

Cases Where Soft Power is Being Ignored

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Abstract

Today, in times of globalization and anarchy regarding global security concerns and global order in general, one can expect a dramatic shift to soft power in approaching unresolved sensitive issues that have plagued and petrified the whole system of international relations. But since there is friction and lack of constructive communication between great powers global disorder will continue to disperse divergences, conflicts, exclusions, cultural-ideological biases and extremism around the world. The world environment reveals itself uncertain with a bunch of challenges ahead that require the utilization of soft power values and its potential to resolve some of these sensitive issues in a durable time frame. Although globalization tends to shrink the role of hard power in general because of the growing interdependence relation among states, one can still observe some cases where states base their actions solely on hard power or are still attached to its means and strategies. Conversely, other states seem unwilling to share and exchange values or attracts other actors or states by argument or persuasion in order to achieve common goals. This paper aims to analyze the role of soft power, namely the power to persuade and attract through its "values dimension", its effectiveness to complement hard power and cases where its role has been ignored.

Keywords: soft power, hard power, unresolved challenges, world order, public diplomacy

Introduction

The picture of the world order in general reveals itself uncertain more than ever before. Despite the overall financial crises and challenges there are still concerning issues like "terrorism, nuclear proliferation, financial instability, pandemic disease, mass atrocity, or tyranny" (Lagon 2011) and radical changes and balance disruption in ideological or cultural relationships between states or religious groups. "These issues are all inter-related" (Riordan 2004:8), moreover, open disputes; some new and some inherited from the past; reflect the divergences between two or more actors in other regions and states because of the lack of good will and soft power misuse or negligence in bringing these conflicts or disputes to an end. The concept of power has shifted dramatically in the wake of 21st century. Although power takes many forms and dimensions, its manifestation in international politics and foreign relationship realm depend on the context of the situation and its capabilities to influence. This paper aims to analyze the role of soft power, namely the power to persuade and attract through its "values dimension" (Lagon 2011) and resources, its effectiveness to complement hard power and more specifically cases where its role has been ignored, neglected or misguided. The aim of this article it is not to predict the exact outcomes and the solution that would have been reached in those cases where soft power usage has been or it is still absent, but to bring up significant facts about the importance of its usage, its influence and how and where it's utilization is missing. Hard power has been traditionally a form to exert "military force and conquest" (Nye 2002:2) which began to change for a number of reasons after the end of cold war, when Joseph Nye Jr. first coined the term of soft power in 1990 and started to develop its concept afterwards. Just as the concept of soft power has evolved during time, the concept of power in general and its "level or faces" (Trunkos 2013:2) take significant importance depending on situation and context. Anyhow, some states in some cases still rely mainly on hard power in order "to induce others to change their position" (Ibid:4). While the utilization of hard power or "the overreliance" (Lagon: 2011) on it may cause today more political, diplomatic and social defects than it caused in the past, the complete absence of soft power where it is expected to influence the resolving of global importance challenges furthermore, may send to loss of time, cost and opportunities. Observing some important events in international arena, like for instance the spreading of terrorism, European enlargement and its skepticism, the Schengen agreement, Israeli-Palestine conflict, Middle East crises etc., one can only question, -where did soft power remain? How are these unsolved issues affecting the peace and stability of the world system in general? What have the leaders and actors related to these events and facts have been doing wrong so far? Did they really go in to the heart of problems to find solutions or their haste to confront the above mentioned challenges without any significant combination of hard and soft power together have only heightened tensions between the parties? One has to pose these

questions because “the context of the twenty-first century, however, presents new challenges for nations-states and other actors on the global stage – in part because the role of information, culture and communication in the practice of international politics” (Hayden: 2012;1) is becoming increasingly important. Moreover the 9/11 events, and other terrorists attacks that happened afterwards continue to shift the focus on issues like “identity, culture and communication”(Ibid:2) not only as components of soft power but also as important means in finding constructive solution and approaches. By giving the right importance to these social elements and facts as actual form of expressions, would be easier to understand the viability and importance of soft power in general and the key role that it is expected to play in the cases that will be mentioned in this paper.

Hard power and soft power; their value dimension and complementary role

Some important aspects of soft power are its resources which differ a lot from hard power resources, namely ideology, “culture”, “political values”, “foreign policies” (Nye Jr. 2006), image, information, institutions that are utilized through various instruments such as public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy. Soft power is related to attraction, power to persuade through attraction, ideas, values and foreign policies that are able to transmit, produce and obtain the desirable outcomes like for instance “Europe has successfully used the attraction of its successful political and economic integration to obtain outcomes it wants”, (Ibid 2006) although now the refugee crises, the policy and stance difference of EU member states toward refugees and the growing or rather the unbearable influx of them heading toward EU has recently put at risk the Schengen agreement. “Image and ‘public relations’ are everyday terms for ‘soft power’. In the business world one would use the term ‘goodwill’”,(Matteuci 2004) but depending on different situations soft power “like any form of power, it can be wielded for good or ill” (Nye Jr. 2006). The image of US and West in general “(democracy, freedoms and lifestyles)” (Ellwood 2014) was an example to follow and their values helped to overcome communism and weaken the position of Soviet Union when the iron curtain fell in the early 90s without any use of force, coercion or military intervention. That was “what Washington achieved after World War II: it used soft-power resources to draw others into a system of alliances and institutions that has lasted for 60 years. The Cold War was won with a strategy of containment that used soft power along with hard power.” (Nye J. Jr. 2004) The West and US image that was produced by the launching of these values dimension at that time created an effective soft power that provided attraction and a haste for communist countries to embrace western values. The events of 9/11 and the Iraq war afterwards changed US “traditional position of prestige”(Ellwood 2014), since “the United States has often acted as though its military preeminence can solve all problems.”(Nye Jr.2006) Although in the 90s it was much easier for the West to obtain the political outcomes through soft power values dimension without using any military force, today the situation is different if we take in consideration the situation that was created in Ukraine. “In the Financial Times, Robert Cooper, a former senior EU diplomat, warned that all the soft power the EU can deploy in the Ukraine will be useless if it can’t be accompanied by a hard edge, though he did not specify what this hardness would consist of.” (Ellwood 2014) Probably the hardness mentioned by Robert Cooper would consist of what Joseph S. Nye Jr. refers to when he thinks that Europe needs “to be smart today” (Nye Jr.2006) in investing more on “hard-power resources”(Nye Jr.2006). “Today Nye prefers the term ‘smart power’, to express an idea of synthesis between the hard and soft power versions that states may deploy in given situations,”(Ellwood 2014) as military coercion is becoming less creditable but not less relevant in a continuous change of global system and soft power is increasing its influence as long as values, norms, behaviors, culture and historical experience will continue to matter in this contemporary world system. A combination and a right use of soft and hard power through smart power strategies would play a significant role in international relations today. This combination is deepened and developed further more by Julio Gallarotti with the term “Cosmopolitan power” (Gallaroti 2010). He refers to “cosmopolitan power” in essence as “a balance between the hard and soft power sources” (Gallarotti 2010;30). This balance would consist of both forces and a “compromise between hard and soft power”(Stuenkel 2011) or a balance between coercion in combination with persuasion in international relations, “abiding by existing rules” and “liberal norms” (Gallarotti 2010;49).

Where has been soft power neglected or misguided?

There is much criticism today about US overreliance on hard power which is not restoring the image of US as a power that knows how to exploit “political means like dialogue, respectful multilateralism, and the use of new media” (Lagon 2011), on the other hand efforts, military actions and logistic expenses to counter terrorism are not generating any bold perspective in understanding or digging more on the impetus, dynamics, social-economic and ideological factors that drive terrorist

organizations or groups to violent acts, and moreover factors that drive people to engage with terrorist organizations and such acts. All this would mean to go into the heart of the problem and "to address this problem has to begin by understanding its origins" (Walt 2015). There is "a vast counterterrorism industry, much bigger intelligence budgets, and more energetic government surveillance, but the basic counterterrorist playbook has evolved little over the past 20 years" (Ibid 2015) Even terrorist groups use soft power instruments and social media to attract people from different age groups, more specifically from the younger generation and spread their influence in different parts of the world. Admittedly, extremist groups know how to use soft power means and mechanisms. "These organizations deployed in different regions of the world spread their ideology thanks to the educational programs developed especially towards the youth. Soft power instruments used by states in combating terrorism are implemented more effectively by terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda; schools and madrasas in countries such as Pakistan and Syria are put to use to brainwash the youngsters and these threats exist also in Saudi Arabia and Indonesia." (Blose 2014) Meanwhile in a time when "USA is losing the information war of ideas and that the international public is starting to express doubts about the war on terrorism" (Pešto 2010), media as well isn't playing a valuable role (since public diplomacy "is used for media consumption" (McEvoy-Levy 2001:2)) in facing or fighting terrorism by giving forehead news and publicity to the successive terrorists acts that continue to happen time after time, instead of "doing more to "discredit, marginalize, spoof, and embarrass" (Walt 2015) these acts of violence. Social media could play a more constructive role in helping to fight these phenomena if they could use smart ways to describe and broadcast acts of violence like for instance "ways to discredit extremist movements" or "make them look ridiculous, so that joining or backing them is seen as stupid, uncool, or embarrassing". (Ibid 2015) In this case probably soft power-public diplomacy has been misguided in "portraying the Islamic State and its ilk as cruel, cunning, fanatical, dedicated, dangerous" instead of finding the right messages to convey regarding this phenomena in order to prohibit the young generation to engage with such groups or terrorist organizations. On the other side Europe has been facing hardships by massive migration and terrorism. Although EU is characterized by its soft power, the mass migration crises and the events and attacks that happened in Paris, Istanbul and Cologne are putting the Schengen agreement into question because of the immigrant influx and terrorism threats. The open-door policy that EU had toward the immigrants acted as a sort of "openness for assistance" or as an invitation for cultural approach in this globalization era of values, but the consecutive above mentioned acts are risking to shake the very foundations of the European Union. In this case the application of EU soft power policies would be meaningless if Europe risks to collapse because of these rapid and unpredicted crises. When EU German President Martin Schultz declares "Nobody knows what we are facing this year. We are threatened as never before"¹, that means that an edifice established with lots of sacrifices for many decades is not only risking crumbling but is also fragile, therefore vision and solidarity is required to eliminate the consequences of a huge crises, now already inside the house of EU. Whether a combination of soft and hard power will be exploited² in order to deal with this crisis remains to be seen. At the moment "division and mistrust" (Hewitt 2016) is prevailing. The conflict in Syria has had a negative impact not only across the region but also for the EU. When there is friction and clash between great powers, tensions are reflected in other regions and countries related to these great powers. When Mustafa Kemal Atatürk first pronounced "Peace at home, peace in the world"³, it was as though he was ahead of his time, since the world has become a global village and so

1 This declaration by Mr. Schulz has been cited also in other articles recently, to express emigration crisis and strains that the European Union is facing this year. See more: EU will FALL amid terror and migrant strain - and it's starting in Germany, admits EU head. - by Rebecca Perring

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/634693/EU-threat-terrorism-Islamic-State-migrant-crisis-Germany-Angela-Merkel>

2 In December 2014, Federica Mogherini, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission said: "Today, the EU cannot simply watch the suffering of Syrian people without acting. We are ready and willing to bring a continued support to the people of Syria and to the neighbouring countries hosting Syrian refugees. It is time for things to change. We are determined to play our role to the full and bring a lasting political solution to this regional crisis"(EU Commission Press release) After the attacks in Paris, France declared its state of emergency. "In the meantime, countries began implementing their own measures"(Hewitt 2016), border controls, fences, constrains. "Hungary built a fence. Germany, Austria, France, Denmark, Sweden and Norway all began introducing checks at their borders. It amounted to a suspension of the Schengen agreement."(Hewitt 2016)

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/hahn/announcements/eu-syria-eu180-million-deal-crisis-and-spill-over-lebanon-and-jordan_en

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35405896>

3 Mustafa Kemal Atatürk stated immediately after the Turkish War of Independence that "Peace is the most effective way for nations to attain prosperity and happiness"

interdependent. Although global trends have their benefits and pitfalls, the negative aspects are spread more rapidly than positive ones. The situation in Syria represents a complex situation where hard power and muscle flexing between "erstwhile cold war rivals" (Ahmad 2015) and other regions involved like Australia and France seem to be the core of the problem but not any sort of the solution. On 9 November 2015, Naveed Ahmad¹ stated in his article relating the Syrian case "Debating hard power against IS" that "if military solutions alone are to be pursued, then the West and the Gulf will have to keep its doors open for refugees, and banks flexible to depleting financials." (Ahmad 2015) Actually, this influx of refugees that he warned about not only has brought to a great debate regarding "the open door policy" but also heightened tensions inside the EU and brought the entire EU project at risk. "An ideology cannot be destroyed with missiles and the geopolitical point-scoring between global powers is not an attempt to help Syrians" (Ahmad 2015), but also not an attempt or any good will to implement smart strategies in order to bring these atrocities and crises to an end for the benefit of the whole region and beyond. Once the Middle East is mentioned, it is understandable that the region is in long-term crises, considering also the Israeli-Palestine crises as one of the longest and most permanent one in the world. This crises has led to harsh confrontations between Israeli and Arab World that have also brought to two frontal (regional wars) in the Middle East, associated with Palestinian waves of refugees fleeing to safer lands and with recent tense situations of terrorist actions between groups or nationalist and fundamentalist organizations, like those between Hamas and Hezbollah on one side and Israel on the other. In a global era, continuous open crises tend to transmit other crises in the region and violence evokes violence further more. Probably regional internal problems like poverty, Islamic radicalization and rivalry between Islam sects and totalitarian regimes in countries like Iraq, Egypt, Libya and Iran have brought to the absence of any social peace, long term political instabilities, confrontations etc. Lastly, as mentioned above, the refugee crises from Syria and Iraq are not only destabilizing the EU but are likely to grow and further expand the radical conservative and extremist groups in Europe. In the case of Middle East crises, means and forms of "soft Power" and "hard power" have generally been used but the fact is that no concrete results or improvements are shown, "because much more is needed" (Nye J. Jr.2004) to be done in this region. Soft power has been difficult to implement in this region even by EU side, since "those persuading need to keep in mind the political and cultural landscapes inhabited by those they seek to persuade." (Wessberg 2015) This applies not only to EU but also to the US, because "Above all, Americans will have to become more aware of cultural differences; an effective approach requires less parochialism and more sensitivity to perceptions abroad."(Nye J. Jr. 2004) Effective soft power strategies would be important to yield public diplomacy in the Middle East countries but firstly a remold of these policies is needed, be they in medium or long term, "in order to better explain U.S. policies and "brand" the United States as a democratic nation."(Nye Jr. J. 2004) The region reveals in hardship more than ever if we take into consideration the fact that from a crisis like Israeli-Palestine from many decades, today we have similar crises with different specifics and variations throughout the whole region. These crises without an end may further encourage the refugee crises and increase the fatigue of international actors and western allies involved, who really want to bring this situation to an end, but may find themselves disillusioned in their expectations. "Although far from omnipotent, the United States is still, as former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright called it, "the indispensable nation." Soft power is crucial to sustaining and best leveraging this role as catalyst" (Lagon 2011) but that would require some "changing attitudes at home"(Nye Jr. J. 2004) and a constructive debate with allies and foes especially regarding the situation in Syria, where the war is raging at the moment. "Wielding soft power is far less unilateral than employing hard power" (Nye Jr. J. 2004) - a fact that applies to all the parties involved in Syria but especially to the US as a "catalyst". (Lagon 2011)

Conclusions

Today, in a world order made of growing complexities and "inter-connectedness" (Riordan 2004:8) soft power remains still the other face of the coin, to get the outcomes one wishes to obtain by exploiting values of example, influence and admiration. While some regions finds themselves in total dark and austerity, global powers have failed to tackle most

"Mankind is a single body and each nation a part of that body. We must never say "What does it matter to me if some part of the world is ailing?" If there is such an illness, we must concern ourselves with it as though we were having that illness."

<http://ataurk.twoday.net/stories/4080648/>

11 Naveed Ahmad is a Doha-based investigative journalist and academic with special focus on diplomacy, security and energy issues. Opinions expressed in the article "Debating hard power against IS" remain those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of al-Araby al-Jadeed, its editorial board or staff.

prominent crises and threats and reach common ground and consensus in finding solutions or any peace agreement between the parties. That is because on one side “the threats these issues pose can only be contained through collaboration with a broad range of partners from a broad range of different cultures that exists today” (Riordan 2004:8), while on the other side these actions require a broader understanding and sensitivity with regard to different cultures. When thinking about public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy as instruments to flourish soft power, firstly the West is having problems in understanding the ideology and the cultural landscape of those they are seeking to “defeat”, meanwhile “we have seen that assertion of western values as possessing unique and universal validity could be counter-productive” (Riordan 2004:10) The right word in this context instead of “defeat” would be “influence”, but as long as military acts and coercion are prevailing, there is always less space for soft power techniques and instruments as well as smart strategies to influence. Although terrorism is becoming a more compound and tricky phenomena it is still true the fact that “The current struggle against Islamist terrorism is not a clash of civilizations; it is a contest closely tied to the civil war raging within Islamic civilization between moderates and extremists. The United States and its allies will win only if they adopt policies that appeal to those moderates and use public diplomacy effectively to communicate that appeal.” (Nye J. Jr.2004). EU is overcoming the hardest time ever since its project was brought to life, because of the refugee crises. This crises appeals for solidarity, leaving behind national interest and finding good will more than ever between EU leaders in overcoming further consequences and crises to prevent “divisions between Eastern Europe and the northern countries” and “clash of values” (Hewitt 2016) by people they consider of different cultural background that now are merging in to the EU. The world is not only facing a political project such as the EU risk of failure but also the greatest humane catastrophe happening after the WW2. Some of the above mentioned challenges show that measures, interventions and preventive diplomatic means taken so far, have been out of a long term vision for a securer and a more stable international order. Moreover methods and institutions that are in charge for decision-making in general, especially those with international character like UN or Security Council seem outdated and require reformation. Their decision-making and ways have proven that they are not able to anticipate or precede solutions for a more prosperous and a securer world without conflicts and crises. These organizations are the products of a status-quo established after the World War Two, which prepared the conditions for a bipolar world order that brought a bipolar leadership, which indeed bore a rivalry or a permanent conflict at that time, but in the end established a peaceful coexistence for almost fifty years. While now, in the conditions of a multi-polar world, new rules and compromises are required.

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