"Soft Dimension of Hard Power in Russian Conduct"

It has been argued lately that Russia, having lost a significant part of her economic attractiveness and soft power (Leonard, 2016) because of the present economic situation, and not being able to pursue her foreign policy goals with “soft power” tools anymore has switched to using “hard” power. While these conclusions are certainly supported by the evidence of Russian actions in Syria and Ukraine, there is a “soft” dimension in the Russian hardball politics which is not obvious.

The case of Syria tell us that along with achieving certain political objectives globally and in the Middle East per se, Russia addresses her Syrian policy to other countries, among them her Central Asian partners. Russia “sells” to them such important public goods as a sense of security, both external and internal, and assurances that Russia will not abandon her allies under any circumstances.