

Is Smart Power the New Soft Power? German and Russian Examples

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The 21st century indicates state power and influence rather different than it was in the 20th century. “Classic” big wars using different weapons belong rather to the past. Instead of those, instruments of soft and smart power are found in the current politics (s. for example works of Joseph Nye, Suzanne Nossel, Michael Harvey, and others), including mechanisms of cultural, institutional, and economic influence supported by a huge number of information tools. “Smart power” means in this context a clever combination of “soft” and “hard” powers for achieving certain aims (power to convince and power to attract).

Modern Germany as a successful example of soft and smart power implementation

According to the modern German foreign-policy concept (name or title?), approved on the 8th of February 2012, cultural and education-oriented NGOs should play a bigger role. Examples include the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Humboldt Foundation’s German Chancellor Scholarship, German Parliament Scholarship (IPS) for young leaders worldwide, and Goethe Institute programmes. Alumni of these initiatives are often tomorrow’s leaders and elites in science, economy and politics in participating countries. Returning to their home states, they make a career in the political institutions, carrying and sometimes spreading a “Germanophilia virus”.

A few words about the activities of Germany’s six unique party political foundations: no other country has such dynamic and global acting political foundations tied to domestic political parties. There are Friedrich Ebert Foundation (close to the Social Democratic Party), Konrad Adenauer Foundation (close to the Christian Democratic Party), Heinrich Boell Foundation (close to the Green Party/Union 90), Friedrich Naumann Foundation (close to the Free Liberal Party), Hans Seidel Foundation (close to the Christian Social Union), and Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (close to the Left Party). Each has branch offices worldwide, which would be impossible for political parties. Formally, all these foundations are independent from any political party: in legal documents and statutes it is written that a foundation is an independent institution). They receive their financing not from parties, but mostly from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, sometimes from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, the financial support depends on each party’s number of seats in the Federal Parliament (Bundestag). The most funding thus goes to the two foundations associated with the two biggest political parties: Friedrich Ebert Foundation and Konrad Adenauer Foundation. In the recent years, the lines between political parties and political foundations have become increasingly blurred: parties often use foundation resources for their aims, transforming them into their own think tanks. As mentioned, big foundations have their branch

offices worldwide (Konrad Adenauer Foundation in 120 countries, Friedrich Ebert Foundation in more than 100) realizing common projects with local partner institutions like think tanks, NGOs, universities working on such areas like civil society initiatives, international cooperation and security, youth exchanges etc.

The other side of the smart-power coin, as noticed, is hard power, including international weapons export and military aid. Germany as a world's No. 3 exporter exports a plenty of products worldwide including of military nature. Matteo Scianna of Columbia University writes that German weapons exports to Arab countries (first of all, to Saudi Arabia and Algeria) as well as to Turkey and Indonesia, has an economic and, therefore, political influence on the elites in these states. In the last 10 years, Germany exported arms and heavy munitions (for instance, "Leopard" tanks) to Saudi Arabia worth a total of 39 million euros.

One of Germany's several goals for increasing its international political influence is to obtain a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. On the website of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a separate column is devoted to the German policy towards the UN. The main idea is to be involved in most of the UN activities worldwide. Moreover, in Germany there are 25 UN offices: 18 of them are based in Bonn, on the so called UN-campus. On the 31st of July, 2012, former German President Horst Köhler was appointed to the UN Secretary-General's High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, advising the UN SG directly on the new global politics.

Germany's dark national-socialist past and later politics of contrition and corrigendum motivated German politicians to build new tools for improving the country's image, both at home and abroad. Soft power was made even from the previous mistakes: Germans do not forget their history, the horrors of national-socialism, initiating projects and initiatives around this topic (within the so-called policy of memory, *Erinnerungspolitik*) and are still paying compensation to the former victims, primarily those of the Holocaust.

A new wave of this development can be observed in Germany's current migration policy, declared by Chancellor Angela Merkel. Many hundreds of thousands of refugees, first of all from MENA countries, try to find their new home in Europe, especially in Germany. Many Germans do not support Merkel's refugee policy, however, exactly *Erinnerungspolitik* and a number of other related factors pushed her to implement migration policies that might unseat her in the next elections. Newcomers from Afghanistan, Syria, Eritrea and other failed and weak states risk their lives and overcome enormous obstacles to reach the "paradise" of Germany. In terms of soft and smart power, this is an evident success for the modern Germany. However, the current obstacle is the integration of new future citizens, but this is a separate topic not covered in this article.

As the EU's largest economy and the world's No. 3 exporter, Germany plays an enormous role as the EU's locomotive (together with France and Great Britain), expected to come to the rescue of Greece, Cyprus, Spain and other economically weaker states in the Eurozone. Strengthening economically and politically since the post-war times, Germany feels responsibility for solving local and sometimes global problems and conflicts (think also of Germany's current chairmanship of the OSCE, where it tries to solve the Ukrainian crisis quite actively). Many countries support Germany in this regard, trusting in its role. For realizing smart power, Germany initiates many activities using the tools of the EU, Council of Europe, NATO, G7, and G20, as well as with BRICS and the UNO. Notably

that G20 format was initiated by Germany in 1999 as a forum of financial ministers and heads of emission banks to discuss the Asian financial crisis of the 1990s. This format is viewed in Germany as a real success.

Development of soft and smart power in the modern Russia

In recent years, Russian academics and politicians realized the importance of soft and smart power (s. for examples articles and books of T. Shakleina, S. Kortunov, K. Kosachev, V. Nikonov, and others), especially in a globalized world. Best practices and international expertise have been studied for that purpose. Institutionally, Russia does not have political foundations like Germany with its solid parliamentary tradition. Rather Russian think tanks and government-run initiatives – like in the USA - became tools to realize soft power. The US is currently the world champion in terms of soft power, so its best practice (global NGO, think tanks, education and scholarship programmes) is used by many countries worldwide, and Russia is not an exception. For example, Commission for international cooperation and public diplomacy at the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation created in 2008, is the Russian analog of the CSIS-run US-American Commission on Smart Power in Washington D.C. Russian International Affairs Council was created by taking the US-American Council of Foreign Relations (CFR) as example. Russkij Mir Foundation has a number of similarities with British Council as well as Goethe Institute.

At the same time, there is still a lack in the Russia-run global educational and scholarship programmes. However, previous success in this area is still relevant for the modern Russia: many representatives of current elites in Latin America and Africa, as well as in the CIS-states, were graduated from the Soviet universities. They are still well connected with Russian elites in politics and economy importing, for example, Russian arms, oil, and gas. This part of the Soviet smart power is being used by the modern Russia with success. However, Russia needs new tools, which seem to be still problematical because of rather painful educational system reform that takes place now.

It is quite early to show first real success of the modern Russian soft and smart power, especially in the information field. Russian state-run initiatives are viewed in the West rather skeptically, called a “Kremlin-hand”, like the TV Channel Russia Today which does not enjoy enough trust beyond Russia.

In this regard, it would be useful to increase a number of common projects abroad, together with local partner institutions, like for example German political foundations do. Among all mentioned organizations, Russian International Affairs Council seems to have the largest trust and respect because of many common projects in Russia and beyond, for example on the nuclear security, euroatlantic cooperation, and others. A big role plays also a personality of the Head of the institution, Igor Ivanov, a former Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Secretary of the Security Council.

Conclusion

Soft and smart power politics in the modern Germany and Russia are of different nature. In this regard, it is interesting to put them together. While Germany focuses on its educational & scholarship programmes, as well as on activities of political foundations and exports, Russia often

uses success of its predecessor, Soviet Union, cooperating with elites from the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, who were educated in the USSR and are still loyal to Russia in the military and energy projects. Taking into account different historical frames and developments of Russia and Germany, it is rather not practical to compare each other in the global meaning. However, more than 1000 years of bilateral relations that jumped through hoops including the darkest moments, is the best teacher for politicians and societies of both countries to promote partnership for peace.

Rating: 11

Tags:# Russia,#SoftPower,# SmartPower, # Germany