



Public Diplomacy and Soft Power in Polish Foreign Policy Making

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to draw attention to the problem of using public diplomacy and soft power as a tool in foreign policy making of Poland. As the Republic of Poland has made an effort to use these tools actively since the 1990s and became even more active after its accession to the European Union in 2004, it is important to answer the question of where the limits of the use of these tools are and what positive and negative effects they can bring. For Poland - the active country, together with strong will to change its international environment - public diplomacy and soft power are perceived as indispensable in fulfilling this ambition however they require a proper use, compatible with the potential they have. In this paper, we will try to analyze the potential, will and implications of public diplomacy, and soft power use in Polish foreign policy making with an analytical approach.

Keywords

Poland, Soft power, Foreign policy, Public diplomacy, the EU

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Introduction

In the globalizing world, the traditional understanding of diplomacy, which is based on state-to-state relations through using bureaucratic channels, changed with the involvement of non-state actors, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations to the process with their increasing role in the international system. Particularly, the end of the Cold War and in parallel with the change in the bipolar structure of the international system had a great impact on this phenomenon. Diplomacy as an effective tool in the foreign policy making process of the countries has also been affected by the change and transformation in the global politics. Frankly, it is understood that the countries can no longer continue to apply traditional diplomatic methods in their foreign policy making process in a changing environment. In this new environment, the countries have begun to apply new foreign policy tools and implement new policies to achieve their national interests. In this sense, the countries' decision to change in the management of their foreign policy and diplomacy by giving importance to civil society and public opinion in their policy making process has paved the way to increase the importance of public diplomacy which is considered as a means of promoting the soft power of a country.

The concept of power that can be mainly categorized as hard power and soft power is an effective tool for countries to achieve the desired outcomes in the international system. Before describing the soft power in foreign policy, it is crucial to emphasize the distinction between hard power and soft power. Even though both are related with achieving the desired outcomes in the international arena, the methods of the two concepts are quite different from each other. Hard power is based on using threat or coercion by applying military or economic sources of a particular country to change the behaviors of others while soft power is all about attracting the others by using attractiveness of a particular country. The concept of soft power was initially used by Joseph Nye (see; Nye, 1990; Nye, 2004; Nye, 2008). He defines soft power as "the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion or payment. A country's soft power rests on its resources of culture, values and policies" (Nye, 2019, p.7). In this sense, all the values that are part of the countries' culture including history, sports, literature, music, art, technology, and science alongside with its political values and policies play an important role in increasing the attraction potential of a particular country. Thus, the whole process will eventually lead to achieve desired goals or interests of the countries in the international system by means of building common values among nations.

Neither soft power nor the public diplomacy terms and phenomena are new in the foreign policy making; however, they have recently become an important tool in that process. Public diplomacy can be roughly defined as a communication process through which the countries introduce their national goals, policies, values, and cultures to people of the other countries in order to support their policy goals. It can be claimed that the process of persuading the officials and policy makers through bureaucratic channels has turned into the process of informing and persuading the public of other countries to achieve the policy goals of the country in the international system.

Public diplomacy as a diplomatic strategy and a foreign policy tool is used by the states with the aim of serving the interests of the countries. (For further information and detailed

analysis about public diplomacy, see; Bjola, 2019; Cull, 2009; Snow, 2009; Melissen, 2005; Snow, 2009; Pamment, 2013). Although public diplomacy was widely used for the purpose of propaganda during the Cold War period, gaining importance of civil society and public opinion, based understandings in the international system, the collapse of the Soviet model and the spread of democracy have played an important role in the more active use of public diplomacy which is based on symmetrical communication and mutual understanding in this new environment. It is obvious that public diplomacy and its practices have become much more visible in the foreign policy making process of the countries in 21st century.

Undoubtedly, we can observe the reflections of all these developments in foreign policy of Poland which emerged as a new and independent state in the international system in the last decade of the 20th century. It is interesting to observe how the Republic of Poland creates its soft power and tries to use a public diplomacy as that country has been experiencing democratic processes since the beginning of the nineties of the previous century. Thus, it cannot and shouldn't be compared with the well-established western democracies. These countries in general have different historical experiences, tradition, and resources which are generally far bigger than those of Poland. On the other hand, it doesn't mean that Polish political elites and foreign policy makers do not pay attention to the soft power and public diplomacy.

This paper is to deliver basic data and information about Polish soft power and public diplomacy. With a view to do so, first, the country's potential and soft power components will be analyzed. While arguing that culture is basically one of the most important variables in the composition of Polish soft power, institutional limitations of cultural diplomacy will also be underlined. This study also argues that currently public diplomacy in Poland is functioning simultaneously with populist international agenda of Polish government and its harsh political rhetoric towards country's neighbors and international partners. It is highly doubtful if the country will be able to create and sustain its positive image abroad with public/cultural diplomacy as an effective tool. Qualitative content analysis is the main research technique applied in this paper. Official documents, reports, indexes, selected monographs, and scientific papers are the main sources for this publication.

Analyzing Soft Power Use in Polish Foreign Policy

After the end of the Cold War, Poland, a new and independent state in the international system, tried to use soft power as a tool in its foreign policy as effective as possible. We believe that analyzing the effectiveness of the soft power that Poland has been using is significant for Polish foreign policy studies. However, it is not easy to develop an approach to measure the use of soft power in foreign policy and suggest the measurement parameters. In this regard, there are several instruments and rankings responsible for soft power measurement. Usually, they refer to the condition of a particular state in various dimensions and analyze different variables. The Soft Power 30 index is one of them (The Soft Power 30, 2019). Its framework is based on objective data (in 65%, referring to government, digital, culture, enterprise, engagement, and education) and pooling data (in 35% with the reference to conditions and attractiveness of living in particular country

including even questions about issues ,such as cuisine, friendliness, and luxury goods among many) (The Soft Power 30, A Global Ranking of Soft Power, 2019: p. 11). The overall position of Poland in that ranking has been rather stable in recent years – in 2017 and 2018 Poland took 24th position, and in 2019 it moved to the 23th. Among country's neighbors, in 2019 ranking only Germany, Czech Republic, and Russian Federation are included in the ranking with 3th, 24th and 30th position, respectively. In the overview section, authors underline rather the stable position of Poland and the ongoing development of its primary soft power assets like culture and education. They also perceive investments in ambitious digital infrastructure and technologies as one of the biggest strengths of Poland in following years, however, they also underline a possible impact of international perceptions of government decisions viewed as populist and illiberal on country's stance in next rankings (The Soft Power 30, Poland, 2019).

For more detailed analysis of Polish soft power, the Elcano Global Presence Index is quite a useful tool. This index done by the Spanish Elcano Royal Institute is a synthetic index that orders, quantifies, and aggregates the external projection of different countries. Global presence is divided into three dimensions: economy, defense, and soft presence (Elcano Global Presence Index, 2021). The last category should be attributed to the soft power, and it contains variables such as migrations, tourism, sports, culture, information, technology, science, education, and cooperation. Moreover, the Elcano Royal Institute provides us also with Elcano European Presence Index which measures the intra-European presence of the EU member states (including UK for 2020 data) and uses the same variables.

It is interesting to observe Poland's position in these two indices which have seemed to be rather stable in the recent years; in terms of global presence, Poland took the 28th position in 2020 and 2019, and 30th in 2016, 2017 and 2018. This stance has been a general feature of country's global presence basically since 2005 when it occupied 31th place. Also, the overall progress since 1990 has been clearly observable: in 1990 it was 43th position, 34th in 1995, and 35th in 2000 (all data based on: Elcano, Country File Poland, 2021).

The European presence index of Poland also reveals both country's stable stance and overall progress. In 2020 and 2019, Poland took 10th position among EU countries; it was also 9th in 2016, 2017 and 2018. Since Poland joined the European Union just in 2004, it is also interesting to observe the progress that country had made since it was first indexed in 2005 with 13th position and 12th in the period between 2010-2012.

While analyzing provided data, one can also indicate important shifts in the particular variables and its values in the index structure, both global and European one – the global military presence decreased from 24,9% in 1990 to only 6,7% in 2020, and at the same time global soft presence remained more or less constant with 30% in 1990 and 29,7% thirty years later. In the same period, the economic presence raised greatly from 45% to 63,7%. The European index proves that Poland's position among the EU member states remains rather constant with 69,3% of economic and 30,7% of soft presence in 2005 and 65,2% and 34,8% in 2020, respectively.

In the soft power context, the Elcano tool contributes to an answer about the Poland's soft power structure while it provides data about particular presence contribution

variables, as mentioned above. Here, one regularity is noticeable: in the recent years, the two dominating variables of Poland's soft presence have been culture and science, both globally and within the European Union. In 2019, the culture and science contributed to country's global soft presence with 9,4% and 5,4%, respectively; in 2020, these values were 9,4% and 5,7%. Within the European Union, the science and culture are also the most important variables; the former was 12,2% in 2019 and 13% in 2020, and the latter 8% and 7,8% for the mentioned period.

The mentioned Elcano data proves that Poland's global and European presence has been rather constant and stable in the recent years. It also shows that country's position has been shifting since 1990 and 2005. It is also interesting to observe how Poland's soft power is being made since the science and culture are the most important variables contributing largely to overall soft presence value. In this context, one should consider science and culture as the most important factors in the Polish soft power making and proper public diplomacy tools.

Public Diplomacy as a Tool of New Polish Foreign Policy

It is quite clear that Polish political elites and policy makers are aware of the meaning of public diplomacy in the foreign policy making process in the modern international relations. The term public diplomacy has been for a long time under the consideration of Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs which has also created several its own definitions of this term. According to an archival definition, the public diplomacy is a multidimensional, informational activity aimed at shaping favorable public opinion for the Republic of Poland, better understanding of our country and its contribution the Europe and world development, and strengthening of our international prestige, stimulation of contact and cooperation between international and Polish partners. It is also important to strength Poland's image as an important European country, promoting European eastern policy, important part of the NATO and the country of civilization success whose citizens appreciate freedom and are able to share it with the others. Poland is the county with growing value of developmental aid, supporting its diasporas, safe, with stable development perspectives as the EU and the NATO member which is a valuable political, economic, scientific, social and cultural partner (Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, archive, 2021). The newest official definition is even more focused on soft power and its role in modern politics. It characterizes public diplomacy as a set of strategic, coordination, and executive actions aimed at finding and providing understanding and support for Poland's *raison d'état* and foreign policy through shaping social attitude and public opinion abroad. Using of soft power tools in public diplomacy (like promotion of the Polish culture, history, science, Polish language, education, sport, tourism, and economy) enables (Polish government – K.B.&Ö.E.B.) to create Poland's positive image abroad and good international relations. The public diplomacy plays a crucial role (in this process – K.B.&Ö.E.B.), together with traditional diplomacy, and is oriented towards foreign institutions, organizations, and societies (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Poland, 2021).

The newest mentioned definition stipulates the role of the culture and its meaning for public diplomacy in general. In the modern world and especially for a country such as Poland, the culture becomes a basic resource and an export good of the state and

the society thus the history of the state and the nation, that can be easily and properly translated for foreign recipients, plays a priority role in this process (Nakonieczna, 2013, p.153). Traditionally, the cultural diplomacy referred to the high culture whereas currently, its scope is even broader and consists of elements of mass culture with a view to reach audience; it also consists other elements of culture and tradition (Surmacz, 2015, p.233).

With no doubts, Poland's cultural and historical potential is huge; however, it is largely attributed to a historical policy. Since everybody recognizes prominent figures such as Lech Wałęsa or Pope John Paul II and appreciates Poland's role in struggling against communism, the newest era also provides us with a spectacular triumph such as Nobel Prize for Polish writer, Olga Tokarczuk in 2018. The accessibility of Polish culture and science due to progressing digitalization is also a factor contributing to its success and overall recognizability. The state budget expenditures for culture in Poland are also systematically on the rise – in 2020, they raised for 14,1% in comparison to the previous year (from 2,380 billion PLN to 2,716 billion PLN) (GIS, Culture in 2020, 2021, p. 29).

Despite of high expenditures, overall good recognizability, and relatively important value of culture for Polish soft power making and public diplomacy, one can say that even cultural triumphs are not sufficient for the country's success and spectacular international presence. Two basic factors contribute to the weakness of Poland in this area.

According to the report of Polish Supreme Audit Office, in general, public budget financed institutions established with a view to promote Polish culture abroad (like Adam Mickiewicz Institute, Polish Film Institute, International Cultural Center, and Book Institute) do promote Polish culture in a positive manner; however, their activities have several malfunctions. They are institutionally and substantially diffused, incoherent, they do not coordinate their activities and do not control the effectiveness of their actions or do that in an appropriate, blurry way (Supreme Audit Office, *Promocja jest. Efekty nieznanne*, 2019).

Institutional weakness is also noticeable in the context of mentioned Adam Mickiewicz Institute which cannot be in any way compared to its prominent counterparts in the western countries like Goethe Institute or British Council with definitely less branches all around the world.

It is also important to say that recently Polish public diplomacy has remained under the strong influence of particular, interim political aims of the Law and Justice Party (pol. Prawo i Sprawiedliwość) government – the general picture of Poland is incoherent. On one hand, the state is declaring the usage of public diplomacy and its tools together with the culture in order to promote Poland's positive image and influence outside the country. On the other hand, Poland has become highly antagonistic towards its neighbors and the European Union in foreign policy making. Traditional right-wing, harsh anti-German rhetoric and Poland's justified accusations towards Nord Stream 2 project made authorities in Berlin reserved towards Warsaw. In the meantime, open conflict with Czech Republic erupted – the Prague complained that the open-cast Turów mine has drained water from villages near the Polish border. In May 2021, the European Court of Justice ordered mine operations to “immediately cease” and later fined Poland €500,000 per day for ignoring the injunction.

What is more, the success of populist Law and Justice Party and its several domestic proceedings like critical reforms undermining political independence of judiciary limitations of human rights on abortion issue led to Brussels – Warsaw tensions. Currently, for the first time, cutting and limiting of European financial support is considered by the Brussels thus providing a fertile ground for domestic populism in Poland and even extreme “Pol-exit” vision.

All of these things make a picture of Polish public diplomacy rather unclear and problematic. In this context, even such an important step like launching 24/7 English broadcasted public television channel (TVP World) in November 2021 creates a fear that the new channel will become a political tool for ruling party and its propaganda mouthpiece, while the government has already been using state national television domestically to promote the government’s narrative and to attack opponents, also abroad.

Such attitude is contrary to the professional perception of diplomacy and the role of state institutions which should be oriented towards creation rather and sustaining of bilateral contacts and partnership networks. They should be able to cooperate with their counterparts with mutual and multidimensional understanding, and remain professional and well informed. This policy is also challenging soft power in general since it is demanding to what J. Nye considered as a cost – if a country represents values that other want to follow, it will cost us less to lead (Nye, 2002, p. 5). The question about the future of Poland’s soft power and public diplomacy remains open in the context of provided analysis.

Conclusion

The provided analysis proves the value of soft power and public diplomacy for the Republic of Poland. In the international indexes, Poland occupies rather stable position in the global and European presence context; however, the particular components of its soft power have been shifting through the years. What’s more, the culture herself, although widely appreciated and sometimes with spectacular international successes, is not sufficient enough to create a positive image of Poland due to institutional domestic obstacles and particular foreign policy actions antagonizing country with international counterparts.

One can risk a statement here that Poland lacks coherent soft power strategy. The Polish attitude is full of contradictions – on one hand, the creation of positive image is officially a matter of great importance, on the other hand, official governmental decisions led to its reduction, and the country started to be perceived as an unreliable partner. Single initiatives aimed at promoting Polish culture are basically unable to overcome this perception, and the country’s potential remains generally unused, and it is unlikely that soft power assets such as culture or science will be ultimately enough to save Poland’s potential in near future.

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