

American Journal of Social and Humanitarian Research

Vol. 7 Issue 10 | **pp.** 142-149 | **ISSN:** 2690-9626
Available online @ https://globalresearchnetwork.us/index.php/ajshr

Article

The Experience of East Asian Countries in Implementing 'Soft Power' and Prospects for its Application in Uzbekistan

***Aziza Umarkulova*[1]**

1. Doctoral candidate at the Coordination and Methodological Center for Contemporary History of Uzbekistan at the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan
Correspondance: azizaumarkulova1@gmail.com

Abstract: This study presents a comparative analysis of the experiences of East Asian countries (Japan, the Republic of Korea, China, Singapore, and Taiwan) in implementing "soft power" policies. It examines key strategies and instruments employed by these states, such as "Cool Japan," Hallyu, the "Belt and Road Initiative," "Smart Nation," and digital diplomacy. Particular attention is paid to the mechanisms for transforming cultural, educational, and economic potential into sustained international influence. Based on the findings, a model for adapting East Asian soft power practices to the Republic of Uzbekistan (the MAOCE model) has been developed, comprising stages of diagnosis, institutionalization, operationalization, and monitoring. Specific practical recommendations for implementing the model, taking into account the national legal and regulatory framework, are proposed. The research demonstrates that the systematic application of East Asian experience would enable Uzbekistan to significantly enhance its international image and tourism appeal, as well as improve its standing in global soft power rankings.

Keywords: *soft power, public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, East Asia, Uzbekistan, Hallyu, Cool Japan, MAOCE model, creative industries, international image, Silk Road.*

1. Introduction

In the modern world, characterized by intensifying global competition and the transformation of international relations, the concept of "soft power"—first systematically developed by American political scientist Joseph Nye—is gaining increasing significance. "Soft power" refers to a state's ability to achieve desired foreign policy outcomes not through coercion or economic pressure, but through the appeal of its culture, political values, foreign policy agenda, and way of life. East Asian nations—Japan, the Republic of Korea, and China—offer striking examples of the successful implementation of this concept. Through initiatives such as "Cool Japan," the global spread of *Hallyu* (the "Korean Wave"), and the "Belt and Road Initiative" alongside the Confucius Institute network, these countries actively employ cultural, educational, and economic tools to bolster their international influence. Studying their experience is of particular interest to the Republic of Uzbekistan, which seeks to diversify its foreign policy and enhance its global image within a multipolar world.

The relevance of this topic stems from the strategic objectives of "New Uzbekistan" regarding the creation of a positive international image and the effective utilization of the country's own cultural and historical potential. Amidst geopolitical competition in Central Asia, "soft power" is emerging as a key instrument for strengthening the state's position

Citation: markulova, A. The Experience of East Asian Countries in Implementing 'Soft Power' and Prospects for its Application in Uzbekistan. American Journal of Social and Humanitarian Research 2026,7(10). 142-149.

Received: 10th Sept 2026
Revised: 11th Sept 2026
Accepted: 24th ASeptug 2026
Published: 20th Oct 2026

Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

without resorting to confrontation. Analyzing East Asian practices is particularly important, as these nations have achieved significant success in blending traditional culture with modern technology and economic diplomacy. The prospects for applying these experiences in Uzbekistan lie in the development of tourism, educational exchanges, and public diplomacy, as well as the promotion of Uzbek cultural heritage on the international stage.

Key regulatory documents serve as the legal and conceptual foundation for the implementation of "soft power" in the Republic of Uzbekistan. The Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. UP-5850 dated December 21, 2019, "On measures to radically enhance the status and prestige of the Uzbek language as the state language," plays a significant role, as it aims to strengthen language policy as an element of cultural diplomacy [1]. Also noteworthy is the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. UP-4947 dated February 7, 2017, "On the Action Strategy for the further development of the Republic of Uzbekistan" (as amended), which outlines priorities for bolstering the country's international image. Furthermore, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. ZRU-458 dated January 9, 2018, "On the Defense Doctrine of the Republic of Uzbekistan," emphasizes the peace-loving and constructive nature of the country's foreign policy, thereby creating favorable conditions for the development of non-military forms of influence [2].

Thus, examining the experience of East Asian countries in exercising "soft power" makes it possible to identify effective mechanisms of cultural, educational, and economic diplomacy that can be adapted to the context of Uzbekistan. The aim of this study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the soft power strategies employed by Japan, the Republic of Korea, and China, and to formulate practical recommendations for their application to enhance the international competitiveness of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Accomplishing this task will contribute to further strengthening the country's standing on the global stage as a modern, open, and culturally appealing state [3].

2. Materials and Methods

The study is based on the methodological material devoted to applying the Six Thinking Hats technique to Ibrayim Yusupov’s creative work, particularly the poem “Búlbúl Uyasí”. The research uses qualitative textual and pedagogical analysis. The poem is considered not simply as a literary text but as a learning environment in which students can perform different cognitive operations.

The instructional procedure begins with an explanation of the six hats and their respective functions. The teacher organizes the class into six groups or, depending on classroom conditions, uses the method collectively. Each group receives a specific analytical task.

The white hat is associated with facts, information, and objective evidence. Students identify information about the poem, its characters, historical period, geographical references, and chronological sequence of events. Personal emotional judgments are excluded at this stage so that students learn to distinguish textual evidence from subjective interpretation.

The red hat focuses on emotions, intuition, and aesthetic perception. Students discuss the feelings produced by particular events and characters. In “Búlbúl Uyasí”, the discovery of the nestling, the death of the mother bird, the arrival of the letter announcing the teacher’s death, the birth of a child, and the later tragedy provide substantial material for emotional interpretation.

The black hat represents critical thinking. Students identify conflicts, weaknesses, risks, contradictions, and problematic aspects of the narrative. They can question the historical realism of particular events, the construction of characters, the organization of

parallel episodes, and the relationship between artistic representation and historical reality.

The yellow hat represents positive and optimistic thinking. Students search for hope, courage, moral strength, humanistic values, and constructive meanings. The hedgehog's intervention to protect the nestling becomes an example of courage and self-sacrifice, while the mother bird's death while protecting its offspring provides an example of devotion and sacrifice.

The green hat represents creativity and alternative thinking. Students are encouraged to imagine how events might have developed differently. They may create alternative endings, introduce hypothetical situations, or consider how the meaning of the poem might change if a different character or image were used.

The blue hat is responsible for organization, synthesis, and conclusion. The teacher or student moderator combines the results of the other groups and formulates a broader interpretation of the poem. The discussion can move from individual observations toward questions concerning the place of Ibrayim Yusupov in Karakalpak literature and the relevance of his creative heritage for contemporary studThe study employs a combination of general scientific and specialized research methods. It is grounded in dialectical and systems approaches, which allow "soft power" to be examined as a dynamic system. Comparative analysis and case study methods were used to analyze the strategies of Japan ("Cool Japan"), the Republic of Korea (Hallyu), and China ("Belt and Road Initiative," Confucius Institutes). Content analysis of regulatory documents included an examination of the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. UP-5850 dated December 21, 2019, "On Measures to Radically Enhance the Status and Prestige of the Uzbek Language as the State Language"; the Presidential Decree No. UP-4947 dated February 7, 2017, "On the Strategy of Actions for the Further Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan" and the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. ZRU-458 dated January 9, 2018, "On the Defense Doctrine of the Republic of Uzbekistan". Additionally, the study utilized content analysis of academic literature and statistical data (Global Soft Power Index), as well as a prognostic method to formulate recommendations for applying East Asian experience in Uzbekistan. This combination of methods ensured the study's comprehensiveness, objectivity, and practical value.

Theoretical Foundations

The concept of "soft power" was introduced into academic discourse by the American political scientist Joseph Nye . In his seminal work *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* and subsequent studies, Nye defines "soft power" as a state's ability to influence other actors through the attractiveness of its culture, political values, and the legitimacy of its foreign policy, rather than through coercion or material incentives. This theory has become the foundation for understanding modern mechanisms of influence in international relations.

Joseph Nye's theoretical concepts have been further developed in collaborative works, notably *The Routledge Handbook of Soft Power*, edited by Naren Chitty, Li Ji, and Gary Rawnsley. The authors broaden the understanding of soft power by incorporating digital diplomacy, the role of non-state actors, and the specificities of its application across different regions. Studies focusing on East Asian practices—such as Japan's "Cool Japan" strategy and the Korean "Hallyu" phenomenon—are of particular significance; this is exemplified by the work of Linnea Mossberg, which presents a comparative analysis of pop culture, public diplomacy, and soft power in Japan and South Korea.

Within Uzbek and Russian academic traditions, the concept is being actively adapted to the regional context of Central Asia. Significant contributions have been made by Sh. Sh. Tadjiev in his monograph *"Soft Power" in the Foreign Policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan at the Present Stage*, as well as by M. Sadullaeva and B. Hikmatov in their study *Features of the Soft Power Bodies of Uzbekistan* . Important aspects of the regional context are also

explored in the research of F. Tolipov and A. A. Baikhodzhaeva. These works highlight the roles of cultural heritage, language policy, and public diplomacy in shaping Uzbekistan's national soft power. Regional perspectives are also provided by M. M. Lebedeva, who analyzes the actors of "soft power" in Central Asia, and O. A. Dobrinskaya, who examines the characteristics of Japan's "soft power" in the Central Asian countries.

3. Results

The The comparative analysis of the five East Asian cases, summarized in Table 1, produced the following results. Each country relies on one dominant instrument: "Cool Japan" in Japan, Hallyu in the Republic of Korea, the "Belt and Road Initiative" together with Confucius Institutes in China, the "Smart Nation" programme combined with cultural diplomacy in Singapore, and new-media and technological diplomacy in Taiwan [4]. The measurable outcomes differ in kind but are consistently substantial: creative-industry exports of $12.5 billion in Japan (2024), global Hallyu revenue of $12.3 billion in the Republic of Korea (2025), more than 550 Confucius Institutes in China, a place in the top ten of the Brand Finance Global Soft Power Index for Singapore (2026), and 28% annual growth of content exports in Taiwan [5].

Comparison across the cases reveals three regularities. First, soft power is built on systematic state support for creative, educational and digital sectors rather than on isolated campaigns. Second, cultural instruments are closely linked with economic goals such as exports, tourism, education services and investment. Third, traditional heritage is combined with modern media and information technologies, which extends the reach of each instrument to young international audiences [6].

The content analysis of Uzbekistan's regulatory documents showed that Decree No. UP-5850 (language policy), Decree No. UP-4947 (the Action Strategy) and Law No. ZRU-458 (the Defense Doctrine) provide a legal basis for non-military forms of influence, but they do not yet establish a unified coordinating body or a dedicated soft power strategy. Uzbekistan's starting position is modest: the country ranked 92nd in the Brand Finance Global Soft Power Index in 2026 with 34.5 points, received 10.7 million tourists in 2025, and, as Figure 1 shows, lags far behind Japan and the Republic of Korea in creative-industry exports [7].

On this basis, the study produced the MAOCE adaptation model (Section 6), which links each East Asian instrument to a concrete proposal for Uzbekistan. The model-based estimates are as follows: a rise to the top 70 of the index by 2030, an increase in tourist arrivals to 18–20 million, 15,000–20,000 international students annually, and additional annual revenue of US$1.8–2.5 billion by 2035. These figures are projections of the proposed model, not achieved outcomes, and their realization depends on funding, competition from stronger actors and the preservation of cultural authenticity [8].

4. Discussion

The experience of East Asian countries demonstrates the high effectiveness of "soft power" as a strategic foreign policy tool. Through the "Cool Japan" initiative [9], Japan has successfully promoted its popular culture, design, cuisine, and technology, transforming them into significant factors of international influence. The Republic of Korea has achieved even more impressive results thanks to "Hallyu"—the global spread of K-pop, TV dramas, cinema, and cosmetics. China actively employs economic diplomacy within the framework of the "Belt and Road Initiative," a network of Confucius Institutes, and digital platforms to cultivate a positive image [10]. Common to these countries are systematic state support for cultural industries, a blend of traditional heritage with modern media technologies, and the close integration of soft power with economic interests [11].

Regarding Uzbekistan, the East Asian experience is particularly valuable in several respects. First, the South Korean model demonstrates the effectiveness of investing in creative industries and youth culture [12]. Uzbekistan possesses a rich musical, artisanal,

and culinary heritage that, with modern marketing support, could become a powerful brand. Second, the Chinese experience highlights the importance of infrastructure and educational projects (such as scholarships and joint universities) for long-term influence. Third, the Japanese strategy proves that high visibility can be achieved even with limited resources through the quality and uniqueness of cultural products [13].

The prospects for applying these practices in Uzbekistan are linked to the implementation of existing regulatory documents. Presidential Decree No. PF-5850 (2019) establishes a framework for promoting the Uzbek language and culture abroad. The 2017 Action Strategy (Decree No. PF-4947) and the Defense Doctrine (Law No. ZRU-458) orient foreign policy toward peaceful and attractive development. Uzbekistan is already achieving success in tourism branding and cultural diplomacy (the Silk Road, Islamic heritage, festivals); however, achieving a significant breakthrough requires a more systematic soft power strategy that includes a unified coordinating body, the development of national content, and active engagement with the diaspora [14].

At the same time, there are certain challenges: competition with more powerful actors, limited funding for creative industries, and the need to preserve cultural authenticity. Nevertheless, its geographical location, rich historical heritage, and policy of openness enable Uzbekistan to secure a worthy place in the regional and global soft power landscape by leveraging best practices from East Asia.

6. Proposed Model for Adapting East Asian "Soft Power" Practices in the Republic of Uzbekistan

To systematically utilize the experience of East Asian nations, the author has developed a Model of Adaptation Oriental countries' "Soft Power" experiences in the Republic of Uzbekistan (MAOCE). This model draws upon practices not only from Japan, the Republic of Korea, and China but also from Singapore and Taiwan—countries that demonstrate a successful blend of cultural diplomacy, innovation, and education. It is grounded in Uzbekistan's regulatory framework—including Presidential Decrees No. PF-5850 (2019) and No. PF-4947 (2017) and Law No. ZRU-458 (2018)—and outlines a four-stage cycle for transforming national resources into sustainable international influence [15].

Stage One: Resource Assessment. A comprehensive audit of Uzbekistan's cultural heritage, human capital, and geographical location is conducted, taking East Asian case studies into account. Stage Two: Institutionalization. Establishment of a Soft Power and Public Diplomacy Agency. Stage Three: Operationalization. Active implementation of tools. Stage Four: Monitoring and Adjustment.

An updated comparative table is presented below for clarity:

Table 1. Comparison of soft power instruments of East Asian countries and proposals for Uzbekistan (with annual statistical data)

Country	Primary tool	Key success (statistics)	Proposal for Uzbekistan	Expected impact (forecast for 2030)
Japan	Cool Japan	Exports of creative industries — $12.5 billion (2024)	Digital content about the Silk Road	+30% growth in tourism
Republic of Korea	Hallyu (K-pop, Asian dramas)	Global revenue from Hallyu – $12.3 billion (2025)	Production of Uzbek music and TV series content	Brand awareness among young people +45%
China	Belt and Road + Confucius Institutes	Over 550 Confucius Institutes, 5,000+ Uzbek students in 2023	Expansion of Uzbek cultural centers and scholarships	+50% international students
Singapore	Smart Nation + cultural diplomacy	Global Soft Power Index – Top 10 (Brand Finance, 2026)	Development of an educational hub in Tashkent	Attracting $1.2 billion in investment

Taiwan	New Media and Technological Diplomacy	Content exports – 28% annual growth (2024–2025)	Joint IT projects and digital diplomacy	+25% in digital influence

The table "Comparison of East Asian Soft Power Tools and Proposals for Uzbekistan (with Annual Statistical Data)" constitutes a key analytical component of the proposed MAOCE model. It systematizes the experiences of five leading countries in the region (Japan, the Republic of Korea, China, Singapore, and Taiwan), outlining their primary tools and the results achieved—supported by specific statistical indicators for the 2023–2026 period—while offering practical recommendations for adapting these approaches to Uzbekistan's context and projecting their impact through 2030. The table clearly illustrates how substantial investments in creative industries, education, and digital diplomacy enable East Asian nations to achieve significant success in enhancing their international influence.

This comparative analysis highlights Uzbekistan's potential to leverage its own cultural and historical heritage. The table serves as a practical guide for developing a national soft power strategy, demonstrating the clear link between adopted tools and anticipated socio-economic outcomes (such as tourism growth, increased recognition among youth, and the attraction of students and investment). It reinforces the validity of the MAOCE model and facilitates the understanding of the material.

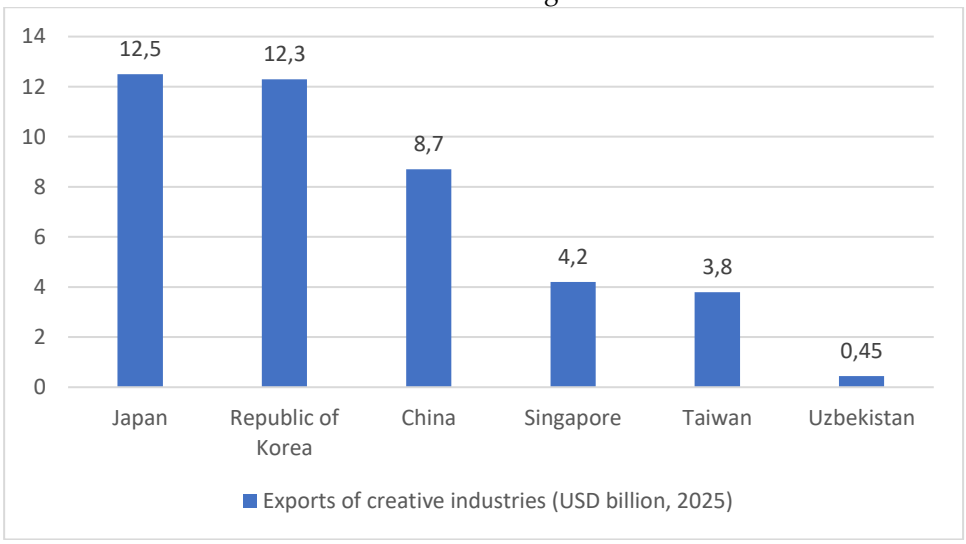


Figure 1. Exports of creative industries from East Asian countries and Uzbekistan in 2025 (billion USD)

The figure presents a bar chart showing the export volume of creative industries in leading East Asian countries alongside Uzbekistan's current figures as of 2025. The chart clearly illustrates the significant gap between the region's leaders (Japan and the Republic of Korea) and Uzbekistan, highlighting the growth potential inherent in successfully adapting the East Asian experience within the framework of the MAOCE model. The data underscores the importance of investing in creative sectors to boost the state's international competitiveness and soft power. Implementation of the model begins with pilot projects in 2026–2028 (focusing on tourism and education), transitioning to the full-scale development of creative industries between 2029 and 2035. According to the Brand Finance Global Soft Power Index, Uzbekistan rose to 92nd place in 2026 with a score of 34.5 points.

Implementing the model aims to propel the country into the top 70 of the soft power index by 2030 through increased tourism (rising from 10.7 million in 2025 to 18–20 million), expanded exports of cultural services, and the attraction of foreign students (with a target of 15,000–20,000 annually).

The model addresses key challenges, such as limited funding, competition, and the need to preserve authenticity. Its strengths lie in its systematic approach, adaptability, and focus on long-term outcomes. The projected economic impact is an additional US$1.8–2.5 billion in annual revenue by 2035, driven by tourism, education, and creative industries.

Thus, the proposed MAOCE model enables Uzbekistan to effectively adapt proven East Asian practices, transforming its cultural wealth into a strategic advantage. Successful implementation will help strengthen the country's position as a modern, open, and culturally attractive state in Central Asia and on the global stage [16].

5. Conclusion

This study showed that the success of East Asian countries in implementing "soft power" rests on a systematic combination of cultural appeal, educational diplomacy, creative industries and digital technologies: Japan and the Republic of Korea demonstrate the effectiveness of pop-culture branding ("Cool Japan" and Hallyu), China the power of economic and educational diplomacy, and Singapore and Taiwan the value of innovation- and technology-driven approaches. For Uzbekistan, which possesses unique cultural and historical assets, a strategic geographic location and a consistent policy of openness, the proposed MAOCE model, comprising stages of diagnosis, institutionalization, operationalization and monitoring, offers a way to move from fragmented initiatives to a systematic strategy in line with Presidential Decrees No. PF-5850 (2019) and No. PF-4947 (2017). To this end, it is recommended to establish a Soft Power and Public Diplomacy Agency under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the end of 2027, to adopt a State Program for the Development of Creative Industries for 2027–2030, to expand educational diplomacy to at least 15,000 international students by 2030 and create a network of Uzbek culture and language centers abroad, to intensify tourism branding and digital diplomacy, to monitor progress annually with the Global Soft Power Index with independent audits every two years, and to fund these measures through a dedicated budget line of 0.3–0.5% of GDP supplemented by private and international grant funds. Together, these steps are expected to improve Uzbekistan's position in the Global Soft Power Index, increase tourism, attract more foreign students and investment, and contribute to the goals of the "Uzbekistan–2030" Strategy.

REFERENCES

[1] President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, "On measures to radically enhance the status and prestige of the Uzbek language as the state language," Decree No. UP-5850, Dec. 21, 2019. [Online]. Available: https://lex.uz

[2] Republic of Uzbekistan, "On the Defense Doctrine of the Republic of Uzbekistan," Law No. ZRU-458, Jan. 9, 2018. [Online]. Available: https://lex.uz

[3] President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, "On the Action Strategy for the further development of the Republic of Uzbekistan," Decree No. UP-4947, Feb. 7, 2017 (as amended). [Online]. Available: https://lex.uz

[4] J. S. Nye, "Soft power," *Foreign Policy*, no. 80, pp. 153–171, 1990, doi: 10.2307/1148580.

[5] J. S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York, NY, USA: PublicAffairs, 2004.

[6] J. S. Nye, "Public diplomacy and soft power," *Ann. Amer. Acad. Pol. Soc. Sci.*, vol. 616, no. 1, pp. 94–109, 2008, doi: 10.1177/0002716207311699.

[7] N. J. Chitty, L. Ji, and G. D. Rawnsley, Eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Soft Power*, 2nd ed. London, U.K.: Routledge, 2023.

[8] L. Mossberg, "Process tracing of pop culture, public diplomacy, and soft power: A comparative study between Korea and Japan," M.S. thesis, Univ. of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden, 2025.

[9] S. S. Tadzhiev, *"Soft Power" in the Foreign Policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan at the Present Stage: Monograph*. Tashkent, Uzbekistan: Fan va Texnologiya, 2023.

[10] M. Sadullaeva and B. Hikmatov, "Features of the soft power bodies of Uzbekistan," *Sci. Innov.*, vol. 3, no. 4, 2024, doi: 10.5281/zenodo.11093451.

[11] A. A. Baikhodzhaeva, "European Union 'soft power' instruments in Central Asia," *Post-Soviet Space Probl.*, vol. 12, no. 3, pp. 185–195, 2025, doi: 10.24975/2313-8920-2025-12-3-185-195.

[12] F. Tolipov, "Objects, subjects, and bearers of soft power: The Central Asian geopolitical context," *Int. J. Consensus*, 2023–2025. [Online]. Available: https://tadqiqot.uz (accessed Jul. 19, 2026).

[13] M. M. Lebedeva, "'Soft power' regarding Central Asia: Actors and their actions," *MGIMO Rev. Int. Relat.*, no. 2(35), pp. 47–56, 2014.

[14] O. A. Dobrinskaya, "Characteristics of Japan's 'soft power' in Central Asian countries," *Japan Yearbook*, 2022. [Online]. Available: https://www.yearbookjapan.ru/jour/article/view/248 (accessed Jul. 20, 2026).

[15] D. McGray, "Japan's gross national cool," *Foreign Policy*, no. 130, pp. 44–54, 2002.

[16] Y. S. Filaretova and B. Atie, "The soft power of the AKDN as a threat to Russia's interests in Central Asia," *Russia New States Eurasia*, no. 4(61), pp. 175–184, 2023, doi: 10.20542/2073-4786-2023-4-175-184.