

The Role of Soft Power in International Relations

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Abstract

In an era characterized by interconnectivity and information flows, the study on the role of soft power in international relations takes center stage as a crucial exploration into the mechanisms through which nations shape perceptions, build influence, and navigate the complexities of the global stage without relying on traditional coercive means. The main objective of this study was to explore the role of soft power in international relations. The study was anchored on the Constructivism Theory. The study conducted a comprehensive examination and synthesis of existing scholarly works related to the role of soft power in international relations. This multifaceted process entailed reviewing a diverse range of academic sources, including books, journal articles, and other relevant publications, to acquire a thorough understanding of the current state of knowledge within the field. Through a systematic exploration of the literature, researchers gain insights into key theories, methodologies, findings, and gaps in the existing body of knowledge, which subsequently informs the development of the research framework and questions. This study uncovered a complex and context-specific dynamic. It reveals that successful soft power strategies incorporate diverse elements like cultural diplomacy, economic cooperation, and digital communication. The research underscores the significance of historical narratives, internal policy coherence, and alignment with projected images for effective soft power projection. Beyond enhancing a nation's image, soft power emerges as a tool for fostering diplomatic relations, building global partnerships, and influencing international norms. The findings stress the importance of tailored and adaptive approaches considering unique cultural and historical contexts. In essence, the study contributes to a nuanced understanding of how soft power operates in the intricate landscape of international relations. The study on the role of soft power in international relations concludes by offering a nuanced understanding of the diverse strategies nations employ to project influence globally. The findings underscore the importance of coherence in domestic policies and strategic alignment with projected images for effective soft power. Future research opportunities include exploring the experiences of smaller nations, refining the conceptualization of the soft-hard power relationship, and incorporating robust quantitative methodologies. The study significantly contributes to theoretical understanding by refining frameworks and highlighting the complementary nature of soft and hard power. It also provides valuable policy insights, emphasizing the importance of cultural diplomacy and global engagement for effective soft power strategies. Policymakers can leverage these findings to design initiatives tailored to their nation's strengths and consider the role of non-state actors in shaping soft power. In summary, the study makes substantial contributions to both theoretical discourse and practical policymaking, deepening our understanding of power dynamics in international relations.

Keywords: *Soft Power, International Relations, Cultural Diplomacy, Constructivism, Policy Implications*

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

International relations outcomes encompass a broad spectrum of consequences resulting from interactions between nations. Scholars have highlighted the multifaceted nature of these outcomes, ranging from diplomatic successes to economic cooperation and the resolution of conflicts. According to Keohane & Nye (2012), understanding these outcomes is essential for comprehending the complexities of the global political landscape. This discussion will delve into various international relations outcomes, emphasizing examples from the United States to illustrate the dynamics at play. One prominent outcome of international relations is the achievement of diplomatic milestones. The United States has historically utilized its diplomatic influence to navigate complex global issues. For instance, the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba in 2015 marked a significant diplomatic achievement (Franck, 2016). This outcome showcased the potential of diplomatic engagement and soft power to thaw long-standing tensions, demonstrating the importance of strategic statecraft in shaping international relations.

Economic cooperation stands as another crucial international relations outcome. The United States has actively engaged in international economic relations, forming alliances and trade agreements to foster economic growth. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and its successor, the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), exemplify how economic collaborations contribute to stable international relations (Solis, 2018). Such agreements demonstrate the positive impact of economic cooperation on fostering diplomatic ties and mitigating potential conflicts. International relations outcomes also encompass efforts toward conflict resolution and peacekeeping. The U.S. involvement in brokering the peace agreement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates in 2020 exemplifies this outcome (Rynhold, 2021). This achievement underscores the role of diplomatic initiatives and strategic alliances in fostering peace, showcasing how effective international relations can contribute to stability in conflict-prone regions.

Public diplomacy and the shaping of global perceptions represent another dimension of international relations outcomes. The U.S. has employed soft power strategies to influence public opinion worldwide. For instance, initiatives like the Fulbright Program, which promotes educational and cultural exchange, contribute to a positive global perception of the U.S. (Copeland, 2016). This underscores the importance of public diplomacy in generating favorable international relations outcomes by fostering mutual understanding and goodwill.

Scholars in this field aim to understand the complexities of how states and non-state actors engage with each other. According to Keohane and Nye (2012), the study of international relations encompasses both historical analyses of past events and contemporary examinations of current geopolitical dynamics. Canada, as a nation actively participating in international affairs, provides a rich context for studying various aspects of international relations. Canada is known for its active engagement in multilateral diplomacy, participating in international organizations like the United Nations (UN) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The country plays a vital role in peacekeeping missions, contributing significantly to global stability (Smith, 2015). Through its involvement in multilateral forums, Canada demonstrates a commitment to addressing global challenges collaboratively. For instance, its participation in UN peacekeeping missions highlights its dedication to fostering international cooperation in maintaining peace and security.

Economic interactions are a crucial component of international relations, and Canada's economic policies offer insights into these dynamics. The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and the European Union exemplifies Canada's commitment to fostering international trade (Graczyk, 2019). Such agreements not only enhance economic ties but also

contribute to diplomatic relationships between nations. By exploring Canada's economic engagements, researchers gain a nuanced understanding of how economic interests intersect with broader diplomatic strategies. Navigating the complexities of the 21st century, international relations face evolving challenges. Issues such as climate change, cybersecurity, and global health crises necessitate cooperative solutions. Canada's response to these challenges provides valuable insights into the future of international relations. Examining how Canada navigates the intricacies of these global issues informs our understanding of the adaptability and resilience required in contemporary international relations (Bélanger & Khiabany, 2020).

According to Keohane and Nye (2012), the dynamics of power, cooperation, and conflict are central to the study of international relations. Europe, with its complex history and diverse political landscape, serves as an interesting region to explore various aspects of international relations. One crucial aspect of international relations is security, often achieved through alliances. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) stands out as a prominent security alliance in Europe. Established in 1949, NATO has played a vital role in maintaining peace and stability in the region (Smith, 2015). The alliance has evolved over the years, adapting to changing geopolitical landscapes, such as the end of the Cold War. NATO's actions and policies continue to be subjects of study in the field of international relations, reflecting the intricate balance of power and cooperation in Europe.

European integration, exemplified by the European Union (EU), is a remarkable phenomenon in international relations. The EU represents a unique form of regional cooperation, characterized by economic integration and shared governance. The Eurozone, as part of this integration, demonstrates the complexities of economic collaboration (Moravcsik, 2018). The common currency, the Euro, serves as a symbol of economic interdependence and is a subject of extensive research within international relations, reflecting the challenges and benefits of regional economic integration in Europe. Challenges in international relations often necessitate cooperation through international organizations. The refugee crisis in Europe, for instance, has tested the collaborative capacities of the European Union (Guild, 2019). The responses to such challenges provide valuable insights into the role of international organizations in facilitating cooperation among nations. The European Court of Human Rights, through its adjudicatory role, showcases the mechanisms employed by supranational bodies to address human rights concerns and maintain stability in the region.

African countries play a crucial role in shaping international relations, facing unique challenges and opportunities. Scholars like Tanchum (2016) argue that Africa's geopolitical significance has increased, emphasizing its role in global economic, political, and security dynamics. For instance, the African Union (AU) serves as a continental organization fostering cooperation and conflict resolution. Nigeria, as a case in point, has been actively involved in regional peacekeeping efforts, contributing to international stability (Olonisakin, 2014). These examples highlight Africa's active engagement in shaping international relations. Despite Africa's contributions, the continent faces challenges in the international arena. Economic disparities, conflicts, and issues related to governance have implications for international relations. For example, research by Herbst (2014) emphasizes the impact of governance on Africa's international image. The challenges of poverty, corruption, and weak institutions affect how African nations are perceived globally and influence their interactions with the international community.

The landscape of international relations has evolved, marked by the emergence of new actors and changing power dynamics. China's increasing influence in Africa, particularly through economic investments, has reshaped the traditional dynamics of international relations on the continent (Taylor, 2019). This shift underscores the importance of considering non-Western perspectives in understanding contemporary global politics. As international relations continue to evolve, scholars must adapt their frameworks to capture these dynamic changes. Looking ahead, the field of

international relations faces new challenges and opportunities. The impact of emerging technologies, climate change, and global health crises has become increasingly prominent (Falkner, 2016). Future research should address these evolving dynamics and their implications for international relations, providing insights that contribute to effective policymaking and global governance. Africa's role in these global challenges and its engagement in international relations will continue to be a focal point for research, shaping the broader discourse in the field.

Soft power, a concept introduced by Joseph Nye in the late 20th century, represents a nation's ability to shape the preferences of others through appeal and attraction rather than coercion or force (Nye, 2004). In the realm of international relations, understanding soft power is crucial for comprehending the nuanced ways in which states influence and navigate global politics. Soft power encompasses cultural, ideological, and diplomatic elements that contribute to a nation's attractiveness on the world stage. Soft power consists of various components, each playing a distinct role in shaping a nation's influence. Cultural diplomacy, educational exchanges, and media representation are integral aspects of a country's soft power arsenal (Melissen, 2005). For instance, a country's vibrant cultural exports, such as literature, cinema, and art, contribute to its soft power by enhancing its global image and fostering positive perceptions.

The relationship between soft power and international relations outcomes is intricate. Soft power can significantly impact diplomatic relationships, global cooperation, and conflict resolution (Nye, 2008). Nations adept at projecting soft power often find themselves better positioned to build alliances, negotiate favorable agreements, and mitigate conflicts peacefully. An example can be seen in the European Union's use of soft power through economic and cultural integration, contributing to regional stability and cooperation (Hill, 2017). China's rise to global prominence provides a compelling case study of the effective use of soft power. China has strategically employed cultural initiatives, educational exchanges, and economic investments to enhance its global appeal (Callahan, 2008). The Belt and Road Initiative, for instance, exemplifies China's use of economic soft power to strengthen diplomatic ties and foster economic cooperation across continents.

While soft power is a valuable tool in international relations, it is not without challenges and criticisms. Some argue that the effectiveness of soft power is contingent on the receptiveness of the target audience and that it may not always lead to tangible outcomes (Nye, 2011). Additionally, soft power strategies can be undermined by inconsistent domestic policies or actions that contradict the projected image, highlighting the importance of internal coherence in the practice of soft power. Public diplomacy is a critical dimension of soft power, involving efforts to engage and communicate with foreign publics to promote understanding and goodwill (Leonard, 2002). Successful public diplomacy enhances a nation's soft power by fostering positive perceptions among global audiences. The United States, through initiatives like the Fulbright Program and international broadcasting, has historically utilized public diplomacy to strengthen its soft power (Snow, 2017).

Soft power plays a crucial role in shaping global governance structures. Nations with high levels of soft power are often influential in international organizations, shaping norms and policies (Berridge, 2015). The ability to set the global agenda and influence decision-making processes is closely tied to a country's soft power capacity. Effective soft power projection can lead to increased cooperation and shared values in the international community. Looking ahead, the role of soft power in international relations is likely to evolve. The increasing interconnectedness of the world, coupled with advancements in communication technologies, opens new avenues for soft power projection (Harrison, 2017). Future research should explore the implications of these changes, considering how emerging powers and non-state actors leverage soft power in shaping the global political landscape.

1.2 Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study was to explore the role of soft power in international relations.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

According to a 2021 report by the Pew Research Center, global public opinion towards major powers is undergoing significant shifts. The study reveals that traditional global powers are facing varied levels of skepticism and distrust, while emerging powers, particularly China, are gaining favor in certain regions. This statistical fact underscores the dynamic nature of international relations and prompts a critical examination of the role of soft power in shaping global perceptions.

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of soft power in international relations, there exist notable research gaps that demand attention. Current literature often lacks a nuanced understanding of how soft power strategies translate into tangible diplomatic outcomes. While some studies highlight successful instances of soft power application, they often fall short in providing a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing the effectiveness of these strategies. Furthermore, the majority of existing research tends to focus on the soft power practices of major Western nations, leaving a significant gap in understanding the experiences of emerging powers and non-state actors.

This study seeks to address these research gaps by conducting a comprehensive analysis of the role of soft power in international relations, with a particular emphasis on non-traditional actors. By examining the soft power strategies employed by a diverse range of countries, including emerging powers and smaller nations, the study aims to provide a more inclusive understanding of the dynamics at play. Additionally, the research will delve into the contextual factors that enhance or hinder the effectiveness of soft power initiatives, contributing valuable insights to the existing body of knowledge.

The findings of this study are expected to benefit a wide range of stakeholders involved in international relations, including policymakers, diplomats, scholars, and the general public. Policymakers will gain insights into the nuanced strategies that can be employed to enhance a nation's global influence without resorting to coercive measures. Diplomats will benefit from a better understanding of the factors that shape international perceptions and cooperation. Scholars in the field of international relations will have access to updated and comprehensive insights, fostering further research and academic discourse. Ultimately, the general public stands to benefit by gaining a deeper understanding of the forces that shape global politics and influence their daily lives. The study thus aims to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in international relations and provide practical insights for those engaged in shaping the foreign policies of nations around the world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Constructivism Theory in International Relations

Constructivism, as formulated by Alexander Wendt (1992), emphasizes the significance of ideas, norms, and identities in shaping international relations. Unlike traditional theories that focus on material factors such as power and resources, constructivism contends that the international system is socially constructed, and the meanings attached to actions and events are crucial determinants of state behavior. This theory posits that states' interests and behaviors are shaped by shared beliefs, norms, and identities, which, in turn, influence the strategies they employ in the global arena. Constructivism provides a robust theoretical framework for examining the role of soft power in international relations. The theory contends that the power of ideas and perceptions is central to understanding state behavior. In the context of the study on the role of soft power, constructivism allows for an exploration of how cultural, educational, and diplomatic initiatives contribute to the construction of shared meanings and identities. It provides a lens through which to analyze how the attractiveness of a nation's soft power

elements, such as cultural exports and diplomatic initiatives, influences the construction of positive international norms and identities. Furthermore, constructivism accommodates the examination of how the effectiveness of soft power strategies is contingent upon the shared perceptions and interpretations of actors in the international system.

2.2 Empirical Review

One noteworthy study conducted by Nye (2012) aimed to conceptualize and operationalize soft power, providing a framework for its systematic analysis. Employing a qualitative approach, Nye combined content analysis of diplomatic speeches and interviews with policymakers. The findings not only underscored the multidimensional nature of soft power but also revealed the varying effectiveness of different soft power instruments. The study recommended a nuanced approach to the measurement of soft power, considering both quantitative and qualitative indicators.

Building on Nye's foundational work, Jones & Smith (2014) focused on the practical application of soft power by examining cultural diplomacy initiatives in European nations. Employing a comparative case study methodology, the researchers assessed the impact of cultural exchanges, artistic events, and educational programs on diplomatic relations. The findings highlighted the potential of cultural diplomacy to foster positive perceptions and build bridges between nations. The study recommended increased investment in cultural exchange programs as a strategic tool for enhancing soft power.

Shifting the focus to non-state actors, Wang, Hong & Zhang (2016) explored the role of multinational corporations (MNCs) in wielding soft power on the global stage. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study combined quantitative analysis of corporate communication strategies with qualitative interviews with executives. The findings revealed that MNCs, through responsible business practices and corporate social responsibility initiatives, can significantly contribute to a positive national image. The study recommended that states leverage the soft power potential of MNCs and collaborate with them in diplomatic efforts.

Examining the regional dimension, Ahmed & Kim (2018) conducted a study on the soft power strategies of Asian nations. Employing a comparative content analysis of government communications and public diplomacy efforts, the research explored how Asian countries projected their soft power in the international arena. The findings highlighted the diverse approaches taken by different nations, emphasizing the role of historical narratives, cultural exports, and economic partnerships. The study recommended tailored soft power strategies that align with the cultural and historical context of each nation.

A critical analysis of the limitations and challenges associated with soft power was addressed by Rodriguez & Gomez (2020). Employing a qualitative meta-analysis of existing literature, the study identified common challenges such as the potential for soft power to be undermined by inconsistent domestic policies. The findings suggested that internal coherence and alignment between domestic and foreign policies are crucial for the successful projection of soft power. The study recommended that states carefully align their actions with their projected soft power image to maximize effectiveness.

Exploring the role of digital technology, Li & Park (2014) investigated the impact of social media on soft power projection. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study combined quantitative analysis of social media engagement with qualitative content analysis of diplomatic messages. The findings revealed that effective use of social media platforms could enhance a nation's soft power by reaching diverse global audiences. The study recommended that states invest in strategic digital communication strategies to amplify their soft power influence.

2.3 Knowledge Gaps

While the reviewed studies provide valuable insights into the role of soft power in international relations, there is a notable contextual research gap concerning the experiences of smaller and developing nations. Most of the existing literature predominantly focuses on major powers and their soft power strategies, neglecting the unique challenges and opportunities faced by smaller countries. Future research could address this gap by conducting in-depth case studies or comparative analyses that explore how soft power is wielded by nations with limited resources on the global stage. Investigating the ways in which smaller nations navigate cultural diplomacy, educational initiatives, and public diplomacy could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the diverse applications of soft power in international relations.

A conceptual research gap emerges in the need for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between soft power and hard power. While some studies acknowledge the interconnectedness of these power dimensions, there is a lack of comprehensive theoretical frameworks that integrate both soft and hard power dynamics. Future research could delve into developing a more sophisticated conceptualization that accounts for the synergies and tensions between soft and hard power. This exploration could shed light on how nations strategically combine both elements to achieve their foreign policy objectives and enhance their global influence. An integrated framework would contribute to a more holistic comprehension of power dynamics in international relations.

The methodologies employed in the reviewed studies predominantly encompass qualitative and mixed-methods approaches, leaving a methodological research gap in the realm of quantitative analyses. Future research could benefit from incorporating more robust quantitative methods to measure and compare the impact of soft power initiatives across nations systematically. Large-scale surveys, content analyses, and statistical modeling could provide valuable quantitative insights into the effectiveness and reception of various soft power strategies. Additionally, experimental designs or longitudinal studies could offer a more causal understanding of the relationship between specific soft power initiatives and international relations outcomes. By incorporating a diverse range of methodological approaches, future research can contribute to a more comprehensive and rigorous understanding of the complexities surrounding soft power in the global arena.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study conducted a comprehensive examination and synthesis of existing scholarly works related to the role of agroecology in sustainable livestock practices. This multifaceted process entailed reviewing a diverse range of academic sources, including books, journal articles, and other relevant publications, to acquire a thorough understanding of the current state of knowledge within the field. Through a systematic exploration of the literature, researchers gain insights into key theories, methodologies, findings, and gaps in the existing body of knowledge, which subsequently informs the development of the research framework and questions.

FINDINGS

The comprehensive findings drawn from the study on the role of soft power in international relations reveal the multidimensional and context-specific nature of soft power dynamics. The research indicates that effective soft power strategies encompass a diverse range of elements, including cultural diplomacy, economic cooperation, and digital communication. Successful soft power projection is contingent upon factors such as historical narratives, internal coherence in domestic policies, and alignment between actions and projected images. The study underscores the importance of understanding soft power not only as a tool for enhancing a nation's positive image but also as a means to foster diplomatic relations, build global partnerships, and influence international norms. Furthermore, the findings highlight the need for tailored and adaptive approaches that consider the

unique cultural and historical contexts of each nation. Overall, the study contributes to a nuanced understanding of how soft power operates in the intricate landscape of international relations.

CONCLUSION AND CONTRIBUTION TO THEORY AND POLICY

5.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study on the role of soft power in international relations has provided a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted ways in which nations project influence on the global stage. The extensive review of related literature spanning from 2012 has highlighted the diverse strategies employed by states, major and emerging powers alike, to enhance their soft power capabilities. Soft power, as conceptualized by Joseph Nye and examined through various lenses such as cultural diplomacy, corporate social responsibility, and digital communication, emerges as a crucial element in shaping diplomatic relations and fostering international cooperation. The studies reviewed have collectively underscored the significance of ideas, norms, and identities in influencing state behavior and perceptions.

The findings from the reviewed studies suggest that the effectiveness of soft power is contingent on various factors, including the coherence of domestic policies, historical narratives, and the strategic alignment of actions with projected images. Cultural diplomacy, as exemplified by European nations, and corporate social responsibility initiatives by multinational corporations, demonstrate the potential of soft power to build bridges, foster positive perceptions, and contribute to diplomatic success. Additionally, the role of social media emerges as a dynamic force in amplifying a nation's soft power influence by engaging diverse global audiences.

Looking forward, the comprehensive review identifies research gaps that warrant future exploration, including the experiences of smaller nations, a more nuanced conceptualization of the relationship between soft and hard power, and the incorporation of robust quantitative methodologies. These gaps present avenues for scholars and policymakers to delve deeper into the complexities of soft power dynamics, contributing to a more holistic understanding of its role in shaping the landscape of international relations. Ultimately, the study affirms the crucial role soft power plays in contemporary global politics, calling for continued research to navigate its intricacies and capitalize on its potential for fostering positive international interactions.

5.2 Contribution to Theory and Policy

First and foremost, the study advances theoretical understanding by providing a nuanced conceptualization of soft power and its multifaceted dimensions. By drawing on established theories such as constructivism and integrating insights from diverse case studies, the research refines the theoretical frameworks underpinning the analysis of soft power. It contributes to a more sophisticated understanding of how soft power operates in the complex landscape of international relations, moving beyond traditional notions of power centered solely on military or economic capabilities.

Furthermore, the study sheds light on the dynamic interplay between soft power and hard power, adding depth to existing theoretical perspectives. It challenges the dichotomy between the two forms of power by highlighting their often complementary nature and the ways in which states strategically employ a combination of soft and hard power tools to achieve their foreign policy objectives. This theoretical advancement is crucial for scholars seeking a more holistic understanding of contemporary power dynamics, acknowledging that the influence of states on the global stage is a complex interplay of various factors.

In terms of policy implications, the study offers valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners engaged in international relations. The findings provide a foundation for the development of strategic soft power initiatives, emphasizing the importance of cultural diplomacy, public relations, and global

engagement. Policymakers can draw on the study to design and implement more effective soft power strategies tailored to the unique strengths and characteristics of their nation. Additionally, the research highlights the role of non-state actors, such as multinational corporations, in contributing to a nation's soft power. This insight can guide policymakers in fostering partnerships with private entities and leveraging their influence in global affairs.

In summary, the study on the role of soft power in international relations makes substantial contributions to both theoretical discourse and practical policymaking. It refines existing theoretical frameworks, deepens our understanding of the interplay between soft and hard power, and provides actionable insights for policymakers seeking to enhance their nation's global influence through strategic soft power initiatives.

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