

REVIEW

**by Dr. Daniela Dobрева Pastarmadzheva,
Associate Professor at the University of Plovdiv Paisii Hilendarski**

of the dissertation thesis for the award of the educational and scientific degree “**Doctor**”

Area of higher education: **3. Social, Economic and Law Sciences**

Professional field: **3.3. Political Science**

Doctoral Program: **Political Sciences**

Author: **Nataliya Krasimirova Tsvetanova-Chilingirova**

Topic: “**Power and the theories about it after the Cold War**”

Scientific supervisor: **Prof. D. Sc. Rumen Ivanov Kanchev –**

University of Plovdiv Paisii Hilendarski

1. General description of the presented materials

By order № RD-22-145/22.01.2025 of the Rector of the University of Plovdiv Paisii Hilendarski (UP) I have been appointed a member of the scientific jury for providing a procedure for the defense of a dissertation on “Power and the theories about it after the Cold War” for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in the area of higher education: 3. Social, Economic and Law Sciences, professional field 3.3 Political Science, doctoral program Political Sciences. The author of the dissertation is Nataliya Krasimirova Tsvetanova-Chilingirova – full-time doctoral student at the Department of “Political Sciences and National Security”, Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences, with scientific supervisor Prof. D. Sc. Rumen Ivanov Kanchev, University of Plovdiv Paisii Hilendarski.

The set of print materials presented by Nataliya Tsvetanova-Chilingirova is in accordance with art. 36 (1) of the Regulations for development of the academic staff of the UP (RDASUP), and consists of the following documents:

- application form to the Rector to initiate the procedure for the defense of a dissertation thesis;
- CV in European format;
- protocol № 117/09.01.2025 from the department council related to reporting the readiness to open the procedure and preliminary discussion of the dissertation work;
- opinion of the scientific supervisor regarding readiness for preliminary discussion.
- dissertation work;

- abstract;
- a list of scientific publications on the subject of the dissertation;
- copies of scientific publications;
- declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents;
- certificate of compliance with the minimum requirements for awarding the educational and scientific degree “doctor”.

The doctoral student has attached 3 scientific publications on the topic - 1 article and 2 reports. The attached works comply with the requirements from a formal point of view and can be accepted and discussed.

2. Brief biographical data about the doctoral student

Nataliya Tsvetanova-Chilingirova graduated Law and has master’s degree in diplomacy and international relations at University of Plovdiv Paisii Hilendarski. She was discharged with the right to defend her thesis from the Political Sciences doctoral program in the Department of Political Science and National Security. As can be seen from the attached CV, the doctoral student has excellent English and very good French, has communication and organizational skills, as well as experience in managing teams and projects. Tsvetanova-Chilingirova is a lawyer with over ten years of professional experience in the field of commercial and tax law, social security legislation and tourism. Since 2020, she has been running her own firm, and previously worked as a legal advisor and partner in companies providing legal and accounting services.

3. Relevance of the topic and appropriateness of the set goals and objectives

After World War II and especially after the end of the Cold War, in the foreign policy of individual countries, but also in international relations in general, an attempt has been made to leave military approaches to conflict resolution in the background. The use of alternative, diplomatic methods has been expanding, including the development of economic relations, the creation of conditions for more intensive business ties, the role of cultural diplomacy have been increasing, etc.

The above approaches outline a positive perspective and expectations for the dynamics of the world order. However, objective circumstances show that hard power continues to stand as a possible approach and militarily secured states are ready to use it when they consider that this is to their advantage. In this sense, the first decades of the 21st century may be associated with conflicts and military intervention in some countries of the so-called Arab world, including the conflict between Israel and Palestine, but also in the Caucasus region. In 2022, the military conflict in Ukraine has been added to the above, which is much more directly and on a large scale related to leading players in

international relations, namely Russia, the European Union and the USA. The events of 2022 are a kind of proof that the means of soft power have not become leading instruments in relations between states on the international stage. On the contrary, the complicated international security environment provides arguments for the undoubted role of hard power.

In this context, the dissertation research of Natalia Tsvetanova-Chilingirova is not only relevant and timely, but also very necessary. It provides an opportunity to present scientific arguments that explain the objectively existing realities in the international environment. It should be noted that not only the topic as a title is relevant, but the research includes aspects through which it very accurately and specifically focuses on the topics significant to the problem. Among them, one can highlight the discussion on the change of the world political system and the environment of its functioning; the main aspects of the end of the Cold War, including globalization; the mass democratization of societies; the transformation of the world from unipolar to multipolar; the derivation of the essence of hard, soft and smart power, but also their practical dimensions at the beginning of the 21st century.

4. Awareness of the problem

Nataliya Tsvetanova-Chilingirova's dissertation thesis is structured in a way and includes topics that allow her to get aware of the problem she is investigating in depth. The goal that the doctoral student sets for herself, namely "to establish the way in which concepts of power are reflected in relations between states on the global stage after the end of the Cold War." (p. 6) touches on several theoretical perspectives and requires knowledge of several practical phenomena. The theoretical perspectives are related to:

- the conceptual framework of international relations and foreign policy (in the first chapter);
- the theme of power, the foundations of which the doctoral student traces back to Antiquity (in the second chapter);
- the interpretation of power in international relations (in the third chapter).

From a practical perspective, the doctoral student conducts a thorough review and analysis of:

- the practical parameters of world politics at the beginning of the 21st century (in the first chapter);
- the relationship between power and public diplomacy, which also includes its practical dimensions in modern times (in the fourth chapter).

It should be noted that her work is not just a collection of various theories, but follows a logic built by the doctoral student based on the read and understood content.

However, it is not only the presentation of theories and facts that gives reason to conclude that the doctoral student has in-depth knowledge of the problem. This is visible not only in the concepts she presents, but also in the way she interprets them and enters into a kind of discussion about them. This means that she not only knows different points of view, but also creatively and critically evaluates what she has read.

5. Research methodology

The conceptual framework of classical and neoclassical realism in international relations chosen by Nataliya Tsvetanova-Chilingirova corresponds to the set goal and provides focus, since the topic suggests the possibility of interpretation from different perspectives. These approaches provide a broad view of international relations. Classical realism explains the striving of states for power and security in the international environment, while neoclassical adds domestic political dimensions, including the views of the political elite and institutional features. This complex allows for a thorough understanding of the behavior of states, giving a balanced perspective on systemic and internal explanations. The above is of essential importance for the complexity of the dissertation research. The implemented dialectical-logical synthesis is also a correct choice and has been successfully used, because the doctoral student manages to present both the concepts of power and its practical dimensions in its dynamics and contradictions, alongside in the consistency of its development and use.

At the next stage, it should be noted that the specific methods used by the doctoral student are relevant to the set goal and tasks. Theoretical synthesis is necessary to create a complex description of power and the factors that determine the dynamics in the use of its forms. Legal-historical analysis has been successfully used in commenting on both specific dimensions of international relations and in describing international institutions. The historical approach helps to synthesize the grounds and reasons for the current dynamics of international relations and the place of power in them. Comparative sociological analysis helps to understand the behavior of individual subjects of international relations (e.g. Russia, China and the USA) and their foreign policy.

The chosen methodology allows the doctoral student to achieve the goal of the thesis and to make valid scientifically based conclusions on the tasks set. The use of desk research is the main possible approach and through an interpretative method Nataliya Tsvetanova-Chilingirova manages to conduct high-quality research that will contribute to political science.

6. Characteristics and evaluation of the dissertation work

Nataliya Tsvetanova-Chilingirova's dissertation offers an in-depth analysis of the role of power in international relations in the context of contemporary global dynamics. The doctoral student

structures the research around key concepts and applies them to the processes shaping the international environment in the 21st century.

The **Introduction** to the dissertation correctly sets out the parameters of the research, including relevance, purpose, tasks, object, focus, research problem, research question, thesis, working hypotheses, limitations, methodology, and structure of the research. Their correct formulation demonstrates the doctoral student's understanding of the essence of scientific research, but also her ability to correctly set the framework for her work.

In **Chapter One**, she successfully introduces the concept of the system of international relations and its transformations, based on authoritative sources – classical theorists such as Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz, Joseph Nye and contemporary researchers in the field of international relations. However, the doctoral student does not simply synthesize the contributions of individual authors, but presents in a structured and precise logic different dimensions and influences on the phenomenon under study. The topic of power and politics from a conceptual point of view, perceptions of systematicity and its interpretations in international relations, the role of the citizen/individual, etc. is touched upon. The attention paid to realism and neoliberalism contributes to a thorough understanding of the issues and the correct formulation of conclusions. The first chapter also describes the dynamics of the international environment at the beginning of the 21st century. What is stated is not just a listing of facts, but also a discussion of the facts, including from the perspective of the previously commented concepts. In this sense, the chapter has its own scientific and research logic and constitutes an excellent basis for the subsequent chapters of the dissertation.

Chapter two is dedicated to the conceptualization of the concept of power in international relations and traces its development from Antiquity to the present day. The doctoral student presents the development of the concept through different historical stages, demonstrating research skills, combining political theory and philosophical interpretations. The emphasis on classical understandings of power and its manifestation in foreign policy is particularly impressive. The above is also successfully developed by examining the views of Machiavelli, Hobbes and Rousseau, which gives further historical depth to the analysis. A significant contribution of this chapter is the systematization of the different typologies of power – hard, soft and smart – and the systematization of the possibilities for their application in international politics. The doctoral student demonstrates a good understanding of the conceptual debates surrounding these forms of power and their dynamics in the global context after the end of the Cold War.

The **third chapter** of the dissertation is dedicated to the phenomenon of soft power in international relations, with Nataliya Tsvetanova-Chilingirova examining both the historical development of the concept and its application in the contemporary international context. She draws at-

tention to the approach by which states apply soft power to achieve foreign policy goals through cultural influence, diplomatic initiatives and international cooperation. The doctoral student focuses on the differences between hard, soft and smart power and emphasizes that successful foreign policy is often a combination of all of them. The chapter makes interesting references to classical theories of power, but its contribution is that they are placed in a contemporary perspective, showing how global actors adapt their strategies to new realities. Particularly impressive is the interpretation of the role of cultural diplomacy and the media as instruments of soft power. Tsvetanova-Chilingirova not only presents the theoretical foundations, but also offers specific examples of its application on the international stage – from US policy after the Cold War to the diplomatic initiatives of the European Union and China. In this sense, the doctoral student does not limit herself to theoretical consideration but makes references to real case studies and current global processes, which contributes to a more complete understanding of the practical dimensions of soft power.

The **fourth chapter** is dedicated to public diplomacy in relation to soft, hard and smart power and their application in international relations. The doctoral student draws attention to the transformation of diplomatic practices in the modern world and how they interact with various manifestations of power. It is good that the doctoral student emphasizes the application of soft power in public diplomacy and its mechanisms – persuasion, attraction and establishment of trust. The connection that Nataliya Tsvetanova-Chilingirova makes between the theoretical concepts of Joseph Nye and the practical manifestations of this form of power in global politics deserves attention. Examples of its use by leading international actors such as the USA, the European Union and China are given. The part that analyzes the limitations of soft power, especially in the context of hybrid threats and information warfare, and the conclusion that traditional diplomatic approaches are adapting to the dynamically changing international environment is interesting. I believe that the doctoral student has implemented a current and well-argued analysis, not limiting herself to presenting the advantages of soft power, but also exploring its limitations in the contemporary international environment.

Chapter Five examines the dynamics of soft and hard power in international relations at the beginning of the 21st century. The doctoral student skillfully comments on the change in the global system after the end of the Cold War, emphasizing the transformation from a bipolar to a unipolar and then to a multipolar world order. Attention is also drawn to key concepts in international relations – balance of power and balance of threat – as the doctoral student comments with understanding on the theoretical frameworks of Kenneth Waltz and Stephen Walt. The mechanisms through which states balance the influence of dominant global players are also discussed. In addition, she examines the manifestations of soft and hard power in the context of significant events and processes such as the conflict in Ukraine and the role of Russia, NATO and the EU, the rise of China and the use of eco-

conomic influence as an instrument of soft power, American foreign policy after 2000 and the combination of military power with cultural and ideological influence. Through these examples, the doctoral student demonstrates how states adapt their strategies in response to changing international realities. Through the above, Nataliya Tsvetanova-Chilingirova demonstrates not only factual knowledge, but also an understanding of the processes being commented on.

The **conclusion** correctly reflects the conclusions from the analysis and corresponds to the parameters set out in the introduction.

7. Contributions and significance of the development for science and practice

Nataliya Tsvetanova-Chilingirov's dissertation is undoubtedly timely and I believe that it has its own contribution to science in two main directions:

Scientific-theoretical – We can include the *detailed development of an integrated conceptual framework* for power in international relations, which combines classical and neoclassical realism with the concepts of soft and smart power. Alongside, we can also mention the *precise systematization of the definitions and typology of power*, which facilitates their analysis and application in international practice. To this group we can also include the *systematized argumentation* of the finding that, despite the optimistic expectations for the predominance of soft power, it is gradually beginning to give way to the methods of hard power.

Practical-applied – *The comparative analysis of the power strategies of global actors* (USA, Russia, China and the EU) provides practical knowledge about the different approaches in international politics and can serve as a basis for developing foreign policy decisions. The dissertation offers *practical guidelines for the optimal combination of soft and hard power* within the framework of public diplomacy, which is especially important for states seeking to increase their international influence through non-military means. The doctoral student also draws attention to the *growing role of non-traditional forms of power* such as cyber influence and information warfare. This allows for better prediction of international dynamics and the development of adaptive strategies.

8. Преценка на публикациите по дисертационния труд

Doctoral student Nataliya Tsvetanova-Chilingirova has presented three scientific articles, namely:

1) Tsvetanova-Chilingirova, N. (2022). Soft power in the discourse of contemporary events, In: Proceedings of the international scientific conference “Modern research and technologies for

defense ARTDef” (pp. 287-294), Veliko Tarnovo: National University “Vasil Levski”, ISSN 2815-2581;

2) Tsvetanova-Chilingirova, N. (2023). Application of hard and soft power in international relations, In: Proceedings of the annual university scientific conference (June 8-9, 2023) (pp. 99-108), Veliko Tarnovo: Publishing complex of National University “Vasil Levski”, ISSN 1314-1937;

3) Tsvetanova-Chilingirova, N. (2024). The United Nations in the context of the events in Ukraine, Scientific Works of the University of National and World Economy, 64(1), pp. 243-256.

In her 2022 article, she examines theoretical perspectives on soft power. The aforementioned research corresponds to the stage of her work on the dissertation and contributes, on the one hand, to the systematization of what has been studied so far on theoretical issues. On the other hand, her participation in a scientific conference provides an opportunity to validate her research activity, both in terms of structure and content. Her next scientific research (from 2023) in a unique way builds on the work on the first report, and also reflects the research activity on the dissertation. In it, Tsvetanova-Chilingirova examines power and its role in international relations, and its practical manifestations in the last century are also traced. On this basis, she analyzes the effectiveness of hard and soft power. In her most recent publication from 2024, the doctoral student focuses on specific dimensions of the dynamics in the current international environment, namely the conflict in Ukraine and, in particular, the role of the United Nations. The UN and in particular its role in regulating international relations are also examined in the dissertation research.

In conclusion, I can point out that the doctoral student’s publications are sufficient both from a formal and from a substantive point of view.

9. Personal contribution of the doctoral student

The personal contribution of Nataliya Tsvetanova-Chilingirova to the dissertation research is undoubted. It is manifested both in the selection and application of an appropriate theoretical framework, and in the in-depth analysis of specific international processes and events. She demonstrates a high degree of analytical skills in the selection of approaches used as the basis of the research. She successfully adapts theoretical concepts to the specific features of the international system after the Cold War, offering an original reading of established theories. The doctoral student does not limit herself to a mechanical presentation of existing literature on the topic, but analyzes empirical data, documents and examples from international practice. This is manifested, for example, in the analysis of the conflict in Ukraine, the strategies of the great powers and the use of soft and hard power in different geopolitical contexts. Tsvetanova-Chilingirova also demonstrates personal commitment by developing an idea that integrates the various forms of power with the practices of

public diplomacy in combination with a critical attitude to the existing theoretical paradigms and their adaptation to the realities of the 21st century. The authorship check performed with StrikePlagiarism proves the findings made, as no plagiarism was detected.

10. Abstract

The abstract is 32 pages long and is prepared in Bulgarian and English. It provides basic information related to the dissertation research, the procedure for scheduling the public defense, the parameters of the public defense itself and the the scientific jury. The content of the introduction, the five chapters and the conclusion are presented in a summarized form. The main conclusions from each chapter are also included. At the end of the abstract, the general conclusions from the dissertation research, the scientific novelty, the contributions of the dissertation and the publications on the topic of the dissertation are drawn. The abstract structured in this way and the information provided are sufficient and correctly reflect the research carried out in the dissertation. In this sense, I can conclude that the abstract was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the relevant regulatory acts and reflects the main results achieved in the dissertation.

11. Critical remarks and recommendations

The dissertation research of Nataliya Tsvetanova-Chilingirova has its undeniable merits. However, it should be noted that it could be improved in several directions. First of all, I would recommend that if the text is to be published, it need to be improved in terms of technical and layout. In addition, the truly in-depth theoretical context is important, but at times it could also be interpreted as a slight deviation from the main focus, namely power in the context of international relations. It seems to me that the dissertation would benefit if the analysis of concepts such as power and politics, citizens and the system were reduced a little, and more focus was given to the empirical. The aforementioned note, of course, represents a point of view and should not be perceived as mandatory.

Regarding the recommendations, I believe that such a work would benefit if smart power as a combination of soft and hard power were studied a little more in detail, especially in the context of technological innovations and hybrid threats.

12. Personal impressions

I have known Nataliya Tsvetanova-Chilingirova since she joined the department as a doctoral student. In the process of her work, she demonstrated dedication not only to the dissertation research, but also to academic work in general. Her professional commitment outside the university did not prevent her from being busy with departmental initiatives, including organizing meetings with

experts from practice, participating in the candidate student campaign through school visits, and intensive teaching work together with her scientific supervisor. Her sense of responsibility and her skills in organizing her tasks made it possible for her to complete her work on time and with sufficient quality. Last but not least, I would like to emphasize that Nataliya Tsvetanova-Chilingirova possesses collegiality, dialogicity, and communication skills, which, in addition to being a professional, also make her a worthy person.

13. Recommendations for future use of the dissertation contributions and results

As already indicated in part regarding the contributions of the dissertation, it can be used as a basis for developing scientific research, but also in practice. The doctoral student could develop a monographic work based on the dissertation, including the dynamics in international relations after the election of the new US President Donald Trump.

In terms of practice, her work can find practical application in the development of national strategies related to foreign policy and the integration of soft and smart power in it.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation contains *scientific, scientific-applied, and applied results, which represent an original contribution to science* and **meets all the** requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA), the Regulations for its Implementation, and the relevant Regulations of the University of Plovdiv Paisii Hilendarski.

The dissertation shows that the doctoral student Nataliya Krasimirova Tsvetanova-Chilingirova **possesses** in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the professional field of “Political Sciences” by **demonstrating** qualities and skills for the independent conduct of scientific research.

Due to the above, I confidently give my **positive assessment** of the conducted research, presented by the above-reviewed dissertation, abstract, achieved results, and contributions, and I **propose to the honorable scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”** to Nataliya Krasimirova Tsvetanova-Chilingirova in the area of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Law Sciences, professional field 3.3. Political Science, doctoral program Political Sciences.

21 February 2025

Reviewer:
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Daniela Pastarmadzhieva