The point of sharp power

China and Russia’s influence is growing in spite of their soft power deficiencys

CHRISTOPHER WALKER
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In recent years, China and Russia have pursued considerable resources into means typically associated with soft power, but have been far less effective at generating influence. China’s tendency to dictate, question the acceptability of alternative forms of soft power, and ignore the capabilities of others is a key reason why China is not perceived as a soft power player.

China’s recent policy of promoting Chinese culture as a means of exerting influence is not matched by the same level of promotion for other forms of soft power, such as education. China’s push to promote Confucius Institutes,孔子学院, overseas is not only met with skepticism, but also with resentment by Chinese students studying abroad. China’s efforts to promote its language and culture through Confucius Institutes are often seen as an attempt to control and manipulate others, rather than as a genuine effort to engage in cultural exchange.

In contrast, Russia’s efforts to promote its culture and language, such as through the Russian Language and Culture Centers, have been more successful. These centers are often seen as a way to promote Russian culture and language, but also as a means of exerting influence and promoting Russian interests.

China and Russia’s efforts to promote their soft power are not always effective, and often result in a backlash from the countries they are seeking to influence. China’s efforts to promote its language and culture through Confucius Institutes are not always well-received, and can be seen as an attempt to control and manipulate others. Russia’s efforts to promote its culture and language are often seen as a way to exert influence and promote Russian interests, but can also be seen as a way to promote Russian interests at the expense of others.

In summary, China and Russia’s efforts to promote their soft power are not always effective, and often result in a backlash from the countries they are seeking to influence. The key to promoting soft power is to do so in a way that is genuine, authentic, and respects the autonomy of others. China and Russia need to be more careful in their efforts to promote their soft power, and to be more open to the views and interests of others.

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