

Bio-Note:

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With a profound admiration for her country, India, she aspires to contribute significantly to society and serve her nation in the best possible manner.

Ramanshi's determination to be a value addition in her pursuit of a better future is truly commendable.

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The Role of Soft Power in International Relations and Diplomacy: A Perspective on United States and China

- Ramanshi Dwivedi

“Soft power gave us an influence far beyond the hard edge of traditional balance-of-power politics.”

- Joseph Samuel Nye Jr.

What is Soft Power:

Leaders, diplomats, and those responsible for setting foreign policy, those responsible for determining their country's foreign policy must be prepared for the upcoming unpredictable times. The soft power resources at governments disposal will be a crucial component of the foreign policy instruments required moving forward as nations attempt to make sense of the quickly shifting circumstances and modify plans accordingly. The nations that are most skilled at leveraging soft power to encourage constructive cooperation will be better equipped to withstand the current unpredictability and geopolitical unrest and

eventually influence world events. When defining and evaluating power in international relations, traditionally 'hard' terms that can be easily quantified and typically understood in the context of military and economic powers have been used. Coercion is the application of hard power, which includes the use of physical force, the threat of physical force, economic punishments, or monetary inducements. Soft power refers to the use of positive appeal and persuasion to accomplish foreign policy goals as opposed to the coercive character of hard power. Instead of using the traditional carrot and stick methods of foreign policy, soft power builds networks, tells appealing stories, creates international norms, and makes use of the assets that make a nation attractive to the rest of the world. The concept's creator, Joseph Nye, first identified three main sources of soft power as he developed the idea. The three pillars of Nye's concept of Soft Power are: Foreign policy, cultural influence, and political principles. However, there are numerous and diverse soft power sources within each of these three categories. Utilising over 75 variables spread across six sub-indices of objective data and seven categories of fresh international polling data, our index expands on these three foundations.

Analysis of soft power:

The index integrates both objective data from six categories (government, culture, education, global engagement, business, and digital) with global polls. The Soft Power 30 methodology offers the clearest picture of global soft power to date, the three ground-breaking components:

- A digital component of the index was created in association with Facebook, who worked with their data-science team to design and compile new measures on nations' digital diplomacy;
- The index includes global polling from 25 distinct nations, which covers all significant regions of the world;
- It is possible to rank the world's soft power resources overall by normalising more than 75 metrics into comparable data and producing a single score for each nation.

Digital: A nation's capacity for digital diplomacy and its digital infrastructure.

Culture: Refers to a country's cultural productions and their attractiveness on a worldwide scale.

Enterprise: The appeal of a nation's economic structure, its friendliness to business, and its ability for innovation.

Education: The strength of a nation's human capital, its contribution to scholarship, and its appeal to foreign students.

Engagement: The effectiveness of a nation's diplomatic infrastructure and its contribution to engagement and development on a global scale.

Government: Belief in liberty, respect for human rights, democracy, and the excellence of political institutions.

The index evaluates the relative strength of a nation's political institutions, its level of cultural appeal, the size of its diplomatic network, the standing of its

higher education system abroad, the attractiveness of its economic model, and its level of online engagement with the rest of the world. Metrics that are based on population or GDP are only managed in the most dire circumstances.

United States and Soft Power:

The United States has utilised soft power throughout its history, although it "was a relative latecomer to the idea of using information and culture for the purposes of diplomacy" (Nye, 2004).

For instance: "In 1917, President Woodrow Wilson established a Committee on Public Information, which was directed by his friend the newspaperman George Creel. Creel's task, he said, was "a vast enterprise in salesmanship, the world's greatest adventure in advertising." Creel insisted that his office's activities did not constitute propaganda and were merely educational and informative. But the facts belied his denials. Among other things, Creel organised tours, churned out pamphlets on "the Gospel of Americanism," established a government run news service, made sure that motion picture producers received wartime allotments of scarce materials, and saw to it that the films portrayed America in a positive light. The office aroused sufficient suspicions that it was abolished shortly after the return of peace" (Nye, 2004).

Additionally, other US presidents recognised the value of soft power in domestic politics as well as international affairs. For instance, President Roosevelt realised in the 1930s that the United States needed to spread its own views over the globe, especially to fight Nazi messaging emanating from Germany. In fact, according to Nye, the United States and Germany were competing for influence through soft power in Latin America. And during the war, this dedication to soft power strategies persisted. In order to assist, the government started collaborating with Hollywood's film industry. For instance: "In 1942, Roosevelt created an Office of Wartime Information to deal in presumably accurate information, while an intelligence organisation, the Office of Strategic Service, included dissemination of disinformation among its functions. Even the OWI worked to shape Hollywood into an effective propaganda tool, suggesting additions and deletions to films and denying licenses to others. And Hollywood executives, motivated by a mixture of patriotism and self-interest, were happy to cooperate" (Rosenberg, 1982; Nye, 2004)" Then, throughout the Cold War, the concept of deploying soft power persisted. Different opinions were expressed here regarding the optimal strategy for soft power, namely whether "direct" messaging or a gradual process of soft power would be preferable (Nye, 2004). Again, soft power doesn't always imply that this power is utilised honestly or for the greater good. Nye (1990) claimed that new forms of power, such as soft power, would be crucial for states since military might was less essential in the system of international relations. And he spent some time discussing soft power in the context of the United States of America within this. For instance, many have asserted that even though the United States continues to have the world's

most powerful military and has for decades, especially since the end of the Cold War, "the United States still have leverage over particular countries, it has far less leverage over the system as a whole" (Nye, 1990). Films produced in the US, for instance, continue to have an impact on the world. Additionally, linkages to American businesses that are present abroad help the US develop its soft power. Through such businesses, they are very well-represented; according to Thussu (2014), "In 2012, four out of the top five department corporations in the world were U.S.-based, with the fifth also having strong ties to U.S.-based media corporations." Additionally, the United States has a strong presence in the media, which falls under the category of soft power. According to Thussu (2014), "...The U.S. continues to dominate the global media. American media, whether in English or in dubbed or indigenous versions, are accessible worldwide as a result of its overwhelming political, economic, technological, and military dominance. Due to the ownership of several networks and production facilities, including satellites, communications networks, cyberspace, and "total spectrum dominance" of actual space, the American media has a significant edge over other countries". However, many have questioned recently whether the United States is losing soft power in international affairs, with some indicating that the country has in fact been doing so. There have undoubtedly been instances where this has been the case. For instance, "exaggerated claims about the nearness of Saddam Hussein's WMD and the intensity of his ties to Al Qaeda may have helped mobilise domestic support for the Iraq war, but the ensuing disclosure of the exaggeration dealt a costly blow to British and American credibility. The soft sell may be more successful than a hard sell in the new circumstances than ever. (Nye, 2004)

Additionally, we are witnessing a surge in soft power with other nations, which may be at the expense of US control of several soft power spheres. For instance, while considering entertainment in relation to soft power, one may observe the expansion of various entertainment markets due to the dissemination of movies and television shows from nations like Turkey, India, and Brazil (Thussu, 2014). For instance, Turkey creates soap operas that are well-liked in the Middle East and the Balkans. The Bollywood film business in India is also very well-liked internationally and is a 3.5 billion dollar sector in its own right, with "the Indian entertainment and media industry was worth \$29 billion in 2013" (Thussu, 2014)

However the US has influenced the globe in culture, education, and digital when it comes to objectively measured soft power assets. American pop culture is more widely consumed around the world, the US enrolls more overseas students than the next two closest nations (the UK and Australia combined), despite having more top-ranked universities than any other nation in the world. The US also sets the standard for tech-based innovation and digital diplomacy as it is the home of Silicon Valley and some of the biggest tech businesses in the world, including Apple, Google, Facebook, and Microsoft.

China and Soft Power:

China has continued to develop its military and economy over the past two decades, some have contended that governments' perceptions of China are in part influenced by China's soft power (Kurlantzick, 2006). Many have countered that their rise in soft power has not always been at the same levels as those observed in recent years. Prior to the 1990s, China had a strong military presence and did not devote as much time or money to soft power activities with respect to other countries. However, 1997 was a crucial year for China's emergence of soft power, according to Kurlantzick (2006). According to him, "1997 offers a convenient moment to recognize China's birth of soft power. Beijing said that by holding firm during the financial crisis, it was standing up for Asia. Rodolfo Severino, Secretary General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), declared after the incident that "China is really emerging from this smelling good." A window for Chinese soft power opened up when Southeast Asian perceptions of Washington began to deteriorate and Taiwan's investment push into the region in the 1990s failed. However, the Chinese leadership have changed their approach to international relations, focusing more on soft power. And it appears to have paid off, as more people are beginning to view China as a significant world power (Kurlantzick, 2006). Kurlantzick (2006) notes that "Since 1997, then, it is possible to identify Chinese soft power strategies. First, Beijing enunciates a doctrine of "win-win" relations. China implicitly contrasts its "win-win" philosophy with that of the United States, which Beijing portrays as disrespectful of sovereignty and punitive toward Southeast Asia. By contrast, Chinese leaders emphasize that Beijing is willing to listen to other nations. China has backstopped this "win-win" rhetoric with real initiatives, signing Southeast Asia's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation..." China has spent a lot of money on developing its soft power through the media, as they are "investing heavily in its external communication, including broadcasting and on-line presence across the globe" Thussu explains. As an illustration, "In 2011, two years after President Hu Jintao declared a \$7 billion strategy for China to "get out," into the world, Chinese broadcasting has rapidly expanded, with CCTV News's Beijing headquarters employing English-fluent international journalists to build a global channel. By 2012, CCTV News was transmitting in six languages, including Arabic, to 200 million viewers outside of China. CCTV launched a studio in Nairobi the following year and intends to significantly expand its international employees by 2016. Moreover, they are open to using foreign aid as a soft power strategy, using a range of soft power techniques to forge bonds not only with foreign leaders but also with their citizens, such as farmers (by assuring them of China's trade) and students (through scholarships) (Kurlantzick, 2006). Many people have been concentrating on this because they think that China's growing economic influence is a major factor in the rise of its soft power. Last but not least, it is impossible to overlook allusions to China's past while attempting to understand its soft power strategy for the present and the future (Breslin, 2011). One of the significant findings from a public opinion poll in a study on China's soft power in Europe was that there are perceptions of credibility problems among Europeans. And it appears that China's political structure is largely to blame for this

(d'Hooghe, 2010). According to d'Hooghe, "The mechanisms of maintaining control over its society seriously hamper the growth of China's soft power and cautious international impressions that China is moving towards a more open society". Although Beijing is appearing to at least acknowledge the significance of non-state players with relation to China's soft power, d'Hooghe continues, "The majority of China's soft-power messengers, are, in one way or another, censured by Beijing". And if at any point they do, it will be interesting to see how much of the media and non-governmental actors they can control.