

PSIR Handout by Mr. Iqbal Singh

Concept of Soft Power

American scholar **Joseph S. Nye** has given the concept of soft power. Nye describes soft power as attractive power.

- Soft power is the ability to achieve desired outcome through persuasion or attraction rather than coercion. Soft power co-opts people rather than coerce them.
- Soft Power builds attraction and encompasses nearly everything other than economic and military power.

The soft power of a country rests primarily on three resources:

- Its culture (in place where it is attractive to others),
- Its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad)
- Its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority).

Soft power resources are the assets that produce attraction. Therefore, Soft Power helps building an overall image of a state; the degree of the attractiveness of the image reflects its Soft Power potential. As evident from the resources mentioned above Soft Power help, build a “brand” of a country in the following ways:

- Its culture is respected and hailed by the external world.
- Its political values are considered as ideal types and others tries to uphold them in their respective systems.
- Its foreign policy commands legitimacy and support of the external world. This facilitates the successful exercise of foreign policies.

Public diplomacy is an instrument that governments use to mobilize these resources to communicate with and attract the publics of other countries, rather than merely their governments. It is widely believed that Public Diplomacy is the development, maintenance and promotion of a country’s soft power

Differences between hard and soft power

<u>Hard power</u>	<u>Soft power</u>
It is tangible and materialistic i.e. threats of Coercion (“sticks”), inducements and payments (“carrots”).	It is ideational (attractive power)
It is compelling	It is voluntary in nature
It requires less time to develop and its results are immediate.	It takes more time to build and it does not lead to immediate results.
It is possessed by the state.	Soft power is dispersed and not concentrated in one institution. It is difficult for the state to use it directly as per their requirement.

Realist scholars criticise soft power for its limitations. They argue that soft power is not dependable and cannot help achieve national interests. Therefore, they suggest that hard power should never be ignored by countries.

Relevance of Soft Power in 21st century

Today’s world is best described by the **Cob Web model** given by **John Burton**. Actors have multiplied; channels of communication have also multiplied because of rapid spread of globalization. Globalization and its forces have led to an interdependent world (Richard Rosecrane). Moreover, nuclear deterrence has also emerged between major powers of the world (9 countries possess nuclear weapons). Thus, usage of Hard Power has decreased, particularly military power, moreover, era of military conquest and expansionism is over (as argued by PM Modi). Trading states are replacing military states.

Therefore, in today's world of interdependence and nuclear deterrence usage of soft power can be extremely handy in achieving your desired outcomes.

Shashi Tharoor: our civilisational ethos has been the immeasurable asset for our country. We should not allow spectre of religious intolerance and political opportunism to undermine our soft power in the 21st century. He further argues that Indian culture has the soft power that would truly make it the influential leader in the 21st century.

P. Stobdan: Soft power can be effective

He argues that in countering China, India should go back to its strength of reaching out to people of other civilisations, emphasising cultural affinities with them.

ICCR chief Vinay Sahasrabudhe:

Importance of soft power is increasing globally. We believe that centrality of cultural ties will eventually promote our diplomatic, strategic as well as economic relationships.

However, Over reliance on Soft Power can be counterproductive: Hard Power is equally important

Many experts have argued that India should not over depend on Soft Power. Developing Soft Power at the cost of ignoring Hard Power resources is not advisable. Soft Power suffers from many limitations like it is not tangible, its impact cannot be assessed, and it is voluntary in nature and is not under the strict possession of state. **Thus, Joseph Nye suggests states to acquire smart power.**

Joseph Nye: Joseph Nye has been aware of the weakness of the soft power concept and has developed a revised approach in the name of 'smart power'. According to Nye power in a global information age, more than ever, will include the soft dimensions of attraction as well as hard dimensions of coercion and inducement. The ability to combine hard and soft power effectively is "smart power". Nye suggests that no country can ignore the importance of soft power but certainly hard Power is also an important variable and both if applied in right proportions amounts to "Smart Power". Nye argues that smart power as an approach underscores the necessity of strong military power but also invests heavily in institutions, partnerships and alliances.

Happymon Jacob: the fading appeal of Soft Power

We would do ourselves good to remember that the pursuit of national interest is a complex affair, and norms, values and soft power should co-exist with the pursuit of hard power.

Chinmaya R. Gharekhan: A mere wish to be praised as a global or even regional power should not be allowed to guide the policy. When other countries flatter us by describing us as a major power, it is invariably because they want to rope us into some schemes of their own. The principal interest of most of them is to sell very expensive military hardware to us. **Our single minded focus should be on economic development. Without the necessary economic strength, we cannot strengthen our military.**

Suhasini Haidar: End of the age of soft power?

The 21st century was to be driven by the win-win use of soft power, but in the last few years global leaders have rejected it in favour of a **'might is right'** attitude. Soft power's efficacy is in decline. This is for a number of reasons, most notably the rejection of soft power by global leaders, increase in **global polarisation, rise of populism, militarisation of diplomacy** and lowering of the exemplary values big powers adhere to.

What, according to Joseph Nye, are the major sources of a country's soft power? Discuss its relevance in the contemporary world politics. (10 marks) (PYQ – 2018)

