THE EVOLUTION AND FUTURE COMPONENTS OF SOFT POWER

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ABSTRACT

Since the early 1990s when the term soft power was coined by Joseph Nye, it has transformed significantly both in definition, concept, practice, and actors involved in the implementation of the strategy. Such changes have been brought about by a number of reasons, ranging from the critique scholars have had on the definition of the term, the changing structure of the international system as well as the changes in the capabilities of different actors. This article, therefore, seeks to examine the evolution of soft power in theory and as a foreign policy strategy now and in the future. I argue that soft power remains an important foreign policy tool for state and non -state actors and will continue to influence the behavior of different actors in the future. However, given the rapid changes in the international arena that has witnessed new actors and different challenges, it would be less strategic for international actors to fully depend on soft power as a means of achieving their goals. Similarly, hard power has become less effective, costly and unpredictable to be fully relied on. Therefore, it is arguable that smart power, a unique combination of soft power and hard power will persist as a more reliable choice in the future and it will be characterized by a combination of coercion and attractiveness in areas that either of the two can deliver success.

Key Words: Soft Power, Future components of Soft Power, Hard Power, Smart Power

INTRODUCTION

The term soft power at first glance may appear to be a simple and an easy to understand concept. It's usually defined as a reverse to hard power (the use of economic and physical cohesion). Soft power as a concept is associated with Harvard professor Joseph Nye who in the 1990s developed a theory to explain what was by then a growing narrative that America's dominance in the world was on the decline. In two of his works contained in an article that was published by the Foreign Policy Journal (Nye, 1990a) and his book Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power (Nye 1990b), Nye did not only attempt to dismiss the narrative that America was a declining power, but developed the theory of soft power which to him explain states' behaviour in a changing international arena.

DE-AMERICANISATION OF SOFT POWER

When Soft Power was first coined, it was centered on explaining the behavior of the United States in the post-cold war era. Joseph Nye while developing this theory did not focus on other non -western countries or regions away from the Northern hemisphere and this had a significant influence on the perception and understanding of soft power at the time especially regarding its theoretical dimension. However, recent years have seen a new twist on how soft power is explained and researched. Broader perspectives have been adopted, new actors and regions have been included in studies. In fact, these changes have not only led to the development of a global soft power index but also, smaller countries have been chosen as case studies for soft power.

This is buttressed by two continuing occurrences: one is the general signs that the world is slowly tilting towards a multipolar system where several countries are emerging to challenge the dominance of America at least regionally as it is the case of China in South East Asia and the decreasing role of the United States in the Middle East which has created a vacuum that Russia, Turkey, and Iran are increasingly tussling to occupy. In Africa, countries like China, India, Brazil, and Turkey are giving Washington a run for its money. Since their military and economic strengths are subdued relative to that of the United States, soft power provides emerging powers with a better alternative

for them to spread their influence regionally and beyond. The character and nature of soft power which does not necessarily have to be accompanied by material strength means that even smaller countries can increase their global attractiveness by exploiting their soft power assets.

EVOLUTION OF SOFT POWER

To understand the future of soft power, it is important to determine how the concept has evolved over the years. Based on the trend and how changes in the international system have affected the nature of soft power, understanding its future will be derived from the already evident evolution. Indeed, the nature of soft power today and in the future is determinant by among other things, how military warfare continue to change and how we will be able to distinguish new wars from old ones, the opportunities and challenges of an actor to generate and use soft power, how globalization will affect the state's ability to accumulate hard power, democratization of the media as well as technological revolution.

From Cold War to Soft Power

Although components and practice of soft power elements can be traced back centuries, it was Paul Kennedy's (1987) New York's best seller book *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* which described the United State as a declining power as a result of what he termed to be "imperial overstretch" that caught the attention of Joseph Nye who sought to counter this argument. For Nye, the belief that the state's power could only be measured by its ability to influence other actors within the international system through payments and coercion was against conventional wisdom. Nye admits that indeed scholars and practitioners, particularly from the classical and neo-realism schools such as Carr (1939) and Waltz (1979), interpret power as a tangible resource. Therefore, in his interpretation of power, Joseph Nye argues that it is possible for a state to attract others using attraction and ideas which in turn makes other parties want to emulate a concept as supported also by other scholars such as Lundestad, (1998). Giving the example of America's popular culture such as universities and Hollywood, universalistic values and open culture, Nye believes that these components attract legitimacy to America's actions at the international arena. Of course, in giving this example, Nye is mindful of the fact that a country's culture, values, and foreign policy may not be attractive

to everyone giving the example of Iranian Mullahs. Having said that, however, he emphasizes that where these values are appreciated, then the United States had a big advantage. In other words, post-cold war America was projecting a different form of power, one that found the use of stick and carrots less useful (Nye, 2017: 2).

Critics of soft power argue that in cases where a country's culture does not produce soft power, then the country in question will end up being unattractive. Some components such as the role of women and how they are depicted in films cannot be attractive. For example, films that may appear to promote nudity of women, appear to support divorce or promote domestic violence may not be attractive to others. Racism practiced by individual citizens may also affect a country's efforts to be attractive. For example, a government may offer scholarships to students from other countries in the world, however, when they arrive at the new country, they may face direct racism which in turn dilutes the government effort to spread its soft power. Similarly, the United States in the 1950s attempted to attract African leaders from the newly independent countries in the continent, however, given that at the time racism was widespread in the United States, these African leaders may have not shared the same rest places or restaurants with the whites that consequently leaves question marks over the effectiveness of soft power. In this period the components of soft power included the following;

Table Showing Soft Power Components in its early stages

International Sources	**Domestic Sources**
Respect for international laws, norms, and institutions Fundamental reliance on multilateralism, and disposition against excessive unilateralism Respect international treaties and alliance commitments Willingness to sacrifice short-run national interests in order to contribute toward the collective good Liberal foreign economic policies	Culture • Pronounced Social Cohesion • Elevated Quality of Life • Freedom • Sufficient Opportunities • Tolerance • Alluring Lifestyle • Cultural Status (religious, racial, ethnic) Political Institutions • Democracy • Constitutionalism • Liberalism/Pluralism • Well-Functioning Bureaucracy

Source: Nye, 1990

From Soft Power to Hard Power

The idea of adopting soft power as a sole foreign policy strategy appears to be unrealistic. Specifically, with the aftermath of 9/11, the United States seems to have reverted to hard power. this was evident in invasion of Iraq in 2003, the attack on Sudan and the prolonged war in Afghanistan. American foreign policy had to be redefined and it is at this stage that the idea of soft power came under criticism. Proponents of American soft power were put to task to explain why the United States a country they argued was not in decline but had changed its foreign policy strategy to soft power had unleashed global scale attacks. Nye attempted to respond to this criticism in his 2004 publication *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. He was concerned that restricting the definition of soft power to "non-traditional forces such as cultural and commercial goods" by scholars such as Ferguson (2009) was too simplistic. Nye presented a case that soft power was but only one of the many components of power. He stressed that adopting either soft power or hard power solely was insufficient (Nye, 2017: 3). For scholars like Wilson (2008: 112), adopting soft power does not only improve the attractiveness of a country but its also cost effective.

Ironically, the invasion of Iraq and American so-called war on terror provide a basis to determine the effectiveness of soft power. while American's interventionist wars have undercut her soft power, they prove that soft power is an important approach towards strengthening a countries status at the international system. For example, after the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the United States lost between 20 and 30 percent of its popularity in western Europe and even a more significant example came from Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim nation which prior to the invasion of Iraq, public opinion support for the united states was at 70% in 2000 and America's attractiveness dropped to 15% in 2004. Noteworthy, even in cases where a country has lost its attractiveness, soft power can still help to regain it. Indonesia again provides a good example, where the involvement of the United States Navy ships to provide relief and support to the tsunami which saw America's attractiveness increase to 40% (Nye, 2005, in Felix, 2007: 162 -172).

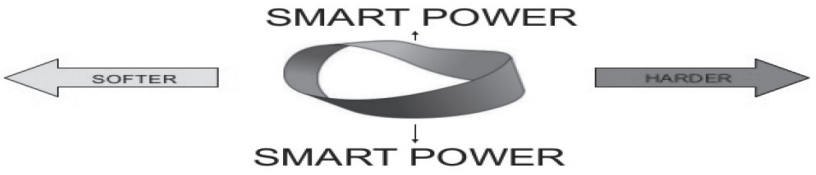
From Hard Power to Smart Power.

A state's ability to skillfully balance the use of hard power and soft power

in its foreign policy endeavors is considered to be using Smart power (Nye, 2011: xiii). The rise of smart power is consistent with the disastrous outcomes of depending solely on hard power and the growing need for a country to remain attractive to others. This concept has been used both by academics and policymakers such as Hillary Clinton (2009) in reference to the foreign policy strategy under the Obama administration, and Joseph Nye in his book *The Future of Power*. Proponents of smart power argue that measuring state power in the 21st century should be based on the outcome rather than resources. (Nye 2010: 4). It is the emphasis on getting the preferred outcomes that make states to keep both soft and hard power capabilities at their disposal. Not only does smart power reduce risks that come with overreliance on either soft power or hard power, but it also makes foreign policy decision making more dynamic.

Smart power is an important tool in the 21st century given that states may, on one hand, want to maintain mutual relations with other external actors while being able to deal with threats to its national security for example through the war on terrorism. Gallarotti describes soft power as providing "greater harmony of interests," while hard power "exhibits a greater conflict of interests" (Gallarotti 2015: 250). This will lead to successful strategies as Nye puts it "is about finding ways to combine resources into successful strategies in the new context of power diffusion and the rise of the rest (Nye 2011: 207-8). Evidently, events and changes in the international system necessitate that state adopts policies that a dynamic and flexible. This means that the components of soft power may remain the same, but it is the question of when and towards whom can soft power components be applied to. Below is a description of the state's use of soft power.

An illustration of Smart Power



FUTURE COMPONENTS OF SOFT POWER

The future of soft power components can be developed by looking at both the evolution of the concept of soft power in theory and practice as well as the changing trend within the international system. As we have observed, in the contemporary global system, a state cannot effectively project its power by relying on either soft power or hard power. A mixture of hard power and soft power is a more effective way for states to continue being attractive while also protecting its national interests. First, policymakers are beginning to understand the value of projecting power *with* others, which leads to cooperation in achieving state goals and the provision of global public goods. At the same time, given the crowded nature of the international arena where states operate as a result of the entry of different forms of non -state actors, there is a need for states to also apply power *on* others in order to deter acts such as terrorism. In addition, there are a number of direct and indirect factors that will certainly shape what soft power will be in the future;

One is the historical framework upon which one will be discussing soft power at the time. The emergence of the concept in the 1990s was clearly informed by the post-cold war environment. In discussing the behavior of the United States in this period, Joseph Nye's attitude and tone in explaining what soft power is were shaped by the events of the just concluded cold war. Today, soft power is characterized by among other things, globalisation, rapid growth in information and communication technology, the rise of new actors within the global arena leading to the de -Americanisation of soft power as well as the use of soft power to influence political revolutions and sometimes terrorist attacks through making certain ideologies attractive to others. In the future, soft power will also depend on the level of perceived threats to domestic and international security, actors will also be guided with their status within the international system and how other countries perceive their culture.

Equally, soft power will depend on the geographic frame at the time. When the term was first coined, the United States had emerged as the sole global hegemony. Over there last few years, the number of emerging powers have been on the rise and the extent of their rise has equally been intense. This may translate to different strategies being developed by states given the competitive nature of the international system that can arise. This may force states to either adopt new forms of soft power or drop some of their soft power components that are less effective.

A third dimension may include the political aspect. From the experiences learned from the decline of hard power, policymakers recognized that the use of force or coercion was no longer a politically favored option and that they needed to change their approach. For example, America's invasion of Iraq in 2003 was condemned by actors within and outside the United States. It is therefore worth mentioning that a similar trend can characterize soft power. Countries will continue to rely on it as long as it brings the desired outcome which mostly can be measured through political popularity. Having looked at the above dynamics, I will examine some of the future components of soft power.

Dualism: Soft power today and in the future will strongly depend on other forms of power in order to be effective. In other words, states will have to continue supplementing their soft power capabilities with hard power. this dualistic approach will not only help countries to reduce the cost of being attractive but also continue to be able to respond to growing threats to state security that is becoming more complicated each day.

Actors: Actors involved in international activities have been on the rise with different forms of non-states emerging. States today find themselves operating in a more crowded system with other actors having the ability to influence the outcome by either using force or attraction. Indeed, the impact of non -state actors have has increased tremendously. Terrorist organizations are today able to attract members by taping on cultural, religious and speeches. Components such as cyber power, advancement in communication, health, construction and information technology, education as well as arts will continue to define soft power in the future. What is interesting though, is the decline of political culture as a key determinant of soft power. The rise of populism in Europe, the United States, as well as China's political culture which has not hindered it from experiencing rapid economic growth, means that other countries may not necessarily focus on whether a country's political system is attractive in the coming future.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Soft power as an analytical tool and foreign policy strategy is globally accepted and the appropriation of the concept has been favored by its digestibility, flexibility and the ease of its application in many contexts.

Even small stats with weak economic and military power can wield strong soft power and become important players globally. That said, the unpredictability of the international system sparked by the increasing role of non -state actors and events such as the war on terror emphasis the notion that use of soft power today and in the future will depend on the circumstances and conditions the various actor's actors find themselves. This also means that Soft power will continue to characterize state behavior and academic discourse in the near future all be it in a different shape.

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