

Rome Conference - 9 June 2016 (3:00 PM-6:30 PM)

**RUSSIAN SOFT POWER: MOSCOW'S STRUGGLE FOR INFLUENCE IN EUROPE  
AND HOW THE EU SHOULD RESPOND**

Tempio di Adriano Conference Center of the Rome Chamber of Commerce

Piazza di Pietra, Rome (Italy)

For information and registration please contact: [fondazionegermani@gmail.com](mailto:fondazionegermani@gmail.com)

The conference is organized by the Gino Germani Institute for Social Sciences and Strategic Studies (Rome) and the Atlantic Council (Washington, DC) . It will take place in Rome on June 9 2016 at the Tempio di Adriano Conference Center of the Rome Chamber of Commerce (Piazza di Pietra, Rome).

The central topic of the event is Russia's soft power strategy in Europe, which aims to shape elite and public perceptions, as well as to gain leverage over the politics of EU states, through the use of non-military instruments of influence (in particular though media, political and economic tools).

The conference will seek to better understand the goals and instruments of Russian soft power in the EU, especially the following aspects of Moscow's struggle for influence which have recently caused concern among European and US decision-makers: anti-EU and anti-Western media campaigns; funding and support for far-right and far-left political parties; and Russia's efforts to influence political processes in some EU countries by means of economic and financial instruments of soft power.

**CONFERENCE AGENDA**

**3 PM** - Welcome remarks by **Vincenzo Scotti** (President, Link Campus University) and **Andrea Manciuoli** (Italian MP and Italian representative to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly) . Moderator: Ambassador **Luigi Vittorio Ferraris**.

**Luigi Sergio Germani** (Director, Gino Germani Institute for Social Sciences and Strategic Studies)

*Introductory presentation: The Debate on Russian Influence and Soft Power in Europe*

**Alina Polyakova** (Deputy Director, Dinu Patriciu Eurasia Center, Atlantic Council, Washington DC)

*Putin's Useful Idiots? The Kremlin and Europe's Far Right*

**Rémy Bouallegue** (Advisor to the Director for Foreign policy Planning at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, Paris)

*Russian Influence Strategy in Europe: the Role of Traditional and New Media*

**Stanislav Secrieru** ( Polish Institute of International Affairs-PISM, Warsaw) :

*Dissolving Consensus: How Russia is Undermining EU's sanctions policy*

**Gemma Pörtzgen** (Journalist, Berlin)

*The Lisa-case and Russian propaganda in Germany*

**Evgeny Utkin** (Russian journalist)

*Russian Perceptions of Western Soft Power and How they Shape Moscow's Soft Power Strategy in Europe*

**Simon West** (Chief of Operations Support Branch, NATO STRATCOM Centre of Excellence, Riga)

*Countering Russian Information Confrontation*

**5:15 PM** - Discussion

**6:30 PM** - Conference ends

## **CONFERENCE CONCEPT AND KEY TOPICS**

Moscow perceives that the West is waging “non-linear” warfare against it by promoting pro-Western revolutionary movements in states belonging to Russia’s sphere of influence and in Russia itself. This threat perception, some experts argue, has led the Kremlin to intensify its influence and soft power efforts in Europe.

Since the onset of the Ukraine crisis and the return of tensions between Russia and the West, Moscow appears to have expanded its soft power strategy in Europe. According to some analysts, this strategy includes the following elements:

- A) Anti-Western and anti-EU communication campaigns and perception management efforts - that sometimes include the spread of disinformation - conducted through expanded traditional and especially web-based social media.
- B) Political and ideological support - and in some cases also financial assistance - provided to extreme right and left-wing political parties. The European populist far-right and the Putin regime both share strong anti-EU and anti-Western views, as well as the idea that there is an ongoing “cultural war” in Europe between traditional Christian values and increasingly decadent Western liberalism.
- C) Economic influence operations in Europe, including politically-motivated investments in critical sectors of a targeted country’s economy (such as energy, finance, media), and attempts to co-opt some members of the economic and political élite of a number of EU countries through business and financial relationships.
- D) Financing of think tanks and the creation of Russian diaspora NGO’s .

. There is a debate underway in the Western expert community on the nature and goals of Moscow’s soft power strategy in Europe. According to one interpretation advanced by some experts Russia’s influence efforts aim to exploit Europe’s profound multidimensional crisis in order to advance a series of strategic foreign policy goals:

- Undermining the authority and credibility of targeted European governments and of EU institutions.
- Impairing EU and NATO decision-making processes and weakening transatlantic relations.
- Weakening public confidence in the Western model of liberal democracy and in the fundamental values of Western and European open societies;

The Rome conference will seek to better understand the goals and instruments of Russian soft power in the EU. The following questions will be addressed :

- 1) What is the nature and role of soft power in Russian strategic thinking? In Russian thinking, how does soft power relate to the concepts of “non-linear warfare” and “information warfare”?
- 2) What are the goals of Moscow’s soft power and influence strategy in Europe? How do Russian threat-perceptions of the West shape this strategy?
- 3) How effective are Russia’s soft power efforts in advancing Russian foreign policy goals?
- 4) Do Moscow’s soft power efforts seek to undermine the authority and credibility of the EU and of some European governments? Does Moscow aim to weaken the confidence of European public opinion in the Western model of liberal democracy?
- 5) How are Russian influence activities in Europe likely to evolve in the coming years and what will their be their likely impact on European security and stability?
- 6) How should the EU respond to the challenge of Russian soft power?

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