveness					0.455*** (0.128)	0.451*** (0.127)	0.461*** (0.126)	0.515*** (0.122)	0.538*** (0.120)
Democratic nature					0.147 (0.120)	0.151 (0.119)	0.157 (0.117)		
Financial element					-0.182 (0.125)	-0.206* (0.123)	-0.202* (0.122)	-0.146 (0.111)	-0.145 (0.110)
Gender		-0.363* (0.206)		-0.434** (0.215)	-0.291 (0.226)	-0.318 (0.224)	-0.325 (0.223)	-0.322 (0.222)	
Income		0.068 (0.098)		0.110 (0.103)	0.100 (0.107)	0.093 (0.107)			
Education2		-0.448** (0.221)		-0.398* (0.230)	-0.340 (0.236)	-0.339 (0.236)			
Education3		-0.413 (0.305)		-0.254 (0.317)	-0.191 (0.326)	-0.222 (0.324)			
Employment		-0.303 (0.219)		-0.393* (0.228)	-0.407* (0.234)	-0.384* (0.228)	-0.328 (0.213)	-0.325 (0.212)	
Age		0.010 (0.010)		0.005 (0.010)	0.003 (0.010)				
Null deviance (df)	600.63 (439)	600.63 (439)	600.63 (439)	600.63 (439)	600.63 (439)	600.63 (439)	600.63 (439)	600.63 (439)	600.63 (439)
Residual deviance (df)	583.18 (437)	572.19 (431)	549.25 (436)	538.52 (430)	518.29 (427)	519.39 (429)	521.98 (432)	524.61 (434)	529.14 (436)
McFadden's Pseudo- R <sup>2</sup>	0.029	0.047	0.085	0.103	0.137	0.135	0.131	0.127	0.119
AUC <sup>1)</sup>	60.97%	64.37%	69.76%	71.26%	74.41%	74.12%	73.73%	73.28%	72.78%
CHCH <sup>2)</sup>	0.471	0.446	0.235	0.537	0.022	0.031	0.064	0.160	0.070
AIC <sup>3)</sup>	589.18	590.19	557.27	558.52	544.29	541.39	537.98	536.61	537.14

Note: \* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ ; standard errors given in parenthesis;

<sup>1)</sup> Area under the ROC (receiver operating characteristic) curve;

<sup>2)</sup> le Cessie-van Houwelingen-Copas-Hosmer unweighted sum of squares global goodness-of-fit test, p-value;

<sup>3)</sup> Akaike Information Criterion.

pertaining to soft power were statistically significant in this model (“Cultural attractiveness”, and, again, “Geopolitical relevance”), as well as the employment status as a control. However, due to many variables included in the model, its complexity also rose, so the following steps in the analysis included the gradual elimination of different variables. Notably, no addition or subtraction of variables from the model showed any changes in the levels of significance of “Cultural attractiveness” and “Geopolitical relevance” variables. On the other hand, exclusions of any of these two variables from the model resulted in significant increases in values of AIC, meaning that these variables explain a significant portion of variance in the dependent one. Thus, I came to model 8, which will hereby be discussed in detail.

This model was chosen for two strong reasons. First, it shows the lowest AIC values with reasonably high values of all other measures of goodness-of-fit. Secondly and equally important, it involves five variables, two of which are statistically significant, which makes this model reasonably simple, though still avoiding possible biases, as this would be the case if it contained only two variables (as model 9).

In order to be able to meaningfully interpret the regression coefficients from the table, one needs to take into consideration their exponential functions. Thus, the exponential function of coefficient for “Geopolitical relevance” ( $\beta_1 = -0.909$ ) is  $\exp(-0.909) = 0.40$ , and the one of “Cultural attractiveness” ( $\beta_2 = 0.515$ ) is  $\exp(0.515) = 1.67$ . These two numbers can now easily be interpreted in terms of odds ratio. Hence, I can conclude that people who regard geopolitical relevance of foreign countries as less important by 1 standard deviation of this variable are as much as 2.5 times more likely to be attracted to Russia. In other words, people in Serbia who regard geopolitical relevance as important when formulating their opinion about foreign countries are less likely to be attracted to Russia than those who do not. On the other hand, Serbs who deem important cultural attractiveness of foreign countries when formulating opinion about them are more likely to be attracted to Russia. More precisely speaking, if a

person ascribes 1 standard deviation more importance to cultural attractiveness than another, he or she is 67% more likely to favor Russia.

Therefore, returning to the initial null-hypotheses, one can say that I failed to reject two of them. First, there is no relationship between how much importance people ascribe to national similarities in their formulation of opinion about foreign states and the Russian popularity in Serbia. Put differently, people who regard national similarities very important will be equally attracted to or repelled by Russia as those who ascribe them little importance.

Secondly, the same conclusion applies to those people in Serbia who give more or less importance to foreign countries' domestic power, i.e. they will be equally (not) attracted by Russia. Strictly scientifically speaking, there is no relationship between the importance Serbs ascribe to foreign country's domestic power and Russian popularity in Serbia.

Finally, I was able to partly reject the third null-hypothesis. While, on the one hand, statistically significant evidence was provided for the existence of a relationship between the importance that people in Serbia ascribe to geopolitical relevance and Russian popularity there, the direction of this relationship was opposite from what was hypothesized. In other words, there is indeed a statistically significant influence of Russian geopolitical relevance on Serbian people's favorability of this country. However, evidence has shown that parts of Serbian population, as represented in this imperfect, slightly biased sample, which care about the historical relations between Serbia and its foreign partners, the behavior of the latter country on the international arena and its support to Serbia in the dispute over Kosovo, as well as about the economic cooperation between the two, feel less attracted to Russia.

Additionally, though initially not anticipated, a statistically significant relationship was also discovered between the importance the Serbian people ascribe to cultural attraction, or, as described, foreign culture in a narrow sense (art, cuisine, education offered and touristic attractiveness) and the favorability for Russia. This is an extremely valuable finding, since it

points to a direction of bases of Russian soft power in Serbia. Based on the established relationship, whereas people who care about cultural attractiveness are more likely to favor Russia than those who do not, one can reasonably argue that one of the main foundations of Russian high popularity in Serbia is exactly this component of its soft power potential. In other words, answering the main research question of this thesis, what makes Russia so popular in Serbia is its art, cuisine, the quality of education it has to offer, and the attractiveness of its touristic sights.

Several important implications stem from these findings. First, theoretically, they show that existing narratives about religious and cultural similarities between majorities of Serbs and Russians (Barber n.d.), as well as the former's search for protection and security (Atlagić 2015) being the reasons for Russian high popularity are not quite founded. Although they might play some role in this among certain parts of population in Serbia, the data presented hereby does not support such claims. As shown previously, there was no relationship found between the importance of national similarities and Russian popularity in Serbia. Since this finding goes against the common wisdom and prevailing narratives, it is indeed an important contribution of this thesis to the existing literature.

Additionally, the relationship between the importance of a foreign country's domestic power, which is supposed to provide security, and Russian popularity was also not found. Even more importantly, although a statistically significant relationship between geopolitical relevance, as another aspect of a country's soft power that could imply the wish for protection, and favorability for Russia was found, its direction is completely the opposite from that established in existing literature. Not only are Serbs who care about geopolitical relevance simply less attracted to Russia, but also is this proportion substantively quite big. Being 2.5 times less likely to prefer Russia if you regard this issue more important by 1 standard deviation

goes strongly and convincingly against any expectations put forward based on existing literature and narratives within the Serbian society.

Finally, the main finding of this thesis about cultural attractiveness playing a statistically significant role in the Russian popularity is the most important novel contribution to the existing knowledge about this topic. Although, due to the nature of factor analysis, one cannot dissect individual variables that are most important in this regard, I can still argue that the combination of Russian art (literature, music, film, etc.), Russian cuisine, the quality of education this country offers to students and its touristic attractiveness is the most important factor that contributes to Russian high popularity in Serbia.

The second group of important implications of findings obtained in this thesis is the policy-related one. First of all, the data confirms that Russia has the biggest potential to softly influence people in Serbia and local political events through its culture. By further promoting this component of soft power, Russia could probably count on increasing the number of people feeling attracted to it. On the other hand, in order to achieve the same goal, it is also necessary for Russia to improve its image among those parts of the Serbian population that regard important the geopolitical relevance of foreign countries. Just one of several ways how this could be achieved is through improving the economic cooperation between Serbia and Russia. Through further enhancing and enriching economic ties between the two countries, Russia could obtain another important basis for soft influence. Finally, a bit worrying for Russian interests might seem the fact that no relationship between self-identification variables (or “national similarities”) and Russian popularity was found in the sample. Although it indeed seems that this could be a valuable source for Russian soft influence, at this point it still is not. These variables are among the most important ones for Serbs when they formulate an opinion about foreign states in general, but not about Russia in particular. Therefore, a potentially good idea for Russian policy-makers would be to enhance the narrative that would put emphasis on these similarities and expect to further increase its popularity.

## Conclusion

This thesis sought to answer two main research questions. First, which elements of soft power matter most for the Serbian population when formulating an opinion about foreign countries, and, second, what makes Russia so popular in Serbia. The newly suggested, *object-oriented* research design for investigating soft power capabilities proved useful for addressing both of them. First, based on three within-subject analyses of variance, I concluded that Serbs are most strongly attracted to countries, which are linguistically and religiously similar to them, as well as those that have significant successes in sports. Moreover, Serbs are significantly more strongly attracted to countries with big military power than to those with highly developed economies. Finally, the findings allow me to conclude that foreign policy elements of country's soft power do not play an important role in the opinion formation of the Serbian population.

On the other hand, the statistical analysis of the causes of high popularity of Russia in Serbia showed that two main groups of soft power components matter in this regard. On the one hand, this popularity is positively influenced by the Russian art, cuisine, the quality of education offered to students and its touristic attractiveness. People for whom these factors matter are 67% more likely to favor Russia. On the other hand, people who regard geopolitical relevance of countries important are 2.5 times more likely not to be attracted to Russia.

All of these findings, along with the proposed methodology, through which they were obtained, represent a valuable contribution to several aspects of existing literature. First of all, to the best of my knowledge, this is the first analysis of Russian soft power with a changed perspective on the issue. Instead of observing Russian influence from the point of a country that elicits attraction (e.g. Russia), as was often attempted previously (Liik 2013, Tsygankov 2006) this thesis investigated it from the viewpoint of the country subjected to that elicitation.

Additionally, it suggested a list of national traits that should be treated as elements of soft power. This list, though, can also be observed as having certain limitations and potentially not being final. Namely, it could be argued that more variability could have been achieved if the survey, for instance, had further divided the notion of “art” into its subparts (e.g. music, ballet, literature, etc.) as was done with “democracy”. This might seem as a relevant objection to the employed research design, and could be attempted in some future ventures. Nevertheless, this thesis managed to show that not all elements of soft power can be treated as equally important, so they should not, as such, be equally weighted when assessing and comparing two countries’ soft power capacities. Therefore, since differences in importance of certain elements can be observed even within one society, one can only suppose how many differences would occur in cross-national assessments. Therefore, this argument again confirms one of the main cornerstones of this research: the notion that global indices of soft power, such as *The New Persuaders* (McClory 2010, 2011, 2012), do not have much practical utility, nor are they representative of any particular country’s soft power in any other individual state. Thus, they should be abandoned and replaced with case-by-case object-oriented studies.

Thirdly, this thesis put to the test the common wisdom and somewhat firmly established narratives of Serbs being attracted to Russia due to their religious similarities, common Slavic origins and wish for protection (Atlagić 2015). This work is the first in the existing literature to refute these narratives and provide firm quantitative evidence against them. One of possible objections to these findings and issues that can be interpreted as limitations are imperfections of two kinds. First, the representativeness of the sample was violated by a bias in respondents’ levels of education. Namely, the sampled pool of people’s education did not fully correspond to the entirety of Serbian population, with undereducated people and those with nothing more than elementary education being underrepresented. One could, therefore, argue that an important part of population was not represented in the sample, which made the results and

conclusions biased as well. This objection seems justified, but at the same time, was noted during the research and the reader was invited to take the inferences implied hereby with a dose of skepticism. Nevertheless, regardless of these imperfections, the survey showed great potential for future developments, which was one of the main goals of this exploratory study.

The second limitation of the research could be the selected methods for statistical analysis. On the one hand, the three factor analyses resulted in losses of variance within the sample, especially in the case of components pertaining to cultural aspects of soft power, whereas two factors explained a bit more than 36% of variance, or in different terms, failed to account for 64% of it. This could mean that several findings occurred or did not occur due to these imperfections and the loss of variance in the sample. On the other hand, a binary dependent variable used in regression analysis could be criticized for not allowing enough variance, which dictated an interpretation in terms of odds and not ordinary “scaled” values, which might have been slightly easier to comprehend. Again, these criticisms might seem founded, but in my view do not significantly influence the outcome of the research. The selection of methods was dictated by the design of research. Moreover, all necessary assumptions for statistical tests were satisfied and the regression analysis showed satisfactory fit to the data. Therefore, although these potential issues should be kept in mind, their importance and influence on the results and conclusions and inferences should at the same time not be overestimated.

The broader significance of this research for other areas of political science stems from an abundance of possibilities for its future development. Broadening the questionnaire and gathering more data about the respondents could bring about many other valuable insights. For instance, it could include information about the news sources people use, their political activism, ideological stances, voting behavior, personal beliefs, etc. so to be able to get a wider profile of people attracted to certain countries, who at the same time represent the potential

audience for soft influence. Additionally, expanding the scope of research both territorially and temporally could lead to other interesting comparative and longitudinal studies, some of which were previously already mentioned. Moreover, the type of research conducted hereby as well as potential comparative and longitudinal ones, can be transformed into multidisciplinary ones, so to include aspects of theories from political communication, international relations, and even peace and security studies. Therefore, this exploratory study has huge theoretical potential for future research and development.

Strictly speaking in terms of broader practical importance of this research, it shows the means through which foreign countries can build a favorable image among the Serbian population. Being highly regarded in such a vibrant and quickly changing environment as the Western Balkans provides many opportunities for advancing own national interests. The case of Serbia not imposing sanctions on Russia, thus contradicting the European Union, the membership in which Serbian elites – at least deliberately – aspire, is a clear example of this. One of the possible explanations for this is exactly the fact that Russia is so popular there (i.e. Russian soft power capabilities) and that an imposition of sanctions would significantly harm the popularity of the ruling party and its leader. Now that the bases of this popularity are better understood, useful policy recommendations for both the EU and Russian elites can be made as to how to limit or enhance this soft Russian influence. Similar research dealing with various other countries and the causes of their attractiveness could help draw similarly important conclusions not only in Serbia, but also across the world.

One could only hope that such researches will be conducted, thus enriching a still fairly young field of soft power in international relations and political science. It remains to be seen which conclusions will be drawn from this, but even more importantly, how and for which causes the observed soft power capacities will be used. After all, there is nothing more dangerous than power and nothing more powerful than other people's hearts and minds.

## Appendix 1: Survey questionnaire

Dear Sir/Madam,

This survey is used to determine the importance of individual factors that influence the formation of positive or negative opinions of the Serbian population about foreign countries, and will be used in a Master Thesis. All obtained data will be completely anonymous.

I cordially thank you for participating in this research.

### **1. Please assess how important these factors are in your formation of opinion about a foreign country.**

#### 1.1. Quality and availability of the foreign country's arts (literature, music, film, etc.) in Serbia

- 1) Not at all important
- 2) Somewhat unimportant
- 3) Neither important nor unimportant
- 4) Somewhat important
- 5) Very important

#### 1.2. Foreign country's national cuisine

- 1) Not at all important
- 2) Somewhat unimportant
- 3) Neither important nor unimportant
- 4) Somewhat important
- 5) Very important

#### 1.3. Possibility of self-identification (to detect resemblances and differences) between yourself and the people of a foreign country)

- 1) Not at all important
- 2) Somewhat unimportant
- 3) Neither important nor unimportant
- 4) Somewhat important
- 5) Very important

#### 1.4. Religious similarity between yourself and the people living in a foreign country

- 1) Not at all important
- 2) Somewhat unimportant
- 3) Neither important nor unimportant
- 4) Somewhat important
- 5) Very important

1.5. Linguistic similarity between Serbian and the language spoken in a foreign country

- 1) Not at all important
- 2) Somewhat unimportant
- 3) Neither important nor unimportant
- 4) Somewhat important
- 5) Very important

1.6. Quality of education offered by the foreign country

- 1) Not at all important
- 2) Somewhat unimportant
- 3) Neither important nor unimportant
- 4) Somewhat important
- 5) Very important

1.7. Sports successes of teams and individuals coming from a foreign country

- 1) Not at all important
- 2) Somewhat unimportant
- 3) Neither important nor unimportant
- 4) Somewhat important
- 5) Very important

1.8. Foreign country's touristic attractiveness

- 1) Not at all important
- 2) Somewhat unimportant
- 3) Neither important nor unimportant
- 4) Somewhat important
- 5) Very important

1.9. Level of democratic development in a foreign country

- 1) Not at all important
- 2) Somewhat unimportant
- 3) Neither important nor unimportant
- 4) Somewhat important
- 5) Very important

1.10. Quality of human rights protection in a foreign country

- 1) Not at all important
- 2) Somewhat unimportant
- 3) Neither important nor unimportant
- 4) Somewhat important
- 5) Very important

1.11. Rule of law (i.e. the equity of all people before the law) in a foreign country

- 1) Not at all important
- 2) Somewhat unimportant
- 3) Neither important nor unimportant
- 4) Somewhat important
- 5) Very important

1.12. Quality of environmental protection in the assessed country

- 1) Not at all important
- 2) Somewhat unimportant
- 3) Neither important nor unimportant
- 4) Somewhat important
- 5) Very important

1.13. Level of economic development achieved in a foreign country

- 1) Not at all important
- 2) Somewhat unimportant
- 3) Neither important nor unimportant
- 4) Somewhat important
- 5) Very important

1.14. Military power of the country in term

- 1) Not at all important
- 2) Somewhat unimportant
- 3) Neither important nor unimportant
- 4) Somewhat important
- 5) Very important

1.15. Freedom of media in a foreign country

- 1) Not at all important
- 2) Somewhat unimportant
- 3) Neither important nor unimportant
- 4) Somewhat important
- 5) Very important

1.16. Levels of corruption in the country of interest

- 1) Not at all important
- 2) Somewhat unimportant
- 3) Neither important nor unimportant
- 4) Somewhat important
- 5) Very important

- 1.17. Perception of personality of a foreign country's leader (prime-minister or president)
- 1) Not at all important
  - 2) Somewhat unimportant
  - 3) Neither important nor unimportant
  - 4) Somewhat important
  - 5) Very important
- 1.18. Quality of historical political and military relations (allies or enemies in conflicts and disputes) between Serbia and the country in term
- 1) Not at all important
  - 2) Somewhat unimportant
  - 3) Neither important nor unimportant
  - 4) Somewhat important
  - 5) Very important
- 1.19. Significance and behavior of a foreign country in global international relations.
- 1) Not at all important
  - 2) Somewhat unimportant
  - 3) Neither important nor unimportant
  - 4) Somewhat important
  - 5) Very important
- 1.20. Financial aid of a foreign country to Serbian non-governmental organizations
- 1) Not at all important
  - 2) Somewhat unimportant
  - 3) Neither important nor unimportant
  - 4) Somewhat important
  - 5) Very important
- 1.21. Amount of humanitarian aid and donations to Serbia coming from a foreign country
- 1) Not at all important
  - 2) Somewhat unimportant
  - 3) Neither important nor unimportant
  - 4) Somewhat important
  - 5) Very important
- 1.22. Foreign country's support for Serbia in its dispute over Kosovo
- 1) Not at all important
  - 2) Somewhat unimportant
  - 3) Neither important nor unimportant
  - 4) Somewhat important
  - 5) Very important

1.23. Quality of economic cooperation between Serbia and the country in term

- 1) Not at all important
- 2) Somewhat unimportant
- 3) Neither important nor unimportant
- 4) Somewhat important
- 5) Very important

**2. List three foreign country that you favor most (order unimportant):**

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**3. Gender:**

- 1) Male
- 2) Female

**4. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_**

**5. Highest obtained level of education:**

- 1) No formal education
- 2) Elementary school
- 3) Secondary school
- 4) Bachelor's degree
- 5) Master's degree or PhD

**6. Monthly income level per household member (total income ÷ number of household members)**

- 1) RSD 0
- 2) RSD 0-10,000
- 3) RSD 10,000-25,000
- 4) RSD 25,000-50,000
- 5) RSD 50,000-100,000
- 6) More than RSD 100,000

**7. Your current employment status is:**

- 1) Employed
- 2) Unemployed/Student/Pensioner

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