


The Utility of Both Hard and Soft Power in Modern International Relations

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Article history: Received Jan 21, 2024 Revised Feb 16, 2024 Accepted Apr 17, 2024</p> <p>Keywords: <i>Hard and Soft Power, International Relations, Diplomacy, Cross-cultural Interactions.</i></p>	<p>This essay's first section defines hard and soft power and how they work together to create soft power. Next, various instances of the two principles' application in the formulation of foreign policy are discussed in order to evaluate their efficacy. There are also instances of the application of smart power in this discussion. According to the article, soft power's durability and longevity make it a more effective and efficient notion in modern global politics. Hard power, however, is becoming less valuable as the world order shifts against it. In the modern international system, smart power tactics are just as significant as soft power tactics. Nye proposed the concept of hard power and soft power distinctions almost twenty years ago. He characterizes command or hard power as coercive power used through inducements or threats, and power as the "ability to affect others to get the outcomes one wants" in general. Hard power depends on concrete power resources like armed troops or financial resources and is based on economic sanctions¹, forceful diplomacy, and military action. Hard power examples include the German invasion of Poland in 1939 and the UN economic sanctions imposed on Iraq in 1991 after the first Gulf War. Because of all of the above, it is important to analyze the types of power and their effectiveness, what is the impact of soft and hard power in modern international relations, both separately and in tandem.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">This is an open-access article under the CC-BY 4.0 license.</p> 

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of soft power, as defined by Nye (2017), is the ability to influence others through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion or payment. This power is based on intangible resources such as culture, ideology, and institutions (Nye, 2019). Rothman (2011) further develops this concept by identifying tools and mechanisms of

¹ Wilson, E. J., 2008. Hard Power, Soft Power, Smart Power. ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, Issue 616, p. 114

soft power, including agenda-setting and framing. Nye (2012) emphasizes the historical and global significance of soft power, noting its use in ancient Chinese culture and its role in international relations today. However, the effectiveness of soft power is not guaranteed, as it can be used for both positive and negative purposes (Nye, 2012).

The availability of power resources significantly impacts the efficacy of hard and soft power strategies. Large nations like the USA and Russia can leverage their superior national incomes to maintain sizable armed forces and exert economic pressure, enhancing their hard power (Efanova, 2018). However, the accessibility of soft power supplies is not necessarily tied to a state's size, as demonstrated by Norway's successful development of soft power (Chong, 2007). The type of soft power resources a state has, such as its social structure and historical heritage, also plays a crucial role in determining the strength and utility of its soft power (Heng, 2018). India's progression from limited to strong soft power, driven by its growing hard power, is a case in point (Majeed, 2022). Similarly, China's emphasis on strengthening its cultural appeal and international image underscores the importance of soft power resources (Lin, 2012).

METHODS

This study utilizes a mixed-methods approach to analyze the effectiveness of hard and soft power strategies in modern international relations, focusing on how time influences their effectiveness. Recognizing that soft power requires a longer duration to establish and produce enduring changes, as noted by Gallarotti (2011), the methodology integrates detailed case studies with statistical analysis. Key case studies include India's strategic pivot from hard to soft power following economic reforms in 1991, the European Union's challenges in leveraging its cultural and economic appeal to strengthen its foreign policy, and the consequences of the U.S. relying primarily on hard power during the 2003 Iraq invasion. Each case provides insights into the long-term impacts and immediate outcomes of power strategies within different geopolitical contexts.

Statistical analyses complement these qualitative insights by quantifying the impacts of various power applications across regions and time periods, focusing on military expenditures, economic indicators, and cultural exchange metrics. This comprehensive evaluation helps to understand the nuanced effectiveness of hard and soft power, including the concept of "smart power" — a strategic fusion of both power types, illustrated by initiatives like the U.S. Africa Command and the Millennium Challenge Corporation. These initiatives combine military engagement and economic assistance, enhancing U.S. influence and image abroad.

The study also considers the spatio-temporal dimensions of power, acknowledging that the success of power strategies is heavily influenced by their timing and location, adapting to the changing dynamics of international politics where traditional methods are less effective due to globalization and the rise of transnational actors.

Ethical considerations are carefully managed, with all data collection from interviews and surveys conducted under stringent ethical standards to ensure participant

confidentiality and consent. Limitations of the study, such as potential biases in qualitative assessments and the availability of reliable data, are transparently discussed to underscore the study's integrity.

By weaving together historical analysis and contemporary evaluation, this research offers a detailed examination of strategic power choices and their implications, aiming to provide a deeper understanding of global political dynamics and the evolving landscape of international relations.

Time is a crucial factor in the effectiveness of hard and soft power strategies, with soft power requiring a longer period to establish and produce lasting change (Gallarotti, 2011). This is evident in India's shift from hard to soft power in South Asia, which, despite some flaws, has the potential to bring about long-term positive effects (Kugiel, 2012). However, the European Union's emphasis on soft power has not fully addressed its foreign policy weaknesses, and in some cases, has even widened the gap between expectations and capabilities (Nielsen, 2013). The use of soft power tools in foreign policy, such as economic success and cultural appeal, is a key aspect of global competition (Efanova, 2018). The spatio-temporal turn in diplomatic studies provides a useful framework for understanding the epistemological and ontological consequences of soft power strategies, as seen in the case of German soft power (Pamment, 2013).

According to Smith-Windsor, there is a blurring of the lines between hard and soft power. In order to convey the allure of using military force, he emphasizes that the armed forces may also be "called to participate in humanitarian and interposition peacekeeping operations". He consequently contends that the use of force should not be viewed as being at the hard power pole of the hard-soft power continuum. In fact, certain foreign policy approaches might be seen as successful fusions of the two extremes of the power spectrum. Nossel and Nye adopted this concept and named it "smart power"². According to Armitage and Nye (2007), smart power utilizes resources from both hard and soft power domains (p. 7). They characterize the idea as "an approach that heavily invests in alliances, partnerships, and institutions, while also emphasizing the necessity of a strong military" (ibid.). "The ability... to combine elements of hard and soft power in ways that are mutually reinforcing" is what Wilson defines as "smart power".³

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Let's move past this paper's definitional section. Hard power tactics are less effective because of the features of the current global order. The following characteristics are defined by Hackbarth based on Nye (1990): economic interdependence driven by

² Nossel, S., 2004. Smart Power. *Foreign Affairs*, 83(2).p7

³ Wilson, E. J., 2008. Hard Power, Soft Power, Smart Power. *ANNALS of American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, Issue 616. p115.

globalization; the emergence of transnational actors; the return of nationalism in weak states; the spread of military technology; and the altered nature of international political issues. Widespread access to information was added by Nye to this list, and Gallarotti emphasizes that the expansion of democracy also reduces the efficacy of force.

The 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq serves as an illustration of the futility of relying exclusively on hard power tactics to determine international policy. "The strategy [of the invasion of Iraq] failed to understand what elements of power were most needed to defeat the emerging threat" posed by terrorist organizations, claims Steinberg⁴. Due to this misconception, the Bush administration disregarded two essential components of soft power: first, they ignored the fact that the United States depends on the intelligence and policy capabilities of its allies as well as on public support throughout the world; and second, they gave little weight to the legitimacy of the invasion. These errors caused the action to fail in the near term. As "the strategy undermined the U.S. global position"⁵ and "global public confidence in U.S. leadership"⁶, they have ultimately led to the erosion of American soft power. For example, when their development aid projects in Africa encountered difficulties, the USA suffered the lasting effects of this harm⁷.

It is difficult to establish effective foreign policies that are exclusively dependent on hard power resources because of the aforementioned issues that limit the efficiency of hard power. Nowadays, a lot of states use soft power in their foreign dealings instead of hard power. For example, India is currently going through a transformation in its foreign policy. Wagner cites two primary causes for this change in direction: India's "hard power approach of the 1970s and 1980s was not very successful,"⁸ according to Wagner, but the country's economic growth after 1991 made it easier to employ economic tools in foreign policy. This theory aligns with some of the variables that led to the decrease in the application of hard power as previously described.

However, there are drawbacks to the idea of soft power as well. Cooper identifies three areas of vulnerability. First, he challenges the effectiveness of culture as a soft power tool, pointing out that political power and cultural influence are not the same thing. Second, certain circumstances that states may not always be able to alter determine whether the results of soft power strategies are desirable⁹. Lastly, he questions the true value of agenda-setting as its benefits tend to continue long after its founders have passed away.

⁴ Steinberg, J.B., 2008. Real Leaders do Soft Power: Learning Lessons of Iraq. *The Washington Quaterly*, 31(2). pp159.

⁵ p. 160

⁶ P.157.

⁷ Hackbarth, J.R., 2008. Soft Power and Smart Power in Africa. *Strategic Insights*. pp6.7

⁸ Wagner, C., 2005. From Hard Power to Soft Power?. *Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics*, Issue 26. p. 2,

⁹ Cooper, R., 2004. Hard Power, Soft Power and the Goals of Diplomacy. In: D. Held & M. Koenig-Archibugi, eds. *America Power in the 21st Century*. Cambridge: Polity Press. p. 171

One could argue that the U.S. Africa Command was a failed soft power initiative. Morrison and Hicks claim that the original three reasons for its establishment were China's growing influence in Africa, terrorism and ungoverned areas in Africa, and oil. AFRICOM was marketed as a soft power tactic despite these hard power justifications, which gave rise to the idea that the USA might have imperialist goals in Africa¹⁰. This view hurt American soft power along with the irrational invasion of Iraq.

However, incompetent soft power tactics are typically the exception. Effective applications of soft power are demonstrated by the following instances. The European Union and its capacity to draw in new members serve as the first illustration. Being a preeminent international body, the EU inspires non-member states to want to engage in the European integration effort because of its achievements. The EU's "soft power derives from its readiness to offer a seat at the decision making table"¹¹ is based on this encouraging foundation. This allure guarantees security and tranquility amongst European nations, and the EU's enlargement strategy solidifies its standing internationally. Therefore, both the EU and its member states profit from the EU's soft power.

Another form of soft power that seems to be being utilized more and more in today's international politics is volunteering and cross-cultural interactions. From an American standpoint, Rieffel and Zalud explain the benefits of volunteering as follows:

Volunteering abroad adds measurable value to American security and well-being and is one example of soft power. Volunteers... support democratic government, social capital, institutional capacity building, and human rights respect, all of which make the world a safer place for Americans both at home and abroad.

Thus, because volunteering fosters intercultural understanding and thereby prevents conflict, it is advantageous for both the host and the home countries. The US-American endeavor to increase its influence in Africa is an illustration of smart power in action. This tactic, according to Hackbarth, incorporates three instruments: (i) A series of bilateral trade agreements conditioned on specific political, economic, and social reforms is known as the African Growth and Opportunity Act.¹² (iii) "Based on the principle that aid is most effective when it reinforces good governance, economic freedom, and investments in people,"¹³ the Millennium Challenge Corporation is a financial aid program.

All of these schemes combine the allure of money with the need for social, political, and economic advancement. The fundamental idea is straightforward: a state must fulfill the requirements established by the USA in order to be qualified to

¹⁰ Hackbarth, J.R., 2008. Soft Power and Smart Power in Africa. Strategic Insights. pp. 9–10

¹¹ Cooper, R., 2004. Hard Power, Soft Power and the Goals of Diplomacy. In: D. Held & M. Koenig-Archibugi, eds. America Power in the 21st Century. Cambridge: Polity Press. pp. 179–180.

¹² Hackbarth, J.R., 2008. Soft Power and Smart Power in Africa. Strategic Insights. pp. 6–10

¹³ pp. 6–7

participate in the programs. Given the potent persuasive power of money, this form of development assistance serves as an excellent illustration of a well-executed smart power strategy. "The generosity of U.S. humanitarian assistance abroad enhances U.S. soft power,"¹⁴ according to Mead.

CONCLUSION

In international relations, hard power refers to the use of coercive authority and material resources such as military strength and economic influence. It is often employed through economic incentives and military threats. On the other hand, soft power relies on intangible assets such as culture and operates through attraction and emulation rather than coercion. Smart power, a combination of both approaches, is a topic of interest in academic discussions and public policy formation. Currently, soft power strategies appear to be more effective than hard power tactics in the global arena. Changes in the international order have contributed to the waning influence of hard power, while the enduring nature and adaptability of soft power have bolstered its effectiveness. However, it is essential to recognize the limitations of soft power and carefully consider the advantages of employing smart power tactics.

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¹⁴ Mead, W.R., 2004. Americas Sticky Power. *Foreign Policy*, Issue 141. pp.51.

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