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THE SMART POWER TRADITION IN THE CONDITIONS OF THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR USING THE EXAMPLE OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

Tatyana Novachenko

Department of International Relations and Political Consulting, Institute of Law and Public Relations, Open International University of Human Development 'UKRAINE', Lvivska 23, 03115 Kyiv, Ukraine, ORCID: 0000- 0002-7306-0712 e-mail: tatnov9@yahoo.com

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Abstract

This article deals with the validation of the smart-power tradition in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The analysis of scientific research and publications shows that foreign and domestic scientists actively study the phenomenon of 'smart power'. It is determined that Ukraine's transition to a postmodern society is filled with complex, contradictory, emergent, but innovative phenomena. Tradition has been shown to be a force for radical renewal and the assertion of ultimate perfection, and its legitimacy has a significant impact on the ability and efficacy of state power. Simultaneously, the 'smart power' idea, which encompasses both hard and soft power resources in times of conflict, is a societal archetype whose integrity is comprised of both conservative and creative elements.

Using the example of local self-government, in light of the continuing decentralization reform, the application of both authoritarian and democratic patterns seen under martial law is taken into consideration. The findings of a poll carried out by the Razumkov's Center in 2025 were examined to determine the degree to which social and state institutions are impacted. It was found that under wartime circumstances, some restrictions are necessary, so the use of the 'smart power' tradition makes it expedient to combine and use the elements of 'soft' and 'hard' power.

Key words

postmodern, tradition, 'smart power', soft power, hard power, Russian-Ukrainian War.

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1. Introduction

People have not experienced such difficulties since World War II as a result of the military escalation that escalated when the Russian Federation unleashed a full-scale war on the Ukrainian state's territory. Life in Ukrainian society, its social institutions, and its social relationships are quite challenging in this context. When considering the principle of subsidiarity, coordinated interactions were established between

state authorities, local self-government, and selforganization of territorial communities, which took on a significant share of humanitarian tasks to support the Armed Forces of Ukraine and territorial defense, as result of which Ukrainian society became much more cohesive at the start of a full-scale invasion.

Meanwhile, in the process of overcoming challenges, joint actions of the people are also enhanced by political cohesion, which is accumulated in the citizens' trust in political leadership, faith in the

correctness of the political line of the state, the justice of the socio-political system, orientation towards democracy and public forms of political participation, and against this background, an indisputable victory over the enemy.

2. Literature Review

As is known, in the 1990s, the American political scientist Joseph Nye divided state power into 'hard power' like the material elements of state power and 'soft power' like spiritual elements. Accordingly, hard power is a set of tools of economic, political, military, or diplomatic pressure, that is, the use of coercive measures that force other countries to act in a certain way. Soft power, soft authority, and soft strength are concepts that outline the principles on which it is possible to obtain what is desired through cooperation, leadership, and solidarity (Nye, 1990). Since the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries, this problem has been actualized, which is confirmed by a number of scientific studies. Thus, G.M. Gallarotti (2011) analyzed and proved the importance of soft power, noting its significance if used effectively.

S.E. Medeiros and D.J.A. Pinto (2015) presented their idea of the implementation of 'smart power' in the 21st century in the context of its correlation with the international reputation of Brazil. W.S. Cohen, M.R. Greenberg, and C. McGiffer emphasize that it is around 'smart power' like a security factor that relations between the United States and China should be built for global leadership (Cohen et al., 2009). A. Chong's (2015) research is devoted to issues of the foreign policy of states, in particular the combination of military power and smart power. It can be concluded from the above that foreign scientists actively study the phenomenon of 'smart power.'

Scientists in Ukraine have long ignored this issue, but the shifting role of nations in global affairs and relations, particularly the conflict between Russia and Ukraine has highlighted the necessity for more intensive study in this area. Thus, several scientists, namely: S. Danylenko, N. Averyanova, T. Voropaeva, and M. Drobotenko, analyze the main components of the Ukrainian version of the 'smart power' strategy in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian neo-imperial war. Within the framework of the 'smart power' strategy, the researchers propose to combine not only 'hard' and 'soft power', but also the intellectual potential of the scientific and expert environment of Ukraine (Danylenko et al., 2022). At the same time, N.M. Averianova and T.S. Voropaieva (2019) in the

article "The Strategy of 'Smart Power' in the Modern Realities of the Russian-Ukrainian War" emphasize that Ukraine should also apply the strategy of 'smart power', combining the resources of 'hard' and 'soft' power. This method will complement the ability to act and establish oneself as a subject in the international arena and effectively resist the pressure of the former imperial center. O. Lozovytskyi (2016) systematizes the experience of the development of 'smart power', noting that it becomes the strategic basis of foreign policy and defense components of effective reform of the state in the conditions of uncertainty and contradiction of globalization.

As can be seen, modern foreign and domestic researchers are considering various facets of the 'smart power' phenomenon, which led to the choice of the problem field of this study.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Characteristics of the Postmodern Era

The term 'postmodernism' is used by scientists to describe the collapse of modern civilization. It is interpreted as a hyperreaction to the extremes of modernism, and it is a period of intense manifestation of social and natural problems of a new quality rather than a new historic age. The concept of 'postmodern' was first used in 1917 by the German philosopher Rudolf Panwitz (1917, p. 64), but only in 1946 did A. Toynbee (1947) define Postmodernism as a qualitatively new stage in the development of Western European culture. According to this scientist, this period began at the end of the 19th century and was marked by a transition from a policy based on thinking in the categories of national states to a policy that takes into account the global nature of international relations. In the 1960s, the opinion expressed by A. Toynbee materialized into sociopolitical reality as the emergence of new phenomena that were simply impossible to predict earlier. Since 1979, after the publication of the work of J.F. Lyotard: The State of Postmodernism. Report on Knowledge, postmodernism is affirmed in the status of a philosophical theory that captures the specifics of the modern era as a whole, developing as a new phase of Modernism. In particular, the scientist was one of the first to note the problem of the correlation between the culture of postmodernism and post-nonclassical science. He hypothesized a change in the status of cognition in the context of postmodern culture and post-industrial society. J.F. Lyotard believed that in the second half of the 20th century, due to a number of circumstances, including the widespread use of information technology, a new, postmodern type of culture emerged (Lyotard, 1979, p. 10).

Unlike the modern era, which was based on the ideas of progress, the consistent development of freedom, the emancipation of the individual, the great goal and the great hero, the universality of knowledge, industrial and technical development, and the liberation of humanity from the burden of everyday work, postmodernism is marked by a new trend in the cultural and psychosocial self-awareness of developed Western societies.

According to Ukrainian scientists E. Afonin, A. Martynov and O. Bandurka, the prospects for the social transformation of postmodern society are a triumph of personal individuality. From now on, it is in this form that the diversity of social life is reflected: the multiplicity of its value principles and the dynamics of their interaction, which will lead to a socio-psychological breakthrough, but not just from the material to the ideal, but a breakthrough to a new quality of life. This should be facilitated by the transformation of the social environment in which individual behavior will change (Afonin et al., 2002).

Thus, the turn from modern to postmodern society in Ukraine is filled with complicated, contradictory and emergent phenomena following nature, but characterized by innovation.

3.2. Features of the Interpretation of the 'Tradition' Concept

The above statement prompts us to turn to the interpretation of the 'tradition' concept and the definition of its features in the present era, since the crisis of the transitional phase of postmodernity can be characterized as a 'search' that structures the problem. Therefore, the very name postmodern does not define something specific, since the prefix 'post' focuses on deep uncertainty. That is why the postmodern era can become the era of a new manifestation of tradition, which is confirmed by the opinion of S. Eisenstadt, who emphasized that traditional society is constantly changing, and these changes can be both local and global, which is associated with a modification of the entire social framework of society (Eisenstadt, 1973). Traditionally, there is a duality: its creative and conservative components. The first is related to the potential of the tradition for expansion, which occurs both at the structural and symbolic level of social life.

At the structural level, expansion is expressed in an attempt to change the boundaries of groups, organizations, and social systems, in their interaction and the possibility of developing new resources and new levels of structural differentiation. At the

symbolic level, it is manifested in the combined possibility of expanding, rationalizing, and developing new dimensions of human existence and new aspects of existing dimensions, in which there is a close connection between tradition and stereotype. If limiting to the consideration of the behavioral facet, then the reproduction of tradition implies an example of social and individual behavior, that is, the dominance of the stereotype over individual expression of will, personality traits, and aspirations. The above allows concluding that the social stereotype is a mechanism for the implementation of tradition.

However, the dynamics of social tradition is a constant process of overcoming some types of socially organized stereotypes and the formation of new, innovative ones. In this sense, the difference between traditional and innovative is levelled. Therefore, tradition is not a 'dried heritage' transmitted from generation to generation along the historical 'horizontal', but that which begins with the 'vertical', an archetype that is intuitively recognizable regardless of any layers of time, since it belongs not to the past, but to eternity. Such a tradition acts as a spirit of radical renewal, but the novelty in it is ontological and is associated not with the gradual improvement of something former, but with the assertion of absolute perfection.

3.3. The Russian-Ukrainian War and the Legitimacy of the Authorities

The Russian-Ukrainian war has proved that only a strong, systematically functional state power can withstand world crises and protect the interests of citizens. It is a type of public political influence that realizes its potential by overcoming multiple global and local challenges. However, the concept of 'force' is mostly associated with directive moments such as violence, coercion, and imposition of one's will in the form of an order accompanied by the threat of punishment. Therefore, power based on its coercive element can be characterized as straightforward and primitive, but even such power cannot be reduced only to coercion, since it will not be able to rally the nation, build state independence, ensure the freedom and security of the people. "The throne can be overthrown by force, but a republic can only be founded by wisdom", Maximilien Robespierre (1989) emphasized.

At the same time, the leader of the French Revolution emphasized that from the time of overthrowing the Roman Empire and until the collapse of the French monarchy, the ruling stratum that could not or could not [KP3.1]use force always 48 Tatyana Novachenko

selected the power of another stratum that could and could [KP4.1]use that force. Louis XVI was defeated because he did not want and did not know how to or could not use force, but the revolutionaries defeated him because they wanted, knew how and were able to use it.

In the literature, the concept of 'force' is defined as the source of the beginning, the main (unknown) cause of any action, movement, desire, motivation, any material changes in space or as the beginning of changes in world phenomena. Power is the ability to influence things by changing their previous state (Arendt, 2002). Accordingly, strength is the ability to manifest any activity that has a characteristic degree, direction, and intensity of the manifestation of this activity. In the context of state power and domination, the concept of 'force' appears as a purely moral phenomenon, or one supported by fear of punishment.

Thus, power is the material or spiritual principle that is the source of energy in any activity. Legitimate (Latin: legitimus means corresponding to the law, legal) power is considered strong, based on its forms of influence and authority. At the same time, the actions of the authorities directed against a person and his dignity destroy the moral foundations of people's common life: solidarity, trust, and legal relations, which makes it possible to state the lack of legitimacy. In social and political thought, several types of theories have emerged to explain the sources of violence.

Thus, one group is united by a concept that derives violence from the nature of the individual: his innate inclinations and instincts that push a person to violence, in particular his desire for power and domination. With regard to state power, Niccolò Machiavelli also expressed the view that only through violence can state power be created, strengthened and preserved (Machiavelli, 1989). This principle becomes a guide to action in the political struggle for the acquisition of state power and its maintenance in modern times. In the explanation of the phenomenon of violence by scientists, it is observed that it is associated not only with direct physical and material damage, but also with psychological and intellectual spheres and manifests itself indirectly: in the form of imposing one's own beliefs, distorted information, etc. Thus, violence is a self-destructive force, since in its implementation as an absolute evil, it turns against itself. A predisposition to violence can have biological causes, which triggers certain mental and physical changes that prepare a person for struggle. However, it is known that it is much easier to start violent actions than to stop them, since violence irrationally

and blindly obeys the deepest instincts. In addition, violence has the property of reciprocity, since any violence causes a response as a form of imitation. Thus, the essence of the concept of 'violence' is expressed in the word itself, which means coercion into something by force. However, the latter does not guarantee the process of rule, because as long as the object resists, it does not obey, it is not subject, but an opposing side. The violence that can be used by the authorities can be briefly defined as a usurpation of free will.

But, understandably, the dynamic nature of existence is infused with a natural yearning for dominance and rivalry, so in the concept of 'power' it is necessary to distinguish between its following components: destructive (violence) and productive, which lies in its 'soft power' as the power of power[KP5.1]. J. Nye (2003) refers to the soft power as the development strategy of the state, the identification power of its ideology and value orientations, the positivity of the social system, the solidarity of the people, the creative power of the nation, the attractiveness of culture, and the power of influence in international affairs, as well as authoritative leadership.

According to the scientist, all these spiritual elements are 'soft power', which has deep philosophical roots and comes from ancient Chinese philosophers. Water is the softest and weakest thing, but the hardest and strongest in overcoming; it is invincible, and it has no equal in the world. From the point of view of symbolism, water dissolves, destroys, cleanses, washes away, and restores, but what is soft and subtle is strong. It is obvious that soft power has emerged not only as an alternative to hard power politics. Like any form of force, it can be used with bad intentions, but unlike hard power, soft power differs in its means of public diplomacy, economic aid, sports, art projects, media products, universities, schools, churches and other civil society institutions.

Thus, the capacity and effectiveness of state power largely depend on its legitimacy, which is accumulated in the productive, intangible value of 'soft power'. However, in the context of the war, the use of solid force by Ukraine as a foreign policy tool in the fight against the aggressor is beyond doubt. This conclusion can be confirmed by the opinion of J. Nye (2011) who emphasized that successful countries need both 'hard' and 'soft' power in the process of shaping foreign policy.

In our opinion, the totality of soft and hard power resources in conditions of war defines the concept of 'smart power', which is also an internal political public management tool.

3.4. Local Self-Government: Democratic and Authoritarian Trends

These trends will be considered taking for example the functioning of local self-government bodies and their leadership in the conditions of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

The data of the eighth wave of the all-Ukrainian sociological survey on local self-government and territorial organization of power in the context of the large-scale Russian invasion show that support for the decentralization reform is growing. Thus, the indicator of citizens' support for decentralization in 2022 was 76.5%, and in 2024 this indicator increased to 77%. Respondents emphasized the need to continue to support the decentralization reform and to continue transferring powers and resources to territorial communities. At the same time, 16% of the population believed that such a reform is unnecessary (Pidtrymka naselenniam detsentralizatsii..., 2024).

According to most respondents (61%), there are infrastructure or housing facilities damaged by missile

attacks/hostilities in their houses[KP6.1]. At the same time, 59% of them generally positively assessed the state of recovery/reconstruction. 32% had a negative opinion (and another 9% were undecided). Only 11% of respondents wanted the state to be centrally responsible for the recovery/reconstruction processes, and only 16% placed the responsibility exclusively on local self-government bodies. Most respondents (65%) wanted to see partnership between state authorities and local self-government bodies. The issue of the configuration of such cooperation remains open. Currently, 65% believe that priority should be given to public authorities, which should consult with local self-government bodies 42%. [KP7.1] At the same time, by contrast, the remaining 24% give priority to local self-government bodies, which must coordinate their actions with state authorities (Mistseve samovriaduvannia..., 2025).

Table 1 below presents a fragment of the results of a survey on the assessment of the situation in the country and the measure of public confidence in state and public institutions conducted by the Razumkov's Center (Tsenter Razumkova..., 2025).

Tab. 1. Measure of Trust in State and Social Institutions

Name of the Social Institution	Do not trust it at all	Rather trust than distrust	Somewhat trust	Fully trust	Hard to answer	Trust/Distrust Balance
President of Ukraine	13.8	21.3	40.2	17.3	7.5	22.4
Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine	37.0	39.7	15.9	1.9	5.4	-58.9
Government of Ukraine	32.1	38.6	20.2	2.3	6.8	-48.2
State Office	35.2	44.0	12.1	1.2	7,6	-65.9
Mayor of your city/ town/village	16.5	25.5	42.8	8.0	7.3	8.8
Local council of your city/ town/village	14.,7	28.8	40.8	6.8	8.9	4.1
Armed Forces of Ukraine	1.7	3.0	25.5	68.0	1.7	88.8

Source: Own study.

As follows from the table, in the list of institutions that are most trusted by respondents from all over the country, local authorities ranked sixth. As for community leaders, residents of amalgamated communities gave them fifth place. In our opinion, this result is explained by the fact that traditionally Ukrainians consider only the activities of higher authorities, international relations, etc. as politics, but they do not extend the concept of 'politics' to the local level of community life. It can be assumed that people have not yet fully understood the innovation and opportunities provided by the decentralization reform.

Another factor that is outlined in the context of radical social and epochal transformations, intensifying the war is authoritarianism, especially among those social groups that suffer most from negative changes and the necessity to rely on themselves. Accordingly, there is an authoritarian consciousness that seeks a 'strong hand', relies on the full responsibility of a certain official, and affirms distrust of democratic procedures as such. They believe that democracy leads to disorder, and strict control and restriction of freedom are necessary to maintain public order, security, and stability and contribute to the effectiveness of achieving the goal,

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guaranteeing social benefits. Therefore, people with authoritarian thinking, leveling the value of civil liberties, tend to unconditionally obey government directives. At the same time, the exhaustion of the war can encourage some citizens to despair of democracy and contribute to their positive vision of authoritarian rule. The tendency of the authorities to centralize the process of making managerial decisions is natural in conditions of war, since centralized leadership is more effective in mobilizing all resources than democratic leadership, which has more bureaucratic procedures. Accordingly, the attractiveness of the authoritarian type of leadership is dictated by its advantages, especially tangible in conditions of crises and systemic transformations in society, in particular: the implementation of a qualitative reorganization of social structures, concentration of efforts and resources to solve vital issues for Ukraine, ensuring public order, etc.

The leadership of public authorities and local self-government must therefore possess competent knowledge of the use of 'smart power' as a

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reasonable force, the essence of which lies in the ability to correctly combine and apply the elements of 'soft' and 'hard' power, when certain restrictions are required during wartime.

4. Conclusions

According to the analysis, manifestations of tradition can be observed in the life of the community and the public-management activities of the local self-government body. The concept of 'smart power tradition' has been confirmed to have a conservative and creative component, and the social stereotype to be a mechanism for their implementation, but one that is constantly changing, forming new innovative stereotypes that are characteristic of the postmodern era. On the one hand, it is the willingness of people to comply with the orders of administrative power; on the other hand, it is the influence on people without the use of administrative power and using various methods of democratic participation.

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