

Soft power strategy in German foreign policy

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The defeat in the World War II put Germany in such a situation that the country had to select its foreign policy strategies very carefully. This situation is still actual for the country. Until now, any political idea, even an indirect one alluding to German desire establishing her hegemony, could pose a risk of deteriorating her relations with her partners in the EU and with other neighbouring countries. In these circumstances, Germany has chosen for the promotion of her national interests the use of the instruments of the so-called “soft power” – i.e. the ability to encourage others to do what you want, rather than the manipulation of material needs,¹ although neither the official statements of the Foreign Minister, the Chancellor, the President, nor any official documents about the foreign policy of Germany, contain anything about “soft power” as a tool of her diplomacy.² However, there is an evidence that not only German foreign policy, but also her domestic political strategy is relying on the tools of a specific understanding of the concept of German “soft power”.

According to Joseph S. Nye, “soft power” is mainly based on three components: culture, political values and foreign policy with respect to international law and exercising moral authority. All of these resources Germany had begun using much earlier than the concept of “soft power” had been established. When direct using culture in the implementation of his foreign policy goals, Chancellor Willy Brandt was calling culture a “third pillar” of his foreign policy. Hence, Goethe Institute, originally founded as a pedagogical institute for learning German

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language, got in 1960 all state-funded federal cultural institutions abroad at its disposal, and since then the Institute has been transformed into a key organization promoting German culture and language abroad.

The system of political values Germany was formulating during her post-war reconstruction could not be called “German” in the literal sense of the word. When after World War II West Germany joined the Western Bloc, German political values were again recognized as values of Western democracy and later incorporated into the founding documents of the EU. Hence, Germany could become a member of the European family. On the basis of the recognition that both Germany and the rest of Europe have common political values like democracy, human rights, freedom of expression, a market economy, the rule of law, tolerance, social justice, the secular nature of government, the right of nations to self-determination, it became possible for Germany to take part as an equal partner in the European integration processes. In the beginning, when participating in the integration process and adopting common European values, Germany had to calm her neighbours about possible revanchism and her strategy of reviving her ruined economy. But after German reunification and further economic growth common

European values became not only an integral part of the country’s foreign policy, but they also began playing an outstanding role for maintaining, strengthening and disseminating German culture in other regions.

Hence, German foreign policy was proclaimed as being a peaceful policy; one of its main tasks is maintaining peace and stability; it did have good prospects after the Second World War because the German defence industry had been liquidated while Germany’s legal system forbade the use of military coercion.

Until 1990 soft power policy was serving to re-establish Germany’s position in the international arena by making German unification possible under the aegis of FRG. After the GDR had joined the FRG, Germany’s foreign policy objectives could grow.

Hence, after unification Germany could become a powerful and economically prosperous country aspiring at a leading role in at least the European region. But this leading role could not be reached by economic and financial successes alone. Until now and despite the fact that for a long period the war has been left behind and Germany has fully paid for her crimes, the latter echoes are still seriously affecting Germany’s image. In January 2015, Greece, then at the brink of a financial crisis, put pressure on Germany when discussing the issue of postponing servicing Greek loans, by announcing her intention to present a bill for still unpaid German reparation payments after the Second World War.



Germany's changing international legal status has also made an end to the discussion of the country's historical responsibility to the world. Neither the payments to Israel, nor the constant infusion of money to Eastern Europe could help changing the content of the second paragraph of Article 53 of the UN Charter about German status of an "enemy" and her responsibility to the other countries for acts committed during the Second World War. Obtaining a permanent seat in the Security Council would create the possibility of amending the Charter in that sense, of getting more manoeuvrability in world politics and acquiring the status of a world power.

Considering the moral and political significance of such suits and other demarches referring to Germany's bad historic past, the Foreign Ministry's first task was strengthening the activities creating an attractive image of the country. By promoting German culture, language and successful democratic development at home and abroad Germany could meanwhile justify her ambition of taking more responsibilities in the promotion processes of peace and security in the world and in the European integration process.

The first policy aim was initially set by foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel in the early 1990s. During the administration of chancellor Gerhard Schröder

maximal efforts were made in order to reform the Security Council. Gerhard Schröder was never tired of repeating that the composition of the Security Council "must be more representative to reflect the reality of the 21st century. Germany is therefore strongly advocating reform and expansion of the Security Council".³ Germany increased her participation in all spheres of UN activities and stayed all the time one of the main financial contributors (in the year 2010 she gained the second place after the USA with 170 million dollars).⁴ Germany expressed the willingness to take part in the maintenance of international security under the responsibility of the UN Security Council, which meant participating in peacekeeping operations. As the Constitution of the country prohibits the use of armed forces on foreign territory, in July 1994 the Federal Constitutional Court made a statement that participation of Germany in the international system of collective security of the United Nations does not contradict her laws and allows the use of the Bundeswehr outside the operational area of NATO. In a short period of time Germany took, hence, part in 6 of the 18 UN missions on three continents. At present about 5,000 German soldiers are operating in peacekeeping missions of the UN worldwide.⁵ The country became an active initiator of UN special programmes addressing the whole range of global issues: the implementation of

educational programmes for refugees, projects for the equitable distribution of water resources, programmes for quick response to emergencies.

The German contribution to the development of the international community was greatly appreciated, which was proved by the fact that under the decision of the UN General Assembly Germany had already become four times a non-permanent member of the Council. However, neither being an exemplary citizen of the world community, nor personal contributions to the development of the United Nations could be invoked as a good reason for acquiring the status of a permanent member of the Security Council. One of the main causes was the reaction of a group of countries denying Germany to get more tools of influence within this multilateral framework. In particular, strong opposition to Germany had been demonstrated by the states organized in the group "Unity in harmony" represented by Italy, China, Argentina, Canada, Mexico, Pakistan and South Korea, and arguing that the admission of Germany in the Security Council could undermine the existing international order.⁶ Some countries of the EU also opposed German membership, explaining that German policy is contradicting the efforts of creating a common European foreign and security policy.

Disappointed in the possibility to reform the UN Security Council in a short period of time, the discrediting of the body by the great powers, especially by the USA which implemented the intervention in Iraq by bypassing the UN Security Council, has led to the fact that the political leadership of Germany is more interested now in a further undermining of the UN, which then may lead to the situation that the United Nations Charter will no longer have such a high moral and legal force it possesses now.

Anyway, the financial contribution to the UN budget and constant humanitarian activities in the poorest and suffering regions of the planet helped reaching the second task of the soft power

strategy of German foreign policy, namely improving Germany's foreign image. Of course money and donations are seen as belonging to the hard power tools but, as the founder of the concept Nye argues, soft power rests on the "attraction to shared values and the justness and duty of contributing to the achievement of those values".⁷ In this regard German moneys are mostly seen as exactly the readiness to contribute and as a moral quality of Germany's generosity.

For the biggest part German foreign image is built upon the country's numerous organizations, political foundations, and societies. In the sphere of culture as one of the three main resources the activity of the Goethe Institute is well known. This organization devoted herself to spreading the German language abroad. This served to reinforce the impression that the German language would not be perceived "as a black-and-white chronicle of the Second World War, but as a language of high literature, poetry, theatre and modern cinema".

Culture plays a key role in shaping the attractiveness of a state, and the readiness to follow one's example, favouring this or that policy, because culture is not only national wealth but is also translating universal values, principles and norms. According to Nye, values attractive to others, form a sense of obligation to follow them, which increases the likelihood of desired behaviour of an object of cultural influence. With its numerous branches around the world Goethe Institute carries out various activities in order to promote German culture, taking into account national specificities of countries. In developing countries the activities of the Institute are characterized by the context of society modernization and restoration of public infrastructure. For example, the projects of the Institute in developing African countries received the name "Culture and Development". The substance of such projects consists in assistance to the restoration of cultural infrastructures in these countries, conducting master classes and training for people working in the cultural

sphere. Goethe Institute is strongly supported by the German government which is annually increasing its financing. This year (2015), the Bundestag decided to strengthen state support, adding another 16.6 million euros to the Institute's budget.

In 2009, Angela Merkel became the first chancellor ever visiting the headquarters of the Institute in Munich, giving by this gesture credit for the Institute's contribution to the development of intercultural communication of peoples. She made a number of statements, which testified that the foreign cultural policy has a much greater meaning than just a desire to expand intercultural dialogue. According to her, "through culture Germany can promote in the world her values, the ideas about democracy, civil society and human rights".⁸

In a sphere of expanding democracy, analysing protection of human rights by the German political foundations can be interesting. There are large numbers of studies confirming that they serve as a tool of German foreign policy. Six of the most prominent political foundations: Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Friedrich Naumann Foundation, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Hans Seidel Foundation, Heinrich Böll Foundation, and Rosa Luxemburg Foundation have the status of non-governmental organizations, but, at the same time, they are related to the different political parties and doing an invaluable service to the state. Because of their legal status they are not subjected to the general requirement of governmental agencies not to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. Hence, they can work with civil groupings with which official contacts are undesirable. An obvious example is given by the situation in Ukraine. Despite the fact that Berlin has positioned itself at the official level as a mediator in the dialogue between Russia and Ukraine, Germany's position was not neutral as required for a mediator. Berlin provided substantial financial and political assistance to the forces preferring an integration into the EU. In particular, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation participated in

the revolutionary events in Ukraine, sponsoring the activities of the party "Udar" and its leader Vitali Klitschko, and giving him a special award "for his commitment to peace and democracy in Ukraine".⁹

The foundations are also engaged in political agenda setting by publishing their expert comments on Germany's foreign policy or on foreign-policy making by other countries, where they have offices and staffs. It is widely known that whoever is working on a particular scientific concept has a kind of monopoly on its interpretation. Foundations widely use their potentials about announcing the new role of Germany in the world and about shortcomings in the development of civil society in other countries. As one of the striking examples serves the report of the German Marshall Fund and the German Institute for International and Security Affairs "New power, new responsibility: the elements of German foreign and security policy in a changing world", which justifies German right to determine the paths of world development in the twenty-first century.

Apart from the political foundations, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) provides grants and scholarships for young people seeking for opportunities to study in Germany. According to the concept of Nye, education is becoming an increasingly important resource for the country's soft power, as foreign students "vacuum up political ideas along with the scientific secrets. Because exchanges affect elites, one or two key contacts may have a major political effect".¹⁰ Germany makes a serious contribution to soft power education of the young political elite. Every year, the DAAD provides about 60,000 scholarships in the hope that by spending a bit of time in Germany young people will be inspired by German culture, will become conductors of German ideas and political culture in the country of their origin, and perhaps will take a leading political position.

In addition to these organizations there is a large number of scientific societies



Max Planck Society

which also give grants, but the targeted group is different. German societies are interested in supporting young scientists abroad who have already gotten high education and who are busy with work in scientific projects interesting German industry. Such organizations as the German House of Science and Innovation, German research society Fraunhofer Society, the Max Planck Society, declare as their goals of activity the establishment of contacts between foreign and German scientists, scientific and technical cooperation. In practice, this search for the best scientific “minds” are also providing infrastructures for research projects. Max Planck Society, especially interested in new, innovative directions of research having not found a place even at the universities in Germany, is providing a wide range of expensive scientific equipments and instruments, from telescopes and powerful machines to special libraries and scientific documentation. Fraunhofer Society focused more on applied research, offers carrying out research work, with full financial support from Germany.

All of them have representative offices abroad, carry out active propagandistic events, involving the well-known portal of *Deutsche Welle*, citing examples of the success of their research centres, explaining how to apply for a grant. In their turn, foreign scientists find working with them as prestigious and as

advantageous because they give them an opportunity for acquiring scientific growth, are implementing advanced research in fundamental science for which their native countries are often lacking budgetary resources. For example, in the Max Planck Society is working a large Russian-speaking diaspora engaged in projects in the field of physical chemistry, molecular biophysics and nanotechnology.

Usually, after researchers get a grant for scientific research in Germany, they do not return back home. Since 1992, about 3 million scientists have left Russia and contributing to Germany’s scientific and technological prosperity. The possibility of getting grants from the scientific societies contributed to the fact that most of these three million people have chosen to stay in Germany. Thus, scientific societies are not only attracting but also recruiting highly qualified personnel for the German economy in sectors the German economy is permanently experiencing an acute shortage.

All organizations engaged in German cultural and political promotion, Goethe Institute, DAAD, and scientific societies have in most cases the status of non-governmental organizations; but the fact that the main sources of income are coming from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or other governmental structures makes that they are rather

quasi-public service institutions. They work in close cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, the Ministry of Education. Hence, in fact, they are a making a part of the state apparatus. They produce annual reports and write reports on the political and economic situation in a host of countries for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; there is a regular exchange of views and information with them and their representatives are involved in inter-MFA talks.

The status of non-governmental organization is important in order to avoid the impression that Germany imposes its will on somebody. As Nye correctly noticed, the main mistake of using the concept by Russia and China is that they believe that “the state is the main instrument of “soft power”.¹¹ Soft power grows from individuals, the private sector and from civil society. German NGOs operate in such a way as if they are representing civil society’s interests. In addition to this factor, the impression of having a civil character of their activities is giving them a greater freedom of action. It does not matter for them how a specific goal will be attained as long as it will be achieved by not violating generally accepted rules.

Not only within the organizations but also through marketing companies, a country’s soft power is operating. In 2004, German President Horst Köhler formulated for the first time the idea that Germany is a country of ideas. Germany would show everybody that the country’s inherent qualities are ingenuity and creativity and that due to them the country was enabled to give the world a lot. Hence, the marketing campaign “Germany-Land of Ideas” could start. It got the support of more than 20 major German companies and its whole audience amounted to 3,5 billion people.¹² Central was the idea to show everything making Germany rich and everything Germany had given to the world. German achievements in science and culture, well-known German poets and thinkers, innovative

products were united under a single slogan “Made in Germany”.

The marketing company was timed with a major international event, the World Cup 2006, which had to expand the audience of the event. In addition, the idea of hosting the World Cup 2006 was an attempt to framework soft influence, in order to manage, on the one hand, mutual distrust among Europeans and to unite their common interests, and, on the other hand, to show that Germany is country number one for exemplary citizens’ behaviour and its ability to maintain law-and-order.

The championship was held in July 2006 in twelve major German cities under the slogan “A time to make friends”. In a video message devoted to the hosting of the World Cup 2006 Chancellor Angela Merkel stressed that the event was necessary to the country in order to reassure her guests that “multi-faceted Germany” is “open to the world, modern and full of life”. Along with its championship, the marketing company developed five projects designed to attract public attention to the cultural and innovative achievements, improve the investment image of the Federal Republic of Germany and increase competitiveness in the global market. One of them called the “100 greatest minds of the future”, was an exhibition dedicated to the most outstanding citizens of Germany who have achieved significant results in science, culture, art and others.

The largest marketing company also aimed influencing domestic consumers and German citizens. The particularity of German soft power strategy consists in the fact that not only the German image abroad, but at home is of great importance for the German political elites. It is important making people believe in themselves, hence that they are worthy of the highest position in the world. The marketing company managed to achieve that the majority of Germans is perceiving their country is a progressive, cosmopolitan, ingenuity and innovative entity. The World Cup in Germany gave, however, also the impression that there can be two

winners at the same time; i.e. a county with best football players and a country of hosting. The polls among the citizens have shown that the event was quite successful: after the event a majority of the Germans perceived their country as a progressive, cosmopolitan and innovative entity. The World Cup 2006 in Germany was also named as one of the safest in the championship history.

Despite significant advances in improving its image the German government still has a clear understanding that soft power has its limits. It is impossible to achieve strengthening its position in the world without using hard resources. That is why Joseph Nye later modified his concept of soft power into smart power, which combines both of the sorts. German leading role in the process of European integration in recent years was determined more by hard power resources, namely financial and economic power. New challenges and threats: terrorism, drug trafficking, internal conflicts in other countries often require an immediate response, and soft power is aimed more at the long-term outcome. Realizing this, Germany seeks to achieve a strategic partnership with some of the newcomers within the EU to secure their support in her readiness to widen the sphere of use of the German army, and other questions of German foreign policy. Currently, Angela Merkel determining her foreign policy directions stakes to appease her long-time critics (such as Poland), through active involvement in her foreign campaigns and strengthening the alliance with the United States. For example, Poland is involved in the project “Eastern Partnership”, where it can spray her criticism of Russia. For reason of strengthening relations with the USA, the German government refused to take measures to bring the United States to account for the spy phone tapping scandal when German politicians and ordinary citizens were tapped by the US secret services, sacrificing thus its own image. For the same reason, Angela Merkel is willing to sacrifice the economic interests of the country, agreeing to create a *Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership*.

In respect of her citizens, who understandably have strong pacifist views, Germany is currently working on the concept of taking more responsibilities, an item about which is widely spoken in order to convince German citizens to contribute to peace and security by military forces as well. That’s why the German army must be reorganized to become more professional and more effective. In addition, the government creates a precedent breaking the existing legal restrictions on the use of military forces by Germany. More than a year ago, the Ministry of Defence has broken one of the taboos – no arms supplies to the sides of armed conflicts – and made a decision to send weapons to Kurds in Iraq.¹³ The tools of soft influence helped to achieve the goal of improving the country’s image abroad, but its use has also limits: in some cases one cannot rely on attractiveness in order to convince. Hence, Germany has started building up resources of hard power as well.

Notes:

¹ Joseph S. Nye. *Soft Power. The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: Public Affairs, 2004. p. 5.

² With the exception of the Minister of Finance Wolfgang Schäuble, who in many interviews is repeatedly emphasizing the importance of soft power tools in conflict prevention. For example: Neuer “Wettbewerbder Systeme”<http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Interview/2014/12/2014-12-28-schaeuble-fas.html>

³ Gerhard Schröder. Russia and Germany: The Core Tenet of Cooperation//Russia in global affairs 09.11.04 http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_3875

⁴ Marjorie Ann Browne, Luisa Blanchfield. United Nations Regular Budget Contributions: Members Compared, 1990-2010// Congressional Research Service. January 15, 2013 <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/204090.pdf>

⁵ Deutschland in der Vereinten Nationen <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/Aussenpolitik/Friedenspolitik/>

VereinteNationen/2_DEU_in_VN/DEU_in_VN_node.html (accessed at 22.10.15)

⁶ Egorov, A. (2014). Pritjazanija objedinennoj Germanii na mesto postojannogo chlena Soveta Bezopasnosti OON (1990-e – 2005 gg.) [German claims about the permanent seat in the Security Council of the UNO (1990-2005)]// Nauchnye vedomosti Belgorodskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta. № 1(96), pp.77-83.

⁷ Deutschland in der Vereinten Nationen http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/Aussenpolitik/Friedenspolitik/VereinteNationen/2_DEU_in_VN/DEU_in_VN_node.html (accessed at 22.10.15)

⁸ Rede von Bundeskanzlerin Dr. Angela Merkel beim Besuch der Zentrale des Goethe-Instituts am 8 September 2008 in München // Auswärtiges Amt, Bulletin Nr. 88#1 vom 10.09.2008.

⁹ Mit deutschen Steuergeldern: Adenauer-Stiftung mischt in der Ukraine kräftig mit. <http://deutsche-wirtschaftsnachrichten.de/2015/05/03>

¹⁰ Joseph S. Nye, Soft Power and Higher Education. EDUCAUSE non-profit organisation. <http://net.edu/ir/library/pdf/FFP0502S.pdf>

¹¹ Joseph Nye, What China and Russia don't get about soft power. *Foreign Policy*, 2013, 29 April. // <http://www.foreignpolicy.com>.

¹² Review by the Federal Government on the 2006 FIFA World Cup. [Http://www.bund.de/cae/servlet/contentblob/150624/publicationFile/15402/Abchlussbericht_WM2006_en.pdf](http://www.bund.de/cae/servlet/contentblob/150624/publicationFile/15402/Abchlussbericht_WM2006_en.pdf)

¹³ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29012159>