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Popular Culture and High Culture as resources of Soft Power strategies in modern China, South Korea and Russian Federation

Topic and Research Question

The research focuses on culture as a resource of the soft power strategy in China, South Korea and the Russian Federation. It demonstrates how culture can be transmitted through the cultural diplomacy channels with an aim to create an appealing image of the state among the foreign public.

Positive perception of ideas and ideology linked to the cultural attractiveness and ideas fascinate people from abroad, make them want to visit the state and to learn the language of the appealing country. Besides, the governments might get transformed by the outside ideas received from a wielder (Vyaz 2011, 44-45). Thus, culture is a crucial resource of soft power. Developing of the cultural soft power strategy is important as it helps to "build the bridges" between the people of different countries. The MA Thesis aims at answering the following research questions:

How is popular culture and/or high culture transmitted through cultural diplomacy channels such as Cultural Institutions/ Foundations as well as by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and/or the Ministries of Culture in the state's cultural soft power strategy of the People's Republic of China, South Korea and the Russian Federation with the initial aim to create an appealing image of the state among the foreign public?

How can certain receivers among the foreign public benefit from these initiatives?

State of the Art

The term "soft power" was introduced by Joseph Nye in 1990 (Nye 2004, 11). The concept of "soft power" raises both support and critics in academia. The "soft power" approach has been criticised by some scholars (i.e., Ferguson (2009), Fan (2008). Fan (2008) believes that soft power is "uncontrollable and unpredictable". Research on China's soft power started to expand in the mid-2000s. According to Li (2009), "it's his (Nye's) approach that has guided existing analysis of soft power, including China's" (Li 2009, 3).

As for the research on Russia's soft power, the soft power-related subjects in Russia's academic literature are topical; at the same time, they are still developing (Kiseleva 2015). Concerning the case of South Korean cultural soft power, the most popular topics among the scholars are related to K-Wave and K-Pop (i.e., Kim 2014, Leung 2012).

To narrow the concept of soft power to the governmental initiative, the "soft power strategy" concept developed by Artem Patalakh (2016) was applied.

Methodology and Approach

The research is based on Joseph Nye's "soft power" approach and the "soft power strategy" approach by Patalakh (2016). In order for the state A to influence "hearts and minds" of the people in the state B, a well-planned active strategy needs to be introduced. The "soft power strategy" approach developed by Artem Patalakh (2016) aims to demonstrate "a coherent and purposeful set of actions aimed to improve a country's image abroad" (Patalakh 2016, 89). The implementation of the soft power strategy involves two and more sides: the "recipient" (Lee 2009, 211-212) or the "receiver" (D'Hooghe 2010, 2) and the "applicant" (Lee 2009, 211-212) or the "sender" (D'Hooghe 2010, 2). Cultural diplomacy is the instrument of soft power strategy and various cultural institutions, and foundations are cultural diplomacy agents. According to Ang. et al., cultural diplomacy is "essentially interest -driven governmental practice" (Ang. et al. 2015, 365). To answer the research question and further demonstrate how certain receivers can benefit from the state-led cultural soft power initiatives, the following analytical criteria has been developed in relation to the cases of China, South Korea and the Russian Federation: **1. Culture as a resource of soft power** (1.1. An overview of the state's most significant/ famous pieces of high culture and/or popular culture; 1.2. Measurement of the resources (Soft Power 30 Index); **2. Cultural soft power strategy of the chosen states** (2.1. The role of soft power in the state's foreign policy; 2.2 Cultural soft power strategy); **3. Cultural Diplomacy mechanisms as the soft power strategy** (3.1. Identification of the cultural institutions/ foundations of the chosen states (incl. their aims and goals); 3.2 Specific initiatives of the cultural institutions in high culture (incl. language) and popular culture).

Based on the state of the art, the resources of culture employed by the cultural institutions and foundations in their state-led cultural soft power strategy are initially the following:

Language: courses, tests, certificates/ *High culture:* art exhibitions, lectures, cinema evenings, literature clubs, theater (ballet, opera, classical music)/ *Mixed sources:* Online streaming of various events; *Education/High culture:* distribution of grants/ scholarships among the public; *Popular culture:* popular music, popular dramas, concerts, games, cosplays, etc.

Main Facts

Soft Power is not abstract and can be measured. According to the overall ranking of the Soft Power 30 Index, in 2019 China was in 27th place; South Korea was in 19th place and Russia was in 30th place. Culture plays an important role in the soft power strategy of all the three states. China's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) highlights various aspects related to China's cultural soft power. In case of South Korea, the "Diplomatic White Paper" (2021) demonstrates the initiatives aimed at promotion of South Korean culture. According to Russia's "Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation" (2016), the instruments of soft power are becoming crucial in the state's foreign policy,

The Global Strategy of the Tenth Five-Year Plan included the promotion of the Chinese language and culture through the Confucius Institutes (Lee 2018, 3-4). Currently, the Institution is coordinated by the CIEF (Chinese International Education Foundation). In addition, the state-led China Scholarship Council allocates the academic scholarships for the students of different educational levels. In case of South Korea, the Foreign Ministry coordinates specialised public diplomacy agencies (Korea Foundation, Academies of Korea Studies, Korean Cultural centres) (Park 2017). They aim at popularisation and promotion of Korean language and culture. The Government also provides academic grants and scholarships aimed at students who want to study in South Korea.

In addition, such institutions as the "King Sejong Institute Foundation" and the "Literature Translation Institute of Korea" develop various programmes in the field of Korean language and culture. Russia also promotes its language and culture via the institutes of culture. Among them is the "Russkiy Mir" Foundation coordinated by the Government. The initial focus of the Foundation is the promotion, popularisation and support of the Russian language. The leading Russia's cultural diplomacy institution is Rossotrudnichestvo. It is involved in the promotion of culture and education. Besides, the Government of the Russian Federation offers academic scholarships to the certain groups of the foreign applicants.

Results

The governments of all the three states develop and fund number of cultural institutions and foundations that

actively involve the foreign public. The actor who can benefit from the initiatives are: 1) those non-professionals

who are interested in different and specific aspects of China's, South Korean or Russian culture and language; 2) the artists, art professionals, dancers, musicians, writers, linguists, translators, scholars and students who would be interested in attending courses/ workshops/ events/ projects related to the field of their expertise which might or might not be directly related to China, South Korea or Russia. Besides, the "brand" of a cultural center guarantees that the courses/events are reliable. The promotion of educational activities and scholarships are beneficial for the prospective students from across the Globe. As follows from the empirical findings, China, South Korea and Russia via various educational councils invest in attraction of overseas students by providing not only financial support, but also through well-developed web-platforms which enable prospective students to go through the admission process online. Based on the empirical findings, it can also be concluded that the quality of the projects/ events/courses/ scholarships are on a high level in all the three countries. The cultural institutions and foundations in all the three states follow the recent technological trends.

References

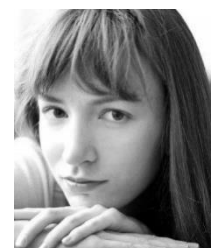
All references can be found in the full version of the MA Thesis at: <http://othes.univie.ac.at>

About the Author

Adel is from the Republic of Bashkortostan (Russia). She holds a degree in "Erasmus Mundus-Global Studies" programme and a degree in "Cultural studies" at HSE University (Moscow). Adele was a participant and a winner of various competitions in Irish and Scottish Highland dances in the UK and Mainland Europe. The author's research interests are connected to cultural and dance diplomacy, dance as an instrument of intercultural dialogue. The author's BA degree is in Roman and Civil Law (Plekhanov Russian University of Economics).

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