

Soft powers relationship with hard power



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The decline of U. S. “ Hard Power” perturbed the rabid US nationalists. Hence in response to US declining “ Hard Power” came the concept of Soft Power.

Joseph S. Nye first developed the concept of Soft Power in “ Bound to Lead”, a book in reply to Paul Kennedy’s book “ The Rise and Fall of great powers” In this book Paul Kennedy had announced the decline of US Power. Mr. Nye disputed Kennedy’s claim that US was in decline. At that time he pointed out that the United States was not only the strongest nation in military and economic terms, but also in a third dimension which he called soft power.

He defined Soft Power as “ the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than through coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideals and policies. When our policies are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others, our soft power is enhanced.”[i]“ The greatest source of power in international affairs today”, says Joseph S Nye, Dean of Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University and the leading proponent of Soft power, “ may lie in persuading other nations to see your interests as their interests.” Underlying this assertion – persuading others that our respective interests are aligned – is the fact that we live in a world where countries can no longer live in “ splendid isolation”. Globalization has been the juggernaut propelling interconnectedness and global media the glue that binds people across continents.[ii]

He went on to say that this power could be cultivated through relations with allies, economic assistance and cultural exchanges”. He argued that this would result in “ a more favourable Public opinion and credibility abroad. Later Joseph S. Nye authored two more books titled – “ Soft Power: The

means to success in world politics” and “ Paradox of American power: Why the world’s only super power can’t go it alone”.

Hans Morgenthau has defined power as, “ Ability of a nation to persuade, influence, force or otherwise induce another nation to take an action or change an objective that the latter would otherwise not prefer to of its own.”[iii]Power is an ability of an actor to impose its will on others. In this sense three basic conditions are required so that Power can come into existence. First, an actor must have the possibilities/ assets to influence other actors. Quantifiable elements like military and economic possibilities and unquantifiable elements like culture, value system and mode of life constitute the first dimension of Power. Second, the actor having these power elements must be conscious of having them. In other words, the actor must have the will to capitalize on these assets. Thirdly, the other actors in the system must recognize and acknowledge that power. For power to exist, other actors must change their policies in line with the interests of the party that has power. In this sense, power is relational.

5. Historically, actors have been using military and economic Power to force other actors to fall in line with the preferences of power holders. In other words, it forced the other actors to undertake a cost-benefit analysis. It is this cost-benefit analysis which determined the preferences of other actors. An actor preferring to use hard power will frighten, buy or coax the adversary.[iv]

6. Contrary to “ Hard Power” Soft Power[v]is the Power of culture, value system, mode of life. The distinction between ‘ Hard’ and “ Soft” power is

made on the basis of the instrument used. But Tarik Oguzlu disputes this basis of categorizing “ Hard” and “ Soft Power”. According to him what makes power “ Soft” is not the nature of means employed but the way those means are employed. Military power is not Hard Power and civilian power is not ‘ Soft’ Power. Military and civilian aspects of power refer to the kinds of means utilized. Hard and Soft dimensions of power refer to the ways military and civilian elements of power are used.[vi]

7. Joseph S Nye also points out in his article “ Think Again: Soft Power,” that the term “ Soft Power” has been “ stretched and twisted”.^[vii]The popular understandings of the concept encompass a narrower sense and broader sense. In the narrower sense, soft power is similar to cultural influence. Prominent examples of this view include those of British historian Niall Ferguson and German publicist Josef Joffe. The majority school of thought on soft power in China also subscribes to this narrower sense. In the broader sense, soft power is synonymous with non-military power and includes both cultural power and economic strength. While these popular understandings are misunderstandings, Scholars have argued that much of the confusion and misunderstanding of the concept of soft power is due to its being “ under-theorized,” “ lack of academic refinement,” and “ analytical fuzziness.”

8. Power always depends on context. To describe the context of power in the 21st century, Joseph S. Nye uses the metaphor of a three dimensional chess game: on the top board of the three-dimensional game, the United State’s is the world’s only superpower, and one is unlikely to see a balance in military power for the next decade or two or perhaps even more. But on the middle

board of economic relations between states, there is already a balance of power. The United States can not get a trade agreement or an anti trust solution if the European Union acts collectively, and without that balance and agreement, one can't achieve the desired outcomes. It is a bit anomalous to call international economic relations " American Hegemony" or " empire". But if one goes to the bottom board of transnational relations, problems across borders outside the control of governments, whether it's infectious diseases or drug smuggling or terrorism, no one is in charge. Power is chaotically organized or distributed. The only ways to deal with these issues is by cooperation among governments. To call that again " American empire" or " American hegemony" or " unipolarity" makes no sense at all. One is taking a metaphor from the top board and applying it to the bottom board, where it doesn't fit.[viii]New Threats are arising from the bottom board of transnational relations. While military power can be of some use occasionally on the bottom board, more often some other forms of power, particularly Soft Power is required.

What makes Soft Power?

9. Since soft power is the power to attract, the question, what constitutes soft power? becomes, What generates attraction? To answer this question, we must look for the power currencies that cause attraction. According to Alexander L. Vuving ,

Associate Professor, Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, there are at least three generic power currencies from which both power and its " softness" are derived. He calls them " beauty, brilliance, and benignity."

10. Benignity is an aspect of the agent's relations with others, especially with the client of soft power. It refers to the positive attitudes that you express when you treat people, especially when you treat the client. Benignity as a power currency works on the tendency of reciprocal altruism that exists in most, if not all, organisms. Among humans, it generates soft power through the production of gratitude and sympathy.

11. Brilliance is an aspect of the agent's relations with its work. It refers to the high performance that you accomplish when you do things. In international relations, brilliance manifests itself in various forms, for example, a strong and awesome military, a wealthy and vibrant economy, a rich and radiant culture, or a peaceful and well-run society. Brilliance as a power currency works on the tendency of human beings to learn from the successes of others. It generates soft power through the production of admiration, which can lead to imitation, or emulation, and respect, or fear, or reverence.

12. Beauty in world politics is about the resonance that draws actors closer to each other through shared ideals, values, causes, or visions. Opposite values and causes provide a firm ground for regimes to see each other as ugly; and shared values and causes provide a push toward the perception that the other regime is beautiful, which in turn will encourage confidence, friendship, and cooperation. If others perceive you in this role, they will adhere to you and look at you for guidance, example, encouragement, and inspiration. Beauty generates soft power through the production of inspiration.[ix]

Dialectics of Hard and Soft power

13. Prima facie, there is no direct correlation between Hard Power and soft power. A country may be strong in hard power but yet may be weak in soft power and vice-versa. But nonetheless on closer examination it is found that a country strong in Hard Power is not totally impotent in soft power. Any country strong in Hard Power is always a role model for aspiring power. Hence aspiring powers are attracted to emulate the Soft power of Hard Power holder. This has been the case since antiquity. Since the Roman times till today every aspiring power imitates Romans.[x]

14. There is a close relationship between the degree of securitization of issues and mode of power used. If the issues of concern were securitised, the tendency to use hard power would increase. The main difference between hard and soft power stems from the kind of “ Logic of action” which governs the behaviour of actors, and not the kind of instruments employed. If the logic of action is instrumental, i. e. if the goal were to force others to make a cost-benefit analysis through coercing or coaxing strategies, then ‘ Hard’ Power occupies the centre-stage. On the other hand, if the goal were to ensure that other actors in the system would automatically follow the lead due to power of attraction, then one could refer to the existence of Soft Power. Whereas the concept of Hard Power assumes a strong emphasis on the agent/actor, the concept of “ Soft” power underlines the significance of perceptions others hold vis-à-vis the agent / actor.[xi]

15. Hard and Soft Power sometimes reinforces and sometimes interferes with each other. A country that courts popularity may be reluctant to exercise its hard power as and when the situation demands. But a country that throws its

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weight around without regard to the effect on its soft power may find others placing obstacles in the way of its hard power. But rarely can a state totally replace one by the other.[xii]

16. A country's soft power can affect its hard power. During the Iraq war, the United States wanted to persuade the Turkish Government to send the fourth Infantry Division across Turkey to enter Iraq from the North. But the Turkish government said "no", because the United States had by then become so unpopular. Its policies were perceived as so illegitimate that they were not willing to allow this transfer of troops across the country. The net effect was that the Fourth Infantry division had to go down through the canal, up through the Gulf, and arrived late to the war, which made a difference in the number of troops on the ground. Neglect of Soft Power made definite negative effect on hard Power.[xiii]

17. It has been historically observed that state weak in Hard Power has exercised strong influence on others by its soft power. This has been the case with disintegrated Italy's music. Hobsbawm writes[xiv]

"..... Cultural hegemony is not an indicator of imperial power, nor does it depend much on it. If it did, Italy, disunited, powerless and poor, would not have dominated International musical life and art from the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries. Moreover, where cultural power survives the decline of the power and prestige of the states that one propagated it the Roman Empire, or the French absolute monarchy..."

Advent of Smart Power

18. The term “ hard power” refers to guns and bombs, the military force of a country. “ Soft power” is used to describe other forms of persuasion a country can employ: trade deals, foreign aid, diplomacy, cultural influence and more. Joseph S Nye argues, however, that the most effective leaders are actually those who combine Hard and Soft Power skills in proportions that vary with different situations. He calls this “ Smart Power”.[xv]

19. Smart power is a term in international relations defined by Joseph Nye as “ the ability to combine hard and soft power into a winning strategy.”

According to Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela R. Aall, smart power “ involves the strategic use of diplomacy, persuasion, capacity building, and the projection of power and influence in ways that are cost-effective and have political and social legitimacy” – essentially the engagement of both military force and all forms of diplomacy.[xvi]

Myths about Soft Power

20. Soft Power Is Cultural Power According to Joseph S Nye Soft Power is partly Cultural Power. Power is the ability to alter the behavior of others to get what you want. British historian Niall Ferguson described soft power as non-traditional forces such as cultural and commercial good sand. Of course, the fact that a foreigner drinks Coca-Cola or wears a Michael Jordan T-shirt does not in itself mean that America has power over him. This view confuses resources with behavior. Whether power resources produce a favorable outcome depends upon the context. Consider Iran. Western music and videos are anathema to the ruling mullahs, but attractive to many of the younger generation to whom they transmit ideas of freedom and choice.

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American culture produces soft power among some Iranians, but not others.

[xvii]

21. Economic Strength is Soft Power. Peter Brookes in a recent article refers to soft power options such as economic sanctions. However, he argues that there is nothing soft about sanctions and they are clearly intended to coerce and are thus a form of hard power. Economic strength can be converted into hard or soft power: You can coerce countries with sanctions or woo them with wealth. As Walter Russell Mead has argued, economic power is sticky power; it seduces as much as it compels.[xviii]There's no doubt that a successful economy is an important source of attraction. Sometimes in real-world situations, it is difficult to distinguish what part of an economic relationship is comprised of hard and soft power. European leaders describe other countries desire to accede to the European Union (EU) as a sign of Europe's soft power. Turkey today is making changes in its human rights policies and domestic law to adjust to EU standards.

22. Soft Power is Better than Hard Power. Not necessarily. Because soft power has been hyped as an alternative to raw power politics, it is often embraced by ethically minded scholars and policymakers. But soft power is a description, not an ethical prescription. Like any form of power, it can be wielded for good or ill. Hitler, Stalin, and Mao, after all, possessed a great deal of soft power in the eyes of their acolytes. It is not necessarily better to twist minds than to twist arms.

23. Although soft power in the wrong hands can have horrible consequences, it can in some cases offer morally superior means to certain goals. Contrast

the consequences of Mohandas Gandhi or Martin Luther King Jr's choice of soft power with Yasir Arafat's choice of the gun. Gandhi and King were able to attract moderate majorities over time, and the consequences were impressive both in effectiveness and in ethical terms. Arafat's strategy of hard power, by contrast, killed innocent Israelis and drove Israeli moderates into the arms of the hard right.

24. Hard Power can be Measured and Soft Power Cannot. False. In fact, it's quite possible to quantify sources of soft power. One can, for example, measure and compare the cultural, communications, and diplomatic resources that might produce soft power for a country. Public opinion polls can quantify changes in a country's attractiveness over time. Nor is hard power as easy to quantify. The apparent precision of the measurement of hard power resources is often spurious and might be called "the concrete fallacy." Some people act as though the only resources that can change behavior are those that can be dropped on your foot or on a city. But that is a mistake. The United States had far more measurable military resources than North Vietnam, but it nonetheless lost the Vietnam War. Whether soft power produces behavior that we want will depend on the context and the skills with which the resources are converted into outcomes.[xix]

25. Some Goals can only be Achieved by Hard Power. Soft Power is not the solution to all problems. For example, North Korean dictator Kim Jong Il's penchant for Hollywood movies is unlikely to affect his decision on developing nuclear weapons. Hard power just might dissuade him, particularly if China agreed to economic sanctions. Nor will soft power be sufficient to stop the Iranian nuclear program, though the legitimacy of the

administrations current multilateral approach may help to recruit other countries to a coalition that isolates Iran. And soft power got nowhere in attracting the Taliban government away from its support for Al Qaeda in the 1990s. It took American military might to do that. But other goals, such as the promotion of democracy and human rights are better achieved by soft power. Coercive democratization has its limits as the United State found out in Iraq.

26. Military Resources Produce Only Hard Power. Military force appears to be a defining resource for hard Power, but the same resource can sometimes contribute to Soft Power. Dictators like Hitler and Stalin cultivated myths of invincibility and inevitability to structure expectations and attract others to join their bandwagon. As Osama bin Laden has said, people are attracted to a strong horse rather than a weak horse. A well run military can be a source of attraction, and military to military cooperation and training programs, for example, can establish transnational networks that enhance a country's Soft Power. Of course, misuse of military resources can also undercut Soft Power. Brutality and indifference to just war principles of discrimination and proportionality can also destroy legitimacy. The efficiency of the initial American military invasion of Iraq in 2003 created admiration in the eyes of some foreigners, but that Soft Power was undercut by the subsequent inefficiency of the occupation and the scenes of mistreatment of prisoners at Abu Ghraib.[xx]

27. Soft Power Is Difficult to Use. Governments can control and change foreign policies. They can spend money on public diplomacy, broadcasting and exchange programs. They can promote, but not control popular culture.

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In that sense, one of the key resources that produce soft power is produced by civil society largely independent of government control. – from Hollywood to Harvard.[xxi]

28. Soft Power is irrelevant to the current terrorist threat. False. There is very little likelihood that we can ever attract people like Mohammed Atta or Osama bin Laden. We need hard power to deal with such hard cases. But the current terrorist threat is not Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations. It is a civil war between a majority of moderates and a small minority who want to coerce others into their simplified and ideologized version of their religion. We cannot win unless the moderates win. We cannot win unless the number of people the extremists are recruiting is lower than the number we are killing and deterring. That equation is hard to balance without Soft power. We cannot win hearts and minds without it. Soft power is more relevant than ever.