

## Russian language as tool in foreign policy in CIS

Shoaib Khan

*Centre for Central Eurasian Studies, University of Mumbai, Mumbai, Republic of India*

*ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5558-4854>, [shoaibk\\_92in@yahoo.com](mailto:shoaibk_92in@yahoo.com)*

**Abstract:** The development of political, economic and cultural relations with the CIS countries is the priority direction of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation. Cultural policy in relation to the CIS countries is the so-called "soft power", which helps to establish a constructive dialogue between countries. Language plays a special role in cultural policy. The Russian language is an instrument of interethnic communication, an integral part of world culture. Language reflects the thinking of the people, their values and worldview. For this purpose, federal target programs "Russian language" are being created. One of the objectives of the program is to support the Russian language as the basis for the development of integration processes in the member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States. In the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, one of the stated goals is to spread and strengthen the position of the Russian language in the world. In the field of international humanitarian cooperation and human rights, one of the tasks of foreign policy is to promote the study and dissemination of the Russian language as an integral part of the world culture and an instrument of international and interethnic communication. The development of the Russian language also presupposes purposeful efforts to promote it in the world, to support and expand the Russian-speaking communities in foreign countries, to increase interest in the Russian language and Russian culture in all countries of the world. First of all, in the countries of the CIS and constituting the so-called post-Soviet space. In this article, the author analyzes the role of the Russian language in the CIS space, taking into account the indicated processes and designated tasks. The work uses the methodology of political analysis, structural linguistics and the method of comparative studies.

**Keywords:** Russia, CIS, Baltics, Central Asia, Language, Soviet Union, Europe.

## Русский язык как инструмент внешней политики в СНГ

Шоаиб Хан

*Центр евроазиатских исследований, Университет Мумбаи, Мумбаи, Республика Индия*

*ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5558-4854>, [shoaibk\\_92in@yahoo.com](mailto:shoaibk_92in@yahoo.com)*

**Аннотация:** Приоритетным направлением внешней политики Российской Федерации является развитие политических, экономических и культурных отношений со странами СНГ. Культурная политика по отношению к странам СНГ является так называемой «мягкой силой», которая помогает наладить конструктивный диалог между странами. Особая роль в культурной политике отводится языку. Русский язык – инструмент межнационального общения, неотъемлемая часть мировой культуры. Язык отражает мышление народа, его ценности и мировоззрение. С этой целью создаются Федеральные целевые программы «Русский язык». Одной из задач программы является поддержка русского языка как основы развития интеграционных процессов в государствах-участниках Содружества Независимых Государств. В Концепции внешней политики РФ одной из заявленных целей является распространение и укрепление позиций русского языка в мире. В области международного гуманитарного сотрудничества и прав человека одна из задач внешней политики – способствовать изучению и распространению русского языка как неотъемлемой части мировой культуры и инструмента международного и межнационального общения. Развитие русского языка предполагает и целенаправленные усилия по его продвижению в мире, по поддержке и расширению русскоязычных сообществ в иностранных государствах, по увеличению интереса к русскому языку и русской культуре во всех странах мира. В первую очередь, в странах, входящих в СНГ и составляющих так называемое постсоветское пространство. В данной статье автор анализирует роль русского языка на пространстве СНГ

с учетом указанных процессов и обозначенных задач. В работе применяется методология политанализа, структурной лингвистики и метод компаративистики.

**Ключевые слова:** Россия, СНГ, Балтия, Центральная Азия, язык, СССР, Европа.

Since 1995 according to the changes in its foreign policy Russia has started to get more involved in the questions relating to Russian minorities in the ex-Soviet republics. Language policy as pointed out in some studies has been an issue that can be bargained in the bilateral relations between Russia and Central Asian countries.

During the Soviet Era, great attention was paid to the issues pertaining with all round development of Russian language and all other languages of the former republics of U.S.S.R. During this period, more than 40 nationalities which did not had a well-developed written language were helped in formulating scripts for them. All the republics of former U.S.S.R. willingly accepted Russian language for interethnic and international communication and co-operation.

Russian language became a window to the world, but after the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991 and emergence of the new states, came up the issues of the national languages. Since then, the attitude towards Russian language as means of interethnic and international communication has changed and the importance of national and other foreign languages increased. The titular languages Kazakh, Uzbek, Kirgiz, Tajik and Turkmen were proclaimed the official languages of their respective republics. This was the common trend among the most Soviet republics.

As Per a claim, Russia ceased to support the demands for double citizenship of the Russians in Kazakhstan, after managing to persuade Kazakhstan to give up the idea to launch an international consortium for its spaceport. The Russian language in multilingual Kazakhstan is gradually being replaced and is officially no more only means of international communication and is used only alongside the state language.

The picture in Kyrgyzstan is very different the Russian language here is given the status of the official language and it is reported that the interest in Russian language in Kyrgyzstan has not declined. In Tajikistan, as per the second article of the constitution of the Republic of

Tajikistan, Russian is the language of inter-ethnic communication. The earlier prevailing apathy towards Russian language during the 1990s has changed to positive attitude towards learning Russian language. The Russian-Tajik (Slavic) University is considered one of the best Universities in the country.

In Uzbekistan, Uzbek has been established as the state language and some reforms are proposed about use of Cyrillic scripts and change over to Latin. In Turkmenistan during the last 20 years of the independence, a whole generation of young people has grown, who consider Russian as one of the foreign languages. In schools, along with Turkmen language, students' study two foreign languages – English and Russian. Despite all other considerations, Russian is likely to remain as the common language of the political elites and masses for a longer time [Ozlem 2002].

Belarus located in Eastern Europe and bordering the Russian Federation represents the best-case scenario for the survival of Russian beyond the borders of the Russia proper. An independent state Belarus with its own national language Belarusian commands the same percentage of speakers of Russian as is the case in the Russian Federation though there are certainly fewer native speakers of Russian in Belarus, owing to use of both Belarusian and Trasianka, a Russian-Belarusian interlanguage.

Sharing both linguistic and cultural links to Central Asia, in Azerbaijan the role of Russian is somewhat complex. Officially, most Azerbaijanis claim fluency in Russian and the language remains a tool for business and commerce; however, like Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan has opted for the Latin alphabet. This development naturally portends a dissipation of Russian's strength over the long term with Turkish similarity of Azeris. Azerbaijan may be a good barometer for understanding at a time when the Russian has been depoliticized effectively and that how the eventual delinking of Sovietization and the Russian language will affect the Russian language free of its old ideological baggage.

Armenia represents somewhat of a statistical outlier among the non-Slavic, former Soviet republics, which show the strongest correlate between knowledge of Russian and the presence of ethnic republics as some two-thirds of the population speak Russian while less than one percent of the population is ethnic Russian. Due to close political cooperation between Yerevan and Moscow after the independence, strong commercial links, and possibly as the result of so-called civilizational affinities [Huntington 1996], knowledge and everyday use of Russian in the mountainous republic remains high, particularly in business and commerce.

Political developments have directly impacted the status of the Russian language in the past decade in neighboring Georgia. Tbilisi's foreign policy pivot towards the West exacerbated relations with Russia in the aftermath of the 2003 Rose Revolution, ultimately culminating in a summer 2008 war between the two nations.

Since then, the Russian language has suffered in Georgia proper, while its status has been elevated in the country's breakaway republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Both republics have now been recognized as independent states by Moscow and have made Russian the co-official language alongside the local Iranian (Ossetian) and Caucasian (Abkhaz) languages.

The site of an 18 December 2012 conference of Russian linguists, writers, researchers, and educators gathered in the Abkhaz Capital Sukhumi to discuss innovative ways to promote the Russian language in the South Caucasus, particularly using new information and communication technologies.

In neighboring Ukraine, where the geo-linguistic situation of Russian is arguably the most complex, the Russian language remains a political shibboleth, frequently being used a cudgel by both the regionalists in the eastern sector and the Ukrainian nationalists in the west. The education, media and public sector the Ukrainization of which during 1990s somewhat reduced the prevalence of Russian in daily life, but with a large percentage of ethnic Russians in the eastern and southern of the country, particularly Crimea where Russian in certain areas-maintained dominance, which was

part of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic until the 1950s.

Many Russophones in political atmosphere declare Ukrainian as their native language despite using Russian in everyday life, making accurate statistics about language use rather difficult in collection as estimated by many suggest parity between Russian and Ukrainian in terms of everyday use.

Identity politics stimulated renewed calls for protection of the Russian language in the Donbas Arena and other regions after the Orange Revolution of 2005 which command larger numbers of Russophones, and which is dominated by Russian friendly party.

Formally recognizes the status of languages in regions in the year 2012 a new law was enacted where more than 10 percent of the population speak a language other than the state language, such as Ukrainian. The Status of a regional language of Russian are in 13 out of 27 districts of the country, including the capital Kyiv, the port cities of Odessa and Sevastopol, Crimea, Kharkov and Dnepropetrovsk Regions.

During the interwar period the Baltic States existed as full-fledged nations states only to be annexed by the USSR during World War II, the Russian language was highly politicized, but lacked any state support. Restrictive post-independence citizenship laws in Latvia and Estonia created hundreds of thousands of stateless persons, mostly Russophones, who were required to learn the national language to gain full rights in their respective countries of residence.

In Latvia, Russian language schools have come under intense pressure to reduce Russian-language instruction<sup>33</sup>. While legislation was proposed that signage in public areas must be made in the Latvian language only; regardless, Riga and other parts of the country remain areas where Russian can be heard.

The pro-Russophone NGO Native Tongue in its sponsored referendum in 2012, showed overwhelming opposition to making Russian an official language in the Baltic country, with 75 percent voting against the measure with a 69 percent turnout. A strong demographic majority is being enjoyed by indigenous population in Lithuania and Russians and other non-Lithuanians tended to learn the local language in higher numbers than anywhere else in the

Soviet Union. The linguistic policy has not been as draconian, however, the long-term expectations for Russian language use in Lithuania is rather poor.

Despite the challenges for Russian in the Baltic States, one fact is clear as per a recent report by the European Commission: Russian has been introduced to the map of the most spoken languages in Europe.

The keys to success of the Russian language are also held by Economics and commerce in the Newly Independent States. Moscow is treating the former Soviet republics in the post-Soviet era as a priority since unraveling of the USSR. It has started promoting Russian economic expansion in the CIS as an effort both to obtain lucrative assets and to enhance its political influence.

Long-standing communication and transportation networks, and the lingering effects of Soviet-era systems of economic interdependence, due to commercial exchange for centuries, the Newly Independent States are inextricably bound to Russia except for EU members Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, a fact which Russian elites understand and attempt to profit from via a common information space.

Preserving the Russian language beyond Russia the most aggressive attempts certainly come from the Russkiy Mir Foundation, described by one scholar as the most concerted effort to date at conceptualizing a notion of 'Russianness' that transcends ethnic bloodlines and geographical boundaries.

While Russkiy Mir's work is closely modeled on pre-existing cultural-linguist outreach efforts employed by Germany's (Goethe-Institut), China's (Confucius Institute), and the UK (British Council), its partner, Rossotrudnichestvo or the Federal Agency for the Affairs of the CIS States, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Co-operation is a bit different.

Proudly dedicated to integration efforts across the CIS the explicitly political mission is Rossotrudnichestvo, formation of a positive image of Russia abroad, and protecting the linguistic and cultural needs of Russia's 20 million compatriots living outside the country.

Taken together, the activities of Russkiy Mir and Rossotrudnichestvo represent two planks of a worldwide campaign by Russia to

expand its influence through the vehicle of the Russian language, benefits for which undoubtedly from the funding of the Russian government abroad, it is the explicit linkage of the Kremlin's political aspirations that may threaten Russian's ability to shift from the Soviet lingua franca to a true global language.

Education abroad is taken as a part of the foreign policy strategies these days and to promote the country's language and diaspora like Britain, U.S., Canada, Australia, Germany, France and now even China, Russia is not behind. Russia educates some 100,000 foreign students a year and its share on the international marketing terms of foreign students is 5% at most. Russia mostly trains foreign students from China, South Asia, South Korea and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

In studying the Russian language abroad there have been changes in the interest positively. The number of Russian language students in China has increased and as per one report about half a million Chinese speaks Russian. The preparatory Russian language courses for foreigners who do not speak Russian but plan to study there have been prepared by Russian Universities. After entering Universities, they continue studying the language at special departments.

Russian is taught as a foreign language to foreign humanities and science students in the special departments of Moscow State University. They issue specialized literature and recommend attending daily lessons on different aspects of the Russian language. Most students there are Koreans, Chinese, South Asians, Japanese and Arabs, although some are Europeans and Americans. Moscow State University also has summer language courses for those who would like to study Russian for travelling around the country.

Russia has youth exchange program with 30 countries, including the United States, Germany, Finland, Estonia, Belgium, South Korea and India. They are monitored by the Russian Ministry of Education and Science and include language exchanges, joint leisure pursuits and friendly ties, as well as exchange of specialists.

The Russian Council on Academic Mobility (RCAM) also facilitates international exchange of students, teachers, ideas and educational experience. The Council is voluntary as-

sociation of Russian Universities and other educational establishments modelled after the British Council, the German Academic Exchange Program DAAD, EduFrance and other transnational educational organizations [Sobolevskaya 2006].

### Conclusion

The democratic processes started with the Perestroika in the former Soviet Union highlighted the drawbacks in the national policy of the country, which had been neglected before. Among them were issues concerned with national identity development and maintenance of minority languages. Most minority languages were in the process of extinction or endangered. The strive to revive a sense of national self-identity as well as endangered languages created a feeling of urgency, sometimes leading titular nations to make radical decisions to protect their languages and identity.

The former Soviet republics started one by one to adopt language laws that proclaimed the languages of titular nations the state languages. Many politicians and sociolinguists believe the nationalist and linguistic issues, along with others, became the key stones in the breakup of the USSR and in some cases the language decrees and laws were direct causes of the armed conflicts, for example in Moldova.

The language reforms started in the Soviet republics in 1989 has made Russia oversee the linguistic situation and adopt the relevant decrees. Russia was the last to adopt the law on languages as per all the other republics of the former Soviet Union.

Russian is used during the sessions of the House of the State Assembly, different conferences, meetings, lectures. The texts of laws of the Republic Sakha-Yakutia and other legal documents are published in the state languages. The state languages are used in the activities of the administrative authorities, local government bodies, enterprises, offices and organizations including texts of forms, stamps, seals, sign boards, official papers such as passports, certificates of birth and marriage etc.

Languages are highly viable and extremely flexible systems, but they should be protected and promoted to effect revival and reversal. Most of minority languages in Russia find themselves in the dangerous situation, that is why they need state protection and support.

The four aspects of language management—nativization, linguistic assimilation, de-russification, and bilingual education—in the multilingual territory first occupied by the Russian Empire, then by the USSR, and then by the successor states. The rationale for this diachronic approach is twofold.

The three settings are interrelated: post-Soviet developments cannot be fully understood outside their historic context, just as the full impact of Soviet language policies can only be established through the post-Soviet lens. In addition, sociolinguists generally lack familiarity with Russian and Soviet language management.

Nowadays the problems regarding the role, place and status of the Russian language, other languages of the people of Russia as within the country and within the world community, are essential.

For modern Russia, the problems regarding the role, place and status of the Russian language and other languages of Russian Federation both in the country and in the international community are urgent and very important in the context of the prospects of the Russian state and society.

The status of the Russian language has received an important official confirmation at both global and federal Russian levels. It should be emphasized that in the post-Soviet area the Russian language has appeared to be in an ambiguous situation. By historical inertia, it is still playing the role of the language of international communication. But depending on the changes in internal political situation, laws, adjustments, and other regulations of the former Soviet republics the status of the Russian language in these areas may change. In general, the language policy of the post-Soviet countries is significantly different.

The language policy of the modern Russia needs serious efforts in the field of language planning. Language policy and language planning in a multi-ethnic state serve as a meaningful tool for conservation and, at the same time, the development of the country. Neglecting of this tool is very dangerous, and its effective application is a crucial point to create an additional margin of safety, that is especially important during the modernizing reforms.

In the field of international relations language policies are rarely studied. On the other hand, studies on language policies have not systematically considered the international dimension but have merely focused on either language behaviours of individuals or on the political structure effecting language behaviours in one country.

The relation between language and politics can be analysed in two broad ways depending on how politics is defined. If politics is defined in broad terms as an influence on another one's action and if it is related to power, authority, and legitimacy, then the relation between language and politics is intrinsic. From this perspective, language and politics are inseparable from each other.

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#### ИНФОРМАЦИЯ ОБ АВТОРЕ / INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Shoab Khan** – Centre for Central Eurasian Studies, University of Mumbai, President, ALFAAZ Education and Cultural Society, Mumbai, Lecturer, Mahim Social Workers' College, Mumbai.

**Сведения об авторе:** Шоаб Хан, Центр евроазиатских исследований Университета Мумбаи, Президент, Общество образования и культуры ALFAAZ, Мумбаи, лектор, Колледж социальных работников Махима, Мумбаи.