

# “The Soft Power” of Small Countries: Kosovo Challenges and Potentials based on the Experience of Switzerland and Slovenia

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## Abstract

In the period of globalization when a big number of actors are involved in international relations, there is a need for smaller countries to be focused in a specific field in order to be successful in their foreign politics. The soft power with its increased importance is attracting academic circuits and those directly involved in foreign politics of different countries.

The aim of this paper is to raise awareness among compilers and executers of foreign politics in Kosovo on the capacities that Kosovo has to achieve a success in foreign politics by the soft power. The goal can be achieved by the use of many scientific methods like: analytical - interpretive method, hermeneutic one, comparative method all of them having a holist approach to the topic.

To have a better and more understandable output the study is focused in concrete examples of Switzerland and Slovenia as a potential topic to be elaborated due to the fact that in the past the states of Western Balkan didn't pay that much attention the use of soft power in foreign politics. Instead they used the forms of classical diplomacy that resulted with not that good image of the region.

Achievements of Switzerland and Slovenia by using an efficient soft power, could be a good example for Kosovo. In this case, being a crucial need, Kosovo can benefit by applying the soft power in the foreign policy.

**Key Words:** soft power, public diplomacy, Kosovo, Switzerland, Slovenia, international relations.

## 1. Introduction

The soft power is an expression being studied recently by theorists of international relations. It could have been just because the former dominating realistic theory in the past has excluded the importance of the soft power in international relations.

The police, army, finances and other similar powers are an example of state power, which can be used to change the position of the others. This is known as a hard power, which uses the method of "carrot and the stick", and in fact it is not in the disposal of small countries. However, in such cases, sometimes the expected results can be achieved by the withdrawal with no use of intimidation or financial power. This is known as a soft power, which means the desired results come by attracting the others. It finds more important the use of cooperation than the compulsion. The essence of soft power lies in the skill to create the preferences of the others that in fact are your wish as well.<sup>1</sup> The soft power does not use only the power of argument; it is only a part of it. It uses the attraction, which leads to a silent admission. Soft power resources include all material and non-material assets that generate this attraction.<sup>2</sup> The soft power is in the disposal of all countries as a tool to benefit in foreign politics whereas the hard power is usually in disposal of only big countries. Therefore the small countries like Kosovo have the soft power as a sole possibility.

Using too often the expression small countries is considered as a necessity to present the approximate notion and the meaning of small countries. David Vital who determined small states based on their populations claims that a small state is one with ten to fifteen million residents if it is a developed state and a non - developed country with 20-30 million residents.<sup>3</sup> Many other authors give the same determination. According to Robert Rothstein a small state is: "a state which recognizes that it cannot obtain security primarily by use of its own capabilities, and that it must rely fundamentally on the aid of other states, institutions,

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph S. Nye, *The Powers to Lead*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2008, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> David Vital, *The Inequality of States: A Study of the Small Power in international relations*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1967, p. 8.

processes, or developments to do so..."<sup>4</sup> Despite the fact that there is a distinction between small states, Kosovo like Slovenia and Switzerland take part in the group of small states based on criteria determined by the above mentioned and few other authors.

Kosovo has its specifics as a small state and a new one in international relations. Nonetheless, it has a golden possibility coming around only once that as a small state undertakes the necessary steps to raise an efficient soft power advancing it with concrete activities. In addition, getting experience from countries of tradition in this regard can do this.

Soft power should not be mixed up with other concepts like public diplomacy, national branding etc. Soft power incorporates all these in itself but it is specified with an unlimited actors included in itself. In reality, everything can be used as a soft power even the thing that in the first glance seems as not proper for a soft power but is included in the framework of soft power by the method used there.

The states can cultivate soft power through different actions, which are not classified as belonging to diplomatic policy. A good example of them is through assistance for development, through public rhetoric of its managers and through symbolic effects of its foreign politics.<sup>5</sup> This tells us that the soft power incorporates public diplomacy but it is broader in the sense. The state can realize its interest by the mean of soft power in indirect way. It includes other internal aspects whereas the public diplomacy attempts to "export" a better image of the state to the foreign public.

However the use of soft power in foreign politics of a country is not that simple. The most eminent researcher in this field Joseph Nye in his theoretical cogitations claims that the inclusion of soft power in a government strategy is more difficult than it looks. Compare to hard power here the success of results is more focused in the control of the objective. Furthermore, the second problem here is that the results are seen much latter and the majority of politicians and the public are not patient enough to see the overturning their investments. And as a third important thing in this regard is that instruments of soft power are not completely under the control of the government. Even though governments are controlling the politics, it's evident that the culture and other values are entrenched in civil

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Power*, Columbia University Press, New York, London, 1968, p. 29.

<sup>5</sup> Craig Hayden, *The Rhetoric of Soft Power: Public Diplomacy in Global Contexts*, Lexington Books, USA, 2012, p. 287.

society.<sup>6</sup> “Soft power may appear less risky than economic or military power, but it is often hard to use, easy to lose, and costly to re-establish.”<sup>7</sup> State soft power is established through many actors and activities that impact the outer public- artists of arts, music programmes, civil activities, Non Government Organizations (NGOs), politicians, political parties, writers, journalists, media, businesses, enterprises, universities, professors, religious leaders etc.<sup>8</sup> Batora stresses that “postmodern publics are generally sceptical of authority, and governments are often mistrusted.”<sup>9</sup>

But why should soft power exist and should one pay attention to it? This is done/should be done because the efficiency of soft power in a certain period of time is translated to political and economic benefits for the state, the benefit which is difficult to be achieved by other means.

## 2. The success of Switzerland and the increase of Slovenia’s efficient use of soft power

Its orientation towards the use of soft power, Switzerland has determined long ago, even if it was not called by such notion. In foreign-political strategy for 2012-2015, Switzerland has determined values of solidarity and responsibility as its values in bringing the foreign policy.<sup>10</sup>

Switzerland’s achievements in foreign policy are linked to the capability of appropriate use of soft power. In 2004 the magazine *Monocle* has ranked Switzerland on the seventh place for the efficient use of soft power. Ranking was based on fifty factors such as number of cultural missions, Olympic medals, the characteristics of local firms (brands), diplomatic infrastructure, cultural production, etc.<sup>11</sup> Therefore Switzerland is a typical example of small countries which by the mean of soft power achieve

<sup>6</sup> Nye, *The Powers to Lead*, p. 83.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Josef Batora, *Public Diplomacy in Small and Medium-Sized States: Norway and Canada*, Discussion Papers in Diplomacy, Netherlands Institute of International Relations “Clingendael”, 2005, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph. S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Chapter 4: Wielding Soft Power, Public Affairs, USA, 2004, p. 113.

<sup>10</sup> Federal Council, *Swiss Foreign Policy Strategy 2012– 2015*, Federal Council report to Parliament on the strategic axes of foreign policy, Bern, March 2012, p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> *Monocle Magazine* website. [Online]. Available from <http://monocle.com/film/Affairs/soft-power-survey-2014-15/> [Accessed 28 February 2015]

success in foreign policy. Related to this, Switzerland possesses too many things necessary for soft power: has a consolidated democracy, a good image in the world, positive cultural values being promoted, peaceful relations with other countries, civilized residents with high individual achievements, high prosperity, products of high quality, well-known brands etc.

Switzerland has selected a long-term strategy to cultivate good relations with others, instead of the strategy of momentum reaction. Nowadays, Switzerland brand is being used to represent the state in all activities and this is known all over the world for this characteristic.<sup>12</sup>

A Federal Board for Scholarships in the framework of Switzerland Government offers scholarships for foreign students who are interested to continue post-graduation studies in Switzerland.<sup>13</sup> Programs to exchange students are very effective with positive impact, where one of them is their role in the framework of public diplomacy, hence the students either those coming or going abroad are amongst excellent students. All of them bring with themselves a good experience in the country and on their way back they follow the image of the country. Therefore, students who go abroad exchange ideas with other students, professors and others from the receiving country.

Switzerland is following a good practice in promoting the city of Geneva<sup>14</sup>, as a world centre of international organizations and other events of different characters. Following this, the intensive international activity in Switzerland brings to reality the presence of many international citizens of different profiles from academic world, business or sport since in Switzerland we have headquarters of Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) and Union of European Football Association (UEFA) including other institutions not leaving aside common people who visit Switzerland as tourists especially winter tourism there.

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<sup>12</sup> Philip Seib, *Religion and Public Diplomacy*, Palgrave MacMillan Series, 2013, p. 135-136.

<sup>13</sup> State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SBFI) website. [Online] Available from <http://www.sbfi.admin.ch/themen/01366/01380/02175/index.html?lang=en>. [Accessed 01 March 2015]

<sup>14</sup> 22 international organizations have their headquarters in Geneva.

On the other hand merely one out of ten Swiss people (around 700 000) live outside their country.<sup>15</sup> These people develop different activities in other countries and are really good “used” by public diplomacy of their state.

Switzerland has developed its media network as a form to represent its positive image in the four sides of globe. There is media network Swissinfo that is a public media. This internet page has different versions of news in ten world languages and that in French, Italian, English, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Arabic, Chinese and Japanese.

However, one country like Switzerland doesn't have it path forever. Image in the world and the possibility to use soft power demands continuous activities and a good study of social flows. Few years ago the ban of minarets in Switzerland caused many reactions being an event followed all over the world through media with a special stress that Swiss people are not “ideal” as pretended to be. Therefore, a Helvetian Confederation had to develop many activities to promote the cooperation, multiculturalism, dialogue to fade a bit the “news” on ban of minarets among the public opinion in the world.

However, Switzerland due to its specifics is among the few small countries in the world that has a possibility to combine the soft power and the hard one which is known as a smart power. This is of great importance for achievements in foreign politics but not always on the disposal of small countries. According to Nye “Switzerland long used the combination of mandatory military service and mountainous geography as resources for deterrence, while making itself attractive to other through banking, commercial, and cultural networks”.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, base to its characteristics Slovenia is closest to Kosovo with an approximate number of population, the time of being independent which doesn't vary that much (regardless that Slovenia used to have a more advanced status in Yugoslavia) and due to their geographical position in Balkans.

Slovenia used the presidency of European Union (EU) in the best way and its membership in EU for the increase of its international prestige

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<sup>15</sup> Federal Council, *Swiss Foreign Policy Strategy 2012– 2015*, Federal Council report to Parliament on the strategic axes of foreign policy, Bern, March 2012, p. 21.

<sup>16</sup> Joseph S. Nye, *A Future of Power*, Public Affairs, New York, 2011, p. 210.

while having in mind that the foreign politics of EU is being exercised by the mean of soft power.<sup>17</sup>

Slovenia has attained to construct a good image in the world despite the fact that it is a part of former Yugoslavia, a country geographically belonging to Western Balkan and a Slavic state that associates not a good image it has achieved to detach itself from this and create an image of country of Central Europe with a consolidated democracy and many well known brands. A very easy transition after its independence helped her a lot in this direction, a thing that cannot be said for Kosovo due to its difficult and a long transition.

Slovenia has a special department of Public Diplomacy in the Foreign Ministry, in Vienna has established "The Slovenian Culture and Information Centre", and through her offers for study in Slovenia has an impact in foreign public opinion. If we look at the time when it got independent Slovenia has made great and fast strides forward, participating in peacekeeping operations in the world, promoting humanitarian international right, democracy, education, culture, sports, a good economical climate etc, and all these resulted to others to perceive Slovenia as a serious, peace-loving and a safe state with well educated citizens.. In addition, this leads to a successful foreign policy of Slovenia with great economical benefits for the country regardless the fact that we have to do with a very small state. A report released this year that analyzes 2013 data, shows that among the 300 largest companies in Slovenia, on third of them belong to foreign owners and are only branches of large corporations that operate in many states. Example Revoz company is ranked on the sixth place, is part of the French company Renault, Slovenian Home Appliance Company (BSH HISNI) ranked on the fifteenth place is a part of the worldwide known corporation Bosch Siemens, then the list consists of many other famous corporations like Shell (no. 25 on the list), IBM (no. 124 on the list), etc.<sup>18</sup> Even politically, Slovenia has won the right place in international relations being factored into the framework of the

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<sup>17</sup> Lisbeth Agestam, *New actors, new foreign policy: EU-Russia and enlargement*, in Steve Smith Amelia Hadfield, Tim Dunne, *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases*, (second edition), Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2012, p. 463.

<sup>18</sup> Slovenian Public Agency for Entrepreneurship, Innovation, Development, Investment and Tourism (SPIRIT), (2012), *Top 300: The Largest Companies in Slovenia*. Available from [http://www.investslovenia.org/fileadmin/dokumenti/is/News\\_\\_Media/e-Newsletter/TOP\\_300\\_2012.pdf](http://www.investslovenia.org/fileadmin/dokumenti/is/News__Media/e-Newsletter/TOP_300_2012.pdf). [Accessed 05 March 2015]

EU, The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and other international instruments to which it belongs.

### 3. Kosovo and the soft power

A challenging question that can be admitted is whether can talk about soft power in Kosovo? From the notion of soft power, we realized that it presents the ability to make others think and act the way that is convenient to us, but as for Kosovo, it's very difficult to talk about achievements of this kind. The others can act the way we want but it is not to be considered as our merit. One of the facts to prove this is that Kosovo doesn't have an increased international support since from its independence but it happens to disappoint our international partners also having pressure for new compromises.<sup>19</sup>

Soft power can be "high", directed at elites in a country, or "low", aimed at the general public.<sup>20</sup> There is a need for Kosovo to reach at both sides, even to the elites of other countries, so that they are the decision makers for the foreign policy of those countries, but also to public opinion in other countries, to make Kosovo as familiar to them since Kosovo is little known by the broad public opinion of other countries, usually, it's perceived negative image is linked to organized crime, the war and similar things.

Kosovo doesn't have financial resources at disposal, it has to find low cost ways to implement different projects that can serve to increase its image in the world. Participation in different conferences even not only the participation but a successful introduction with adequate people in various international conferences, admission of international responsibilities serves Kosovo's image, hence its soft power.

One of the possibilities for improving the image is cultural diplomacy in the service of increasing soft power. The power of culture is exceptional. John Brown states that "diplomacy of art provides the audience with memorable and unique experiences ... art creates a strong impression that often remain forever in the memory."<sup>21</sup> Precisely this is the

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<sup>19</sup> Hasan Salju, *Komunikimi në diplomacinë publike: Sfidat e soft power-it të Kosovës në rritjen e imazhit ndërkombëtar*, (Tezë doktore), Universiteti i Tiranës, 2013, p. 228.

<sup>20</sup> Joshua Kurlantzick, *Charm offensive: How China's soft power is transforming the World*, Yale University Press, Michigan, New York, 2007, p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> John Brown, *The Neglected Aspect of Cultural Diplomacy*, in Nancy Snow & Philip M. Taylor, *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, Routledge, New York, 2008, p. 59.

first task of soft power, good values remain in the memory of others, and then these benefits are carried out into foreign policy. A concrete achievement in the cultural field of the country recently marked is a successful organization of Technology, Entertainment, Design (TED) - where in October 2014, Prishtina made the TED community to recognize Kosovo and be included among other states.

The country should take the advantage of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) decision to benefit politically and increase the number of recognitions. Also the fact that Kosovo president is a female, serves as a counter argument against those who represent us as fundamentalists. On the other hand organization of various activities like Dokufest are good opportunities for foreign public to get acquainted with the country and our culture. So it is necessary for our embassies to engage more and cooperate with our diaspora in maintaining contact and coordinate activities for the purpose of presenting a positive example for Kosovo. Even the specific well-known figures who do not have Kosovo citizenship and represent other countries, can be used for the good of the country like a singer Rita Ora, Majlinda Kelmendi a World Championship in judo or generally footballers and athletes who are marking many successes in the international arena, and usually the global media reports about them mentioning the state of Kosovo. So cultural diplomacy, sports diplomacy are segments of public diplomacy and can be very effective especially numerous athletes from Kosovo who play in various European countries, regardless in higher or lower ranks are in a big communication with the public of those countries, that with their actions influence to a positive or negative image of Kosovo.

Education is a very crucial component. Prishtina Summer School is a good opportunity for students of other countries to get familiar with Kosovo students and the country in general. The exchange program of students used by few institutions of higher education in Kosovo, should be further developed. However, many scandals happening in Kosovo Universities and Colleges are step backwards which can be seen even in goggle. While searching information for Kosovo Universities you can read only negative news for them. University of Kosovo as a key university institution in the country within half a year has got down for fifty places, in

August 2014 used to be in the 4937<sup>th</sup> place whereas in January 2015 in 4987<sup>th</sup> in the world and 1435<sup>th</sup> in Europe.<sup>22</sup>

Another aspect impacting to soft power is citizen diplomacy including “the idea that every citizen enjoys the right and at the same time is obliged to participate and help its country in relation with other countries”.<sup>23</sup> Many researches appeal the government to take steps to educate citizens about the importance of good presentation in contact with others or while travelling abroad even as tourists.<sup>24</sup> It is not easy to achieve that, because citizens are free to choose and not always, their views are in accordance with the official state stances. Kosovo has a well-educated youth with a good knowledge of foreign languages and is always ready to adapt themselves to circumstances and citizens of other countries. An institutional action to sponsor coordination with citizens on various issues shall be higher, including our large diaspora.

Kosovo during the Balkan wars of the late twentieth, and after it, was admired in the external environment and was seen as a victim of Serbian terror, a thing that may have been better used especially in the early post-war years. Nowadays others expect us to respect multi ethnicity and multiculturalism, freedoms and human rights and our engagement for peace in region and worldwide.

Kosovo must also use its geographical position, between the two great civilizations, as a bridge between Asia and Western Europe, a place where different cultures meet. This feature can be a problem in many respects, to create different stereotypes for Kosovo to the East and the West, but the ability of proper use of soft power, using a variety of elements makes this problematic feature of Kosovo be converted into profit opportunities in foreign policy.

The world should be interested to follow the rhythm of Kosovo music, to see traditional clothing of Kosovo, to interfere with vital youth of Kosovo, to learn about archaeological inventions in Kosovo, films about

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<sup>22</sup> Webometrics, Ranking Web of Universities. Available from [http://www.webometrics.info/en/Ranking\\_Europe?page=14](http://www.webometrics.info/en/Ranking_Europe?page=14). [Accessed 25 February 2015]

<sup>23</sup> Fatmir Fazliu, *Diplomacia Publike*, Instituti për Studime Politike dhe Ndërkombëtare, Shkup, 2015, p. 100.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, p.106-107.

Kosovo, to acquaint with cultural and sport capacities of Kosovo. The world needs to be "cheated".<sup>25</sup>

Activities within the public diplomacy should not be momentary, ad hoc, and not aimed at tangible results in the future. Therefore, public diplomacy must be extremely organized, coherent and planned with clear targets to be achieved.

There have been made some good steps through soft power to raise the image of Kosovo in the world. A number of TV spots that are transmitted through the global media campaign "Kosovo: The Young Europeans" despite given criticism is considered a proper campaign to present Kosovo with good image in public opinion of the world (mainly European countries through media and some Arab and through Al Jazeera).

Digital diplomacy is an area where foreign ministers engaged and has managed to succeed, so that foreign experts regard Kosovo digital diplomacy as among the best in the world.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, having in mind the importance of digital diplomacy and its role nowadays, it is important to further develop this field, especially because it does not require that many expenses, but the commitment and creativity of responsible individuals.

In fact Kosovo has to be more engaged to improve its image, which usually associates with a place of organized crime and a non stability, an image being faded by Dick Marty's report, corruption allegations and reports of various international organizations such as Transparency International, Freedom House, the sights of Kosovo asylum seekers in Hungary, France, and elsewhere. Because achieving a positive image among world public opinion is automatically interpreted into positive image of policymakers in other countries, to the companies that can invest in the country, to potential tourists, and in other forms, so the feedback of investments in soft power is very profitable. The experience of Slovenia's journey to the state building and the raise of its image by the mean of soft tools represent a good experience for Kosovo as lesson learnt from this and apply it adapting to circumstances of the country.

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<sup>25</sup> Olta Andoni, *Strategy for export of Kosovo's cultural assets*, p. 6. Available from <http://www.kentlaw.edu/perritt/courses/seminar/andoni-final-paper%20clean.pdf>. [Accessed 28 February 2015]

<sup>26</sup> Gëzim Krasniqi, *Foreign Policy as a Constitutive Element of Statehood and Statehood Prerogative: The Case of Kosovo*, in Soeren Keil & Bernhard Stahl, *The Foreign Policies of Post-Yugoslav States: From Yugoslavia to Europe*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 201, p. 210.

#### 4. Conclusion

Therefore, since the soft power is the ability to make others think and accept the thing you think and do it comes that the importance to possess soft power is extremely crucial. Its use depends on the credibility of the state, government, citizens, companies, NGOs and other stakeholders across the country. Kosovo has difficulty in efficiency of soft power, due to its obstacles with not a good image in the external environment which usually associates a country with rather bad things, the image that is created by external factors such as Serbian and Russian lobby, international reports, but also with the internal factor such as economic stagnation, different corruption scandals etc.

The soft power can be use as an efficient strategy by other countries through different actors and this is the most efficient way to penetrate at others that means to reach the soft power essence to make the others unconsciously do the thing you want. Non state stakeholders (NGOs, Medias, civil society, citizens, immigrants) have a great role in this influencing the public opinion.

Membership in international organization of different characters is a good opportunity to improve the image of Kosovo in the world because with a good image you can create positive perceptions from the others about your country. Therefore, membership in international organizations in addition to the acquisition of new international recognition, Kosovo should use for creating a peaceful climate perceptible to others.

Investment of different specific forms of diplomacy like: public, cultural, sport and digital diplomacy and or citizens diplomacy should be functioning a strategy that coordinates these with other activities of institutions and nongovernmental actors to increase the capacity of soft power in Kosovo.

However, the creation of soft power is not static, but is an ongoing process, and in this respect the Kosovo has opportunities to succeed. In this regard there is a need to develop a clear institutional strategy, training the staff of the ministry of foreign affairs including the diplomatic service to get basic knowledge not only of the software power and its importance, then that through activities coordinated with other governmental and nongovernmental institutions, the media, stakeholders, public persons, international friends of persons or other relevant organizations to undertake specific activities that are dedicated to continuously improving

the power goal. To achieve this there is a need for a big patience, since the results coming from the soft power are not immediate but obviously very important and stabile once are achieved since the image of a country in the world not as a goal but as a tool of continuous benefit in foreign policy.

If we compare the three countries elaborated in this essay Switzerland currently is the most successful small country in the world for an efficient use of soft power, Slovenia has an increase in the success of its software power that cleverly managed to use it in the service of its foreign policy which represents the station where Kosovo should achieve in the med-term period.

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