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RE-EXAMINING THE CONCEPT OF SOFT POWER AND INITIATING A DEBATE ON HOW TO DEFINE THE CONCEPT FROM THE NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE CONNOTATIONS*

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REEXAMINAR EL CONCEPTO DE SOFT POWER E COMENZAR UN DEBATE SOBRE LA DEFINICIÓN DEL CONCEPTO DESDE LO NEGATIVO Y CONNOTACIONES POSITIVAS

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Abstract

This article makes an attempt to explicate and thus revisit the definition of Soft Power as provided by Joseph S Nye Jr., which has in fact been very widely used by politicians, bureaucrats and scholars. In fact, Nye's definition of 'soft power' has set a domino effect, whereby majority of the definitions that follow, have accepted in principle the definition provided by Nye. Thus, the problem being many simply claim to know what soft power is with the mere reference of the concept. In the process they ignore the obvious, which has been discussed in this article. There is wide flaw in Nye's definition, as a country's behavior in the international platform is never determined by the other parties' attraction in soft power terms. Every country weighs its interest and follows its convictions before taking any decision. The arguments put forward in the article intends to initiate a debate of what soft power actually is and how it should be defined, from the negative and positive connotations. Veritably, two new constructs entitled, 'Negative Soft Power' and 'Positive Soft Power' is introduced and explained. And finally, before concluding the article also analyses the existing critical literature and have justified as to how this work is different from those critical literature and in what way it contributes in furthering the debate on soft power.

Keywords

Soft Power, Positive Soft Power, Negative Soft Power, Smart Power, Hard Power.

Resumen

Este artículo intenta explicar y revisar la definición de "poder blando" de Joseph S. Nye Jr. que, de hecho, ha sido ampliamente utilizada por políticos, burócratas y académicos. De hecho, la definición de "poder blando" de Nye ha creado un efecto dominó, por el que la mayoría de las definiciones que le siguen han aceptado en principio la definición proporcionada por Nye. Así pues, el problema es que muchos simplemente afirman saber qué es el poder blando con la mera referencia al concepto. En el proceso ignoran lo obvio, que ha sido discutido en este artículo. Hay un gran fallo en la definición de Nye, ya que el comportamiento de un país en la plataforma internacional nunca está determinado por la atracción de las otras partes en términos de poder blando. Cada país sopesa sus intereses y sigue sus convicciones antes de tomar cualquier decisión. Los argumentos expuestos en el artículo pretenden iniciar un debate sobre qué es realmente el poder blando y cómo debería definirse, desde las connotaciones negativas y positivas. Para ello, se introducen y explican dos nuevos conceptos: "poder blando negativo"

y “poder blando positivo”. Por último, antes de concluir, el artículo también analiza la literatura crítica existente y justifica en qué se diferencia este trabajo de dicha literatura crítica y de qué manera contribuye a fomentar el debate sobre el poder blando.

Palabras clave

Soft Power, Soft Power Positivo, Soft Power Negativo, Smart Power, Hard Power.

Introduction

In international politics a large number of politicians, diplomats, and academics, predominantly trust soft power to be one of the essential components of international relations, which influences a country's behaviour and facilitates the achievement of one's foreign policy objectives. However, in the practical functioning of International politics it is national interest and hard bargaining that seem to be the most dominant factor in determining a country's behaviour. This argument is substantiated with examples in the article and has been seconded by many diplomats around the world, whom I met during my stint in the Ministry of External Affairs, where I got an opportunity to interact with hundreds of diplomats from over 80 countries. Thus, in this article I make an attempt to revisit the definition of soft power as provided by Joseph S Nye Jr., which has in fact been very widely used. This is apparent from the fact that a Google search of the word 'soft power' will hit about 2,33,00,00,000 searches. However, the primary problem here is that many scholars simply claim to know what soft power is with the mere reference of the concept and in the process they ignore the obvious and the concept is being used naively. The arguments pertaining to the right understanding of the concept and the possible outcomes will be elaborated further in this article. This article thus seeks to explicate the concept of soft power as it applies in international relations. It begins by first revisiting the definition of soft power provided by Nye and many others. Thereafter, an attempt has been made to define soft power in the way it should be from the 'Negative' and 'Positive' connotations. Veritably, two new constructs entitled, 'Negative Soft Power'¹ and 'Positive Soft Power' is introduced

¹ The concept of 'Negative Soft Power' here is used in a very different context and having different meaning as compared to the ideas put forward by William A Callahan (Callahan, 2015), who questionably uses the concept of 'Negative Soft Power' to portray the manner in which China uses soft power.

and explained, primarily to do away with the glitch that exists in the definition provided by Joseph S Nye Jr. The article also deals with the factors that promote soft power and as to what are the primary constituents of soft power. Finally before concluding, the article also analyses the existing critical literatures on soft power and have justified as to how this work is different from those critical literatures and in what way it contributes in furthering the debate on transforming the notion of soft power into something that is well understood and relevance accepted.

Revisiting the concept

To begin with Joseph S Nye Jr's definition, according to whom,

Soft Power is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideas and policies. (Nye, 2004)

The flaw in this definition is that, a country's behaviour in the international platform is not in the least determined by the other parties' attraction in soft power terms. Every country weighs its interest and follows its convictions before taking any decision. If Country 'A' finds Country 'B's' 'political ideas and policies relevant, it might make an attempt to adopt and apply some of those policies and ideas in its domestic politics, but it in no way would start wanting what Country 'B' wants. India for example, has adopted in its constitution the finer ideas and practices from the constitutions of many countries, for example, Parliamentary type of Government from UK; Written Constitution and the provision of Fundamental Rights from USA; Fundamental duties from USSR; the provision of Concurrent List from Australia; practice of 'Procedure Established by Law' from Japan; Suspension of Fundamental Rights from Germany; Federalism with a strong Centre from Canada; Concept of Directive Principles of State Policy from Ireland and etcetera. However, it never meant that India toed the line with these countries and voted with them in international forums. Similarly, Country B's culture may also be equally attractive, but that again in no way changes a country's behaviour in the international platforms. For most their native culture is always dear and better. To take a very naive example, to most denizens, the taste of their mother's food is always better than the best cuisines of the world. Cuisines of foreign countries do taste good, but they can be alternate only for a day or two or on occasions, what is sustainable is obviously one's

staple food. Another supporting example here could be that many Americans in the United States of America are to some extent fond of Chinese food, however, this love for food, in no way transforms into the love for that country, primarily for the governments that are expected to act in the behest of their country's national interest. Nonetheless, other country's culture may influence the thought process and the behaviour of citizens towards that country, as it fosters better understanding and know how, as for example the Americans at least know that the Chinese cuisine too is as good and popular as theirs own. Thus, it would not be wrong to state that soft power is food for the individuals, but not for countries. However, citing Bourdieu, one may argue that in its deep state, as a way of thinking, there is a sense in which culture is significant, as discussed in Bourdieu's concept 'Habitus' (Bourdieu, 1977). For instance, Anglophone countries have a shared way of thinking, which makes them natural allies. Conversely, South Asia, as an example seems to be least interconnected, despite being bound together by history, geography, kinship, religion, faith, cultural legacy and linguistic affinity. Detailed discussion of the use of culture as a soft power tool and its implications will be discussed in the later part of this article.

Essentially, every country is aware that they are a sovereign nation. They also apparently know, as to which are the country's that are powerful and with whom it will benefit the most. And seemingly they are also aware of the insignificant countries which may be ignored no matter how rich it may be in terms of its culture, political values and ideas. This is also evident from the different official visits of the Head of States to various countries. Such visits are never guided by the extent of soft power resource a country possesses. It is all about one's interest and goals – this is the harsh reality of International politics. However, a point to mention here is that it is the tourist and not countries that are attracted by a country's soft power.

According to Nye again,

A country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries admire its values, emulate its example, aspire to its level of prosperity and openness. This soft power—getting others to want the outcomes that you want—co-opts people rather than coerces them. (Nye, 2004)

Here too, an argument can be built that a country may admire other countries values, emulate its example and aspire to its level of prosperity and openness, however, that does not mean that the country starts to want the outcomes of that country. There is in fact no connection between the two situations. However, Nye justifies his point with the help of few examples, such as,

Soft power is also likely to be more important when power is dispersed. A dictator cannot be totally indifferent to the views of the people under his rule, but he can often ignore popularity when he calculates his interests. In settings where opinions matter, leaders have less leeway to adopt tactics and strike deals. Thus it was impossible for the Turkish government to permit the transport of American troops across the country in 2003, because American policies had greatly reduced our popularity there. In contrast, it was far easier for the United States to obtain the use of bases in authoritarian Uzbekistan for operations in Afghanistan. (Nye, 2004)

Here Nye is partly correct in the sense that public opinion matters in a democratic setup (this fact will be elaborated in the later part of the article), but when this example is applied to the behaviour of countries or its leaders, Nye's argument can be challenged. To believe Turkey's noncooperation was the result of a negative image of American policies may be considered to be over simplification of a complex issue. Political leaders look at the larger picture, and weigh their interest, when dealing with larger and powerful countries, as they are equally aware that for a number of reasons, as explained by 'regime theory', their rule is inherently fragile. In international forums, alliances are more a result of hard bargaining that goes on behind the scenes, which are primarily dominated by the national interest of each and most prominently of the dominant power and thus diplomacy too is less about admirability. Everything goes ok with the concept, till they start focussing on the point that understanding and attraction leads to acquiescence. Unfortunately, thus, the use of soft power today has merely become a cliché, with everybody using the term soft power naively. Nye, too acknowledges the limits of 'soft power' in his 2004 book titled, 'Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics'. However, the problem is not with 'soft power' per se, but with its definition and the expected scope.

Nye's definition of 'soft power' has set a domino effect, whereby majority of the definitions that follow, have accepted in principle the definition provided by Nye. In fact, most literatures on soft power first begin by referring to Nye's definition of soft power, and then go on to build ideas upon it (Kroenig et.al, 2010; Callahan, 2015; Kalimuddin & Anderson, 2018; Shambaugh, 2015; Blanchard & Lu, 2012; Hill and Beadle, 2014; Rothman, 2011). To put it in other words, there is more or less a universal acceptance of Nye's definition by scholars signifying that, they are also accepting that a country can be influenced and foreign policy objectives achieved by the use of soft power tools in the international platform. More so, even non-academic writings, for example the Cambridge Dictionary defines 'soft power' as, "the use of a country's cultural and economic

influence to persuade other countries to do something, rather than the use of military power.” Here again, the definition lays stress on the point of persuading others, and altering their behaviour through soft power, which as discussed is not attainable.

Similarly, the body that conducts the study of ‘Soft Power 30’, build on Nye’s definition, and conduct their research. According to them - “soft power describes the use of positive attraction and persuasion to achieve foreign policy objectives. Soft power shuns the traditional foreign policy tools of carrot and stick, seeking instead to achieve influence by building networks, communicating compelling narratives, establishing international rules, and drawing on the resources that make a country naturally attractive to the world.” Though well defined, some of the problematic words in the definition again are, ‘achieve foreign policy objectives,’ ‘achieve influence,’ etc. Here again as discussed, achieving influence or foreign policy objectives for countries through soft power means is not within the realm of possibility.

As is evident, Nye is like the modern day ‘Pied Piper’ (though not in the literal sense), people followed his definition and when they realized there is a ‘cliff’ ahead, they understand that you needed ‘smart power’, and that, soft power was not sufficient ‘to get the others to want what one wants’. The above arguments can be justified by the fact that Nye and many other scholars’ coined and started using the concept of ‘smart power’ within few years of coining the concept, soft power (Nye, 2004, 2017). This happened primarily when they failed to see results from soft power in the international platform. Smart power hence forth became the vanguard of America’s foreign policy and many other major powers. This transformation unfortunately happened without sufficient debates about what can a country expect out of its soft power, or to be precise, without understanding what soft power actually entails. Smart power is defined by Nye as the combination of both hard and soft power. Further, he and Richard L. Armitage, in their report of the CSIS (Center for strategic and International Studies), titled, ‘Commission on Smart Power: A smarter More Secure America’, talk extensively on the importance of smart power. Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson and Pamela R. Aall, have gone a step ahead and defined smart power as something which “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”.

However, this concept too is not without problems. To put it in a lay man’s term, or to cut short a sophisticated concept, smart power can be understood, with the help of the following example; say, if a man is caught stealing a packet of biscuit from a store. Now an excellent use of smart power can come handy, first, you can chop his hands off (use of hard power), and then apply analgesic lotions (use of soft power).

Now you have a person, who can never steal anything in future, since he has no hands (smart power at work). It has to be realized that the menace procreated by the use of hard power cannot be recompensed. No analgesic tool can recompense a war widow, or a child orphaned in a war. There are studies conducted, which go on to reveal that many of those innocent families that have been impacted or those families that have lost their near and dear ones in the US led 'war on terror' for example, seek revenge with USA, despite the fact that after war US seeks to promote democracy and human rights in the countries that have been impacted (U.S. Drone Strike Kills Aid Worker, 2021; Al Jazeera, 2018). For a country to believe that it is applying smart power and achieving its goals, one primary precondition here should be that the country does not apply much thought. Every country behave or take sides or start to want what you want only if it sees some interest for itself or is forced to do so. They look at the larger picture, and weigh their interest in the long run. So to believe that one's smart power is at work, is nothing less than the show of naivete.

An attempt to define soft power in the way It should be

To some power is guns

To some power is knives

To some power is the ability to read, and write

To some power is control

To some power is a fist

To some like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. power was words

To some power is like a trapped animal trying to get out of a cage

To some power is love

To some power is art

To some power is money

To me power is knowledge

So what is power to you?

Edwina Matthews

No matter what the answer for the above question, "the concept of power remains a decisive reality in International Politics" (Gupta, 2013). Nye is also spot-on, when he says, "Power has never flowed solely from the barrel of a gun" (Nye, 2004). Thus,

respecting all debates on 'power', one acceptable fact is that there are multiple sources of power. Nye's soft power represents few of those multifaceted sources of power, its outcomes may however be debated.

Nye's definition of soft power may be tweaked to read, soft power is that power, which fosters better understanding among two sentient beings and is based on intangible influences such as culture, values, ideology, one's occult knowledge and the like. To put it in other words, soft power may be defined as a means to showcase one's culture and make the other country understand what one really is, beginning from its thought process to its high culture. Soft power is thus about fostering an understanding of what one's country is and what it could mean. The soft power resources cannot definitely direct the other countries behavior, but will definitely generate an understanding of oneself to the other. Such understanding becomes essential primarily to convey the messages like, Americans are not only about bullying in the international platform; Iranians are not only about nuclear weapons; China is not just about communism; and so on so forth. Such a definition of soft power, which does not beget into influence, may be defined as 'Positive Soft Power'. Positive Soft Power helps to promote the idea of compassion with the primary objective of waning away any misunderstanding that exists between nations and the people living within it. Better understanding fosters better harmony and helps countries to predict what the other side is thinking or the way the other side would react in a certain situation. And thus, better decisions can be taken keeping in view all sensitivity and intentions. Thus, policy makers and academicians need to see and focus on 'Positive Soft Power', as a benign statecraft tool.

This argument can be built further by taking the case of the fight against terrorism. A fact to note would be that terrorism is not definitely unsurpassable. As a famous adage goes, 'the one that comes, has to go.' And one of the correct means to eradicate terrorism is to work at its roots. This can be done through people-to-people collaboration - a definite resource of soft power - and definitely not by using missiles (however, not totally undermining the uses and importance of military). Through such collaborations, the general misunderstanding between the denizens of the so-called sovereign nations can be done away with, and the cause towards strengthening humanity can be achieved. As misunderstanding fans hatred, it, in some way or the other, acts as a stimulus and encourages the unwanted elements in a society to flourish and grow. The terrorists avail of such misunderstanding and get a portion of the popular sentiment to support their objective. Thus, it has been evident, no matter how many terrorist one kills, their number keeps increasing, as their leaders are able to fan misinformation and are able to portray their interest to be genuine. This is primarily

because of lack of understanding among civilians of two different countries, who very easily fall for such negative propaganda. However, if a country is successful in showcasing its soft power (Positive Soft Power) to the world, and let know what the country is really about and how rich its culture, its people are, and that it fosters love and humanity, instead of hatred and selfish interest, then it becomes difficult for terrorist to recruit its forces against the people of that country, which they were doing till now by fanning misinformation and making use of people's sentiments. This is one of the ways how 'positive soft power' works. Thus 'positive soft power' can be about showcasing the humane characteristics of a human being.

In this globalized world, one claims that the world is now connected and shrunk with ever growing interdependence and the use of technology has brought us together. Surprisingly, however, if put bluntly there is still so much we don't know about the other countries and their people and culture. There is still widespread misinformation that is influencing our behavior. Unfortunately, one will find that many countries are portraying their soft power resources, which are manipulated and framed or are hiding the stark under side of the country. In this regard, Neal Rosendorf pointed out that if a country's soft power exhibition, does not accurately reflect the state's realities, they are merely putting lipstick on a pig.

Another major lacuna, in the existing literature on soft power has been that the propounders of soft power have been demonstrating it mostly in the perspective of 'ethnocentrism' (Fan, 2008), favoring the region to which they belong, failing to realize that to most, their culture is always better or is second to none. Nye for example, through the introduction of the concept of soft power, tried to portray the strength of US in all terms and in a way succeeded in conveying his message. Likewise, Joshua Kurlantzick talks extensively in the same rhetoric about Chinese soft power; Shashi Tharoor speaks about Indian soft power through his various articles; Nicu Popescu talks about Russian soft power; Hugh Richardson has a lot to say about European Union's soft power, with all its achievements till date; and the list continues. Similarly, the Cambridge dictionary states that "When it comes to soft power, Germany is now one of the most powerful nations on earth." But how many would agree with this proposition. Some scholars and politicians within India, claim India to be Super Soft Power, but again how many outside the country would agree. In the process the concept is used more as a tool with traces of ghetto mentality evident, as everybody is talking about the greatness of their soft power with no listeners. The question here arises, if a nation is attractive by means of other countries soft power, then considering the greatness of all, who is going to get attracted to whose attraction? The problem further escalates, when one starts to assume that the

world will follow its intangible standing and will start to want what it wants. This adverse use of soft power may be termed as ‘Negative Soft Power’.

If the concept of soft power is continued to be used as the best form of propaganda tool (Nye, 2017), or as a tool for altering others behavior, or as a tool to make the others to want what you want, or as a tool to further ones foreign policy goals or to enhance its influence, then the concept may be referred to as ‘Negative Soft Power’. To put it in Umut Yukaruc’s words, there is no difference between hard power and soft power, if their aims continue to remain the same. This negative use of soft power ensures no leverage to nation states, but only ensures distrust because as discussed, all countries are aware of their sovereign status and do primarily act in accordance with their interest and convictions.

On the contrary, as discussed above, when one’s soft power is used to spread the message of humanity and foster better understanding amongst one another, that use may be termed as ‘Positive Soft Power’. However, the positive use of soft power, may sound very idealistic, and something out of the world to many, when it comes to dealing with nation states in the present international system, which according to many is anarchic and a one where constant rivalry politics is evident. However, the historical uses and evidences of the use of positive soft power prove otherwise. To elaborate, the concept of ‘Soft Power’ as has been coined by Joseph S. Nye Jr., is actually an age old, time tested idea and practice, applied successfully by fiefdoms, kingdoms, empires, nation-states from time immemorial. The idea behind the use of soft power was to ensure a better understanding, maintain friendship, learn from each other, increase trade and in the process civilizations and empires flourished. It has been evident in history that those civilizations and empires that were the best connected to the world, always did better than those inward looking civilizations. Definitely, the use of soft power was never about “shaping the preference of others”, or getting the others to want what one wants. Thus, considering the rewarding and meritorious use of the idea of soft *power since time immemorial*, one must say that the concept and the idea of soft power is being underestimated today. One primary reason for this underestimation is the use of or attempt to use soft power with negative intent. Thus, the concept requires strong theorization so as to abridge all the ambiguities associated with the term and its relevance.

One of the other problems here with the concept of soft power is its oxymoron attribute. The word ‘power’ appears in conjunction with the word ‘soft’. Many believe power is about altering others preferences, thus power in any form cannot be benign. Thus, many would argue, when soft power is defined without the attribute of influence and if it is only about generating an understanding of oneself to the other, the concept, loses

the right to refer to the word 'power'. Thus one must mention that 'power' here should not be seen or interpreted in the sense of an ability to influence other, but the ability to make a difference, the ability to make you help understand and be understood better and thus enabling you to take right decisions.

Likewise, Josef Joffe too put forward the idea, though differently, that soft power does not necessarily increase the world's love for a country. It is still power and that it can still make enemies. A country's culture might be alluring, but how does it necessarily mean anything to a person like Osama bin Laden or Hitler. For example, how effective will America's Hollywood be in changing the ways of the North Korean leader Kim Jong-il, despite his fondness for Hollywood movies? To this however, Joseph S. Nye Jr. replies with an example of Steven Luke's concept of 'vehicle fallacy'. He emphasizes 'context' and says that this is not unique to soft power resources alone and that having a larger tank army may produce military victory if a battle is fought in the desert, but not if it is fought in a swamp (Nye, 2006). However, one must point out that here again the examples provided by Nye are neither sufficient nor satisfactory. When asked about apples, his examples are concerning oranges. If we let go the examples of Osama, Hitler and Kim Jong-il, can we name any leader of a country who has been influenced by other countries soft power, and has taken decisions in International forums, without weighing multiple factors, including his, or the nations interest.

Factors promoting Soft Power

The other major challenge towards understanding soft power has been to identify the factors that promote soft power. Such factors are in fact available in plentiful, the reason being that the idea of soft power is as old as human civilization, and is thus in use since time immemorial. The humane nature of a human being is actually his soft 'power'. Through this section, I will identify some of these humane characteristics that can be reckoned as the major factors that promote soft power.

Collaboration- Collaboration, which forms an essence of humanity, can be considered to be a major ingredient in the promotion of soft power. "It", according to Geoffrey Cowan and Amelia Arsenault,

...provide(s) a useful basis and structure upon which to form more lasting relationship. Individuals who engage in conversation may each leave the room with a better understanding of the other. Individuals who build or achieve something

together- whether it be in building a home, a school, or a church; in composing a piece of music; or by playing side by side on a sports team- are forever bound by their common experience and/or achievement.

Better association among the public of various nations would enable them to understand that we are all humans and that, humanity is what matters. And the feeling of hatred, haughtiness, misunderstanding, arrogance and the want for power through war, are merely shams. Robert D. Putnam, in his article, 'Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital', emphasized the fact that, "the quality of public life and the performance of social institutions [and not only in America] are indeed powerfully influenced by norms and networks of civic engagement."

Civic engagements or people-to-people collaboration can be made in many fields, through education- especially by emphasizing on student exchange programs; through social development programs - with people and organizations of various countries coming together and working on a common project for the development of the deprived societies; through sports, where players from different countries come together and play as a team; through intercultural programs and tourism- to foster, understand and respect each other's culture and values better, and through many other means, the list of which is measureless. Such collaborations are nothing but major tools in the context of soft power, which ultimately leads to improved understanding and cooperation.

Communication- "The most basic of all human needs is the need to understand and be understood" (Quotations on Listening). And the best way to be understood is to be able to communicate well. Through effective communication, one can also persuade successfully. It strengthens affiliations, be it at the individual level or in the arena of international politics. Understanding each other lays the foundation of a base, over which peace and harmony can be established. If the Americans and the Muslim world understand each other better, they will know that America is not just about bullying and dropping bombs and the Muslim world on the other hand is not just about extremism and terrorism.

If better understanding, among the public, is the prerequisite for a better and a peaceful life, then say for example, should the Iranians, try to judge or understand the Americans, through their attack on Iraq, or should the Americans, try to judge the Iranians, through their nuclear development policies. This definitely does not work. A basic means or a source of information is a must, and it is here that the mass media plays a very vital role. Radio, television, newspapers and the internet constitute the basis of mass media. It is this media which acts as a major source of communication and

knowledge for the people all around. It also plays a major role in shaping and molding public opinion. The result of which is that, many governments use the media as a tool of propaganda, to meet their selfish ends. As was apparent in 2003, when the war against Iraq was being orchestrated, the United States of America and its allies, along with their media, were leaving no stone unturned to prove that, the news coming out of Iraq were all lies, and that only they were speaking the truth. This, however, is not permissible, and the media which has percolated into the life line of humans, has to rise above political games, and play a part in the development of humanity. Mass media is a very effective tool, which can radiate soft power to its full potential.

The system of communication however, is incomplete, if 'listening' which is an important factor in the promotion of soft power, is not paid heed at. "The best way to understand people," according to Ralph Nichols, "is to listen to them" (Quotations on Listening). This time again, emphasis is being laid on understanding, but by a different means, that is through listening. By listening to others, one can definitely get to learn, know and understand a particular situation or a behavior better. One can even get to know the reasons for growing terrorist activities. Say, for example, a man, be it strong or weak suddenly starts to act in an unruly manner. The best thing to do would be to listen to him first, as to why is he behaving in such a manner, rather than you reciprocating in a similar way. The reason could simply be that you might be stepping on his foot, which he is not able to remove, because of your heavy weight. Listening thus, can be considered to be a very effective tool in promoting soft power. However, till date, listening, though considered important, has negligibly been put into practice. Many disputing countries who sit over the table to discuss their issues are seen talking 'at one another', rather than talking 'with one another'. They are not ready to listen to one another. Thus, the possibility of any solution is at its minimalist. This is why the 'International Listening Association' which was founded in 1979, has dedicated itself to teaching the importance of listening and its skillful use to understand human activities better.

Diaspora – A country can easily reach out to the world through its diaspora. They are in fact the true ambassadors of a country and act as a mirror of the country of their origin. One of the easiest ways to look at a country or understand its land, culture and people is to look at that country's diaspora who by way of their humility/arrogance and way of life generally represent their home country's ethos and principles. Taking cue from India for example, its "diaspora seems to be winning the hearts of the world with their endearing character and peaceful qualities" (Gupta, 2008). Sreeram Chaulia, in his article, "The Great Indian Diaspora," mentions that, "For the most part, an average American, Canadian or Dutchman does not see Indian immigrants as national security

or economic threats, thanks to their humble, flexible and endearing qualities.” And also Mr. Sinha, according to C. Raja Mohan, pointed out that, “people of Indian origin are extremely important sources of support for the Indian Government in the execution of its policies through the influence and respect they command in the countries in which they live.” Thus, it will not be wrong to claim that diaspora forms an essential factor in portraying ones soft power abroad.

Constituents of Soft Power

Joseph S. Nye Jr. and many other scholars of soft power, along with the publishing houses and consultancies such as, Monocle, Portland and USC Center on Public Diplomacy have discussed in detail the various constituents of soft power. Some of which are discussed below;

Culture- Culture, which is alluring to others, has the characteristics to awe, and ultimately generate an understanding of oneself to the other. A footnote to one’s alluring culture is that, everybody on earth has their own unique culture, of which they are proud and are making every effort to preserve and showcase them. The Post-Colonial scholars are and their works are prime examples in this regard. Culture in general has different meanings, to put it in Manali Oak’s words:

Culture refers to the pattern of human activity and the symbols, which give significance to this activity. Culture is represented through the art, literature, costumes, customs and traditions of a community...Culture is a bond that ties the people of a region or community together. It is that one common bond, which brings the people of a community together. The customs and traditions that the people of a community follow, the festivals they celebrate, the kind of clothing they wear, the food they eat, and most importantly, the cultural values they adhere to, bind them together.

Through cultural exchanges, better understanding among the countries is feasible. However, a very important fact to note would be that such cultural exchanges should always be a two way symmetrical exchange. A country, if it imposes its culture upon others will be viewed with aggression. To everyone, their own culture is dear.

To name a few examples; the American culture with its, “grunge and Google, Madonna and MoMA, Hollywood and Harvard” (Joffe, 2006), are very alluring to majority of the youths around the world. “Even in Iran, where the ruling clerics describe America

as ‘the great Satan,’ the young want to watch American videos in the privacy of their homes,” (Nye, 2005). The Chinese students are said to have symbolized their protest in Tiananmen Square (1989) by creating a replica of the statue of liberty. And also instances of the youth listening to Radio Free Europe (RFE) behind the Iron Curtain, (Maleki, 2007), are examples of American cultural influences around the world. China, with its Confucius Institutes around the world and rapid economic growth, is out on a venture spreading its soft power resources. The result of which is that people around the world have now started to look at China differently, much beyond its communist identity. India on the other hand, with its diaspora and Bollywood, seems to be winning the hearts of the people all over. The list goes on, as every country on this globe have their culture and sub-cultures, which of course is unique and second to none. However, some have managed to showcase it well and the others are in the process of doing so. In the process, one should definitely not believe that their culture is superior, as doing so, is utter foolishness and the portrayal of naivete.

The idea here is very much related to the concept of cultural diplomacy. Cultural Diplomacy, as Milton C. Cummings Jr. puts it, “... (is) the exchange of ideas, information, art, lifestyles, values systems, traditions, beliefs and other aspects of cultures...” (culturaldiplomacy.org). Cultural diplomacy has in fact existed as a practice for centuries, with explorers, travellers, teachers and artists as examples of informal ambassadors or early cultural diplomats. Cultural exchanges can take place in fields that include art, sports, literature, music, economy, etcetera (culturaldiplomacy.org). Such exchanges not only help a nation understand another country better, but also create a world that has its foundation on trust and compassion.

Political Values- Nicolae Kallos and Ovidiu Trasnea define political values “as political relationships, institutions, organizations, views and ideas resulting from the transforming, creative sociopolitical practice of the social forces that meet the requirements of social progress and of the development of human personality on a social scale.” According to Joseph S Nye Jr., when countries live up to their political values at home and abroad, it constitutes its soft power resource. He further adds that “the political values a government champions in its behavior at home (for example, exercising democracy) in international institutions (working with others), and in foreign policy (promoting peace and human rights) strongly affect the preferences of others. Governments can attract or repel others by the influence of their examples” (Nye, n.d.). However, a point here to note is that in academics, it is still being contested as to what is the best form of government and that every society is guided by its own political culture.

Ideology - “Ideas and Ideologies”, according to Andrew Heywood, “influence political life in a number of ways... they provide a perspective through which the world is understood and explained. People do not see the world as it is, but only as they expect it to be; in other words, they see it through the veil of ingrained beliefs, opinions and assumptions.” It is hence conceivable that when a person’s/leader’s ideology - i.e. its beliefs, opinions and assumptions - is appealing enough, it can get the people from the opposition camp to join your end. This is supposed to be one of the cases, in the Capitalist victory over its Communist rival during the cold war. The idea of free market, human rights, democracy and rule of law played a decisive part in beckoning the majority of Eastern European youth towards the capitalist ideology. To put it in YU Xintian’s words, “We should not underestimate the influence of ideology on soft power...The more the ideology suits the trend of the times, the more it will win endorsement and increase the soft power of a state.”

Charismatic Leaders like Gandhi, Martin Luther King Junior or Nelson Mandela had a plethora of followers, primarily because of their ideas and ideology, which has multiple takers. Similarly, however, leaders like Hitler, Stalin, and Osama Bin Laden too had followers. Thus, I will not enter into a debate of whose ideology or what idea is better. The fact of the matter is that leaders have acolytes because people are influenced by their ideas. A point here to note is that Charismatic leaders possess the essence of soft power.

Thus, a unique characteristic of soft power is that it is wielded, not just by the state, but by all actors, including Institutions, employers and employees, sellers and buyers, leaders and followers and even members in a family. Hence, it would not be wrong to view soft power in the eyes of Steve Young, when he defines soft power in many perspectives. To him,

‘Soft’ power is far more strategic.

‘Soft’ power is customer loyalty.

‘Soft’ power is employee skill and commitment.

‘Soft’ power is having investors and creditors who believe in your business and will help you through hard times.”

‘Soft’ power arises from all your intangible assets – relationships, good will, brand equity, unique value proposition, business model, supplier quality, long term thinking.

‘Soft’ power is all about people. Take care of people, and they will take care of you. Trust, reliability, being there for your customers, mutuality of benefit, win-win over zero-sum – these moral factors build business opportunity.”

Likewise, for consultancies such as, Monocle, Portland and USC Center on Public Diplomacy, soft power is constituted in factors such as, Government, Digital Capability, Culture, Enterprise, Engagement with others, Education, Cuisine, Friendliness, Luxury Goods Production and Use, Foreign Policy, Living standards of the people within a country (Human Development Index). In a nutshell, anything and everything that attracts the other and generates an understanding of oneself to the other is soft power. However, what one expects out of such an understanding is the primary issue of debate.

Existing Critical Literatures on Soft Power

There are extensive critical literatures on soft power. Each of the literatures provide a motley of arguments criticizing Nye's presentation of the concept of soft power. Some of the indispensable critical reasoning of soft power are as follows: Incapable of concrete results (Ramo, 2009); vague, confusing and even ethnocentric (Fan, 2008); not easily measurable and better suited to the jargon of politicians, rather than having any analytical value (Hall, 2010; Umut, 2017); ideational and often subjectively employed, far less practical relevance, inherently fuzzy concept and that there are difficulties associated with measuring the impact of the concept, not verifiable concretely (Kearn, 2011); not so soft (Mattern, 2007); limited reach and nothing new in the concept, has similarity with other approaches and it is the other name of cultural imperialism (Ferguson, 2004; Umut, 2017); ambiguity in the structure, as there is no difference between hard power and soft power in terms of its aims (Umut, 2017); lack of clear conceptual framework, as is very easily translated into other related concepts, such as public diplomacy and strategic communication (Liaropoulos, 2011).

As is evident there are numerous arguments pointing out the shortcomings of the concept, and each time they do so, they present a case with justifications and examples. Further, efforts have been made by scholars such as, Pawel Surowiec (Surowiec, 2017), Steven B. Rothman (Rothman, 2011) and William A. Callahan (Callahan, 2015) to develop the concept of soft power by introducing newer twist in the study with concepts such as, 'hybridity', 'harder powers', 'softer powers' and 'Negative Soft Power (questionably only in the Chinese context)', etc.

With this, however, one must also point out that many of the critics who counter the concept or those who are developing the concept further do so only after accepting the definition provided by Nye. Some thinkers start analyzing the concept by bracketing it under some IR theories and then criticize it further through the lenses of those theo-

ries. Some relate it to the concept of Gramsci's 'hegemony' and some with Bachrach's, Baratz's and Luke's 'second and third face of power'. Additionally, many critics of soft power, lay stress on the word and discuss elaborately on the point as to why are the words 'soft' and 'power' used conjointly, while they are words that are juxtaposed to each other.

But in the process of this extensive bickering, some of the critics fail to appreciate the idea and its age old existence, and thus fail to realize that it is not the concept or Nye's explanation of the concept that is important, but what really makes sense is to take the concept ahead by suggesting improvements in the definitions so as to ensure better understanding of the practice through such concepts. It is here that some of these critics have failed as they do not provide any improvements or alternative solutions to the concept. One must realize that the practice in International relations are not the result of concepts or theories, but these concepts and theories are only efforts to understand what the practice is. Thus, if any of the theorists and his concepts fail to explain the real picture, the effort must be to rectify and initiate a debate to further the idea and improve the definition in order to bring out the true picture. With regard to the concept of soft power, Nye had himself agreed to the point that the concept requires further elaboration. This article thus makes an attempt to do that by adding on to the existing critical literatures and introducing two new concepts, that is, 'positive soft power' and 'negative soft power' in this regard.

Conclusion

With all said, this article intends to initiate a debate of what soft power actually is and how it should be defined from the negative and positive connotations, because as mentioned earlier, the concept has merely become a cliché with the majority using the concept without understanding its essence or without knowing what to expect out of it. In the manner it is being used presently, is thus, a clear manifestation of the idea of 'Negative Soft Power'. Seeking to lead has negative effects. Nye starts well, however loses track when he starts to expect too much. Essentially, to do away with the confusion and disagreement, it must be made clear that examples that apply in a society, where individuals are the subjects, Nye's definition of soft power fits the genre. Soft power is the food for an individual and not for countries. It can thus be said that, the concept of soft power is in need of a stronger academic research, which will nullify any attempt to downside its importance. Past usage of the idea of soft power conveys the message that it can even prove to be

stronger than hard power and that it should be used with the positive intent to create a better world where humility and understanding prevails. To conclude in David A. Baldwin's words, "Overall, soft power is a huge conceptual misstep in the right direction."

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