

Soft power geopolitics: how does the diminishing utility of military power affect the Russia – West confrontation over the “Common Neighbourhood”

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Abstract

This paper is based on the fact that a number of factors, but particularly the restricting utility of military force between great powers, increase the significance of soft power as a tool both for legitimization and expansion in international relations in general, and in the West – Russia confrontation over the “common (or shared) neighbourhood” in particular. It explores how this fact affects the policies of the Western powers and Russia within the frame of the confrontation they are in. The paper narrows down its analytical focus on the efforts of the Kremlin to affect the public opinion in its neighbourhood and to counter Western soft power. It is argued that the Ukraine crisis has affected Russia’s perception of soft power, re-constructed its counter-revolutionary agenda, and increased the profile of propaganda in its foreign policy. The paper concludes that the soft power competition between Russia and West and the policies of the two powers to win over the hearts and minds of people in the shared neighbourhood re-define the character of geopolitical games in the Former Soviet Union.

Keywords: European Union, Common Neighbourhood, Russia, soft power, United States

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