

Exertion of Global Influence with Full Spectrum in both Hard and Soft Power

A Study of the United States of America (USA)

And

The Peoples' Republic of China (PRC)

Manya, Nura Umar

Department of Crime Management Prevention and Control, Zamfara State College of Arts and
Science Gusau (ZACAS)

Abstract

This paper examines the contemporary world system, in two countries that have exerted global influence within the ambit of this essay are the United States of America (USA) and the People's Republic of China (PRC). Their selection for this work is hinged on their capabilities in terms of global decision making, population size, territory (Geography), natural resources (Geology), economic strength, military force, social stability, science and technological advancement, diplomatic power, culture and security maximization

Keywords: Power, Hard power, Soft Power, USA, China, Persuasion, Coercion.

Introduction

There are two forms of traditional power concepts: Hard and Soft powers. Power remains an ancient tool in human relationships and existence. According to Joseph Nye (1990), Power is defined as the ability to affect others to get the outcomes one wants and commands. He further defined hard power as coercive power wielded through inducements or threats (Nye, 2009, P.63). Gallarotti (2011, p.29) defines hard power based on military intervention, coercive diplomacy and economic sanctions and relies on tangible power resources such as armed forces or economic means. The German invasion of Poland in 1939 and the United Nations Economic sanctions against Iraq in 1991 are contemporary examples of the use of hard power. Soft or Cooperative power is the capacity to persuade others to do what one wants. According to Nye, persuasive power is based on attraction and emulation and it is associated with intangible power resources like

culture, ideology and institutions. To enhance soft power, it must bear the tag of legitimacy since state activities need to be seen as legitimate.

Hard Power belongs to the realist school in the International System and it is the oldest form of power. It is about power politics, force and violence but soft is more enduring and effective and the international system is changing in favor of soft power because it is about submission to international institutions and a world where war is not the only means of resolving conflicts and the successful countries are those with natural economic and financial resources. However, there is a convergence of hard and soft powers in the world today because armed forces can be called to keep peace operations or participate in humanitarian activities. Both pure forms of power have their weaknesses in their use/combination and effectiveness in foreign policy formulation and that brings in to play another concept of power called the smart power. This concept was coined by Joseph Nye. This is the combination of traditional pure forms of power resources with smart strategies which play an important role in contemporary international system. It is the new concept of power. Nye. (ibid) defines it as “an approach that underscores the necessity of a strong military, but also invest heavily in alliances, partnership and institutions” It is the combination of elements of hard and soft powers in a way that are mutually complimentary.

He further posited that, “Smart Power is the winning strategy. It 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 economic and social legitimacy”.

No state whitening the international system bases her foreign policy only on hard power resources and the effectiveness of hard and soft power depends on the accessibility of power resources. These concepts have several instruments of various degrees of coercion or persuasion.

US GLOBAL INFLUENCE AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS Power is an unavoidable element in human life and it affects every aspect of human activities. US has military capabilities that are unrivalled the world over with a defence budget that is higher than the nation budget of 20 countries in the world. The US National Security Strategy fits into the definition of Joseph Nye. The core objective is “Alliances are important but the central objective is the maintenance of US military superiority “this objective reveals why most of US most important relationships are

expressed primarily in military terms like the Security Treaty for Japan and NATO alliance with Europe.

US involvement in the World War 1, established them in a prominent position among world power and the effective planning and success in WW1 propelled America to the top of the world order. America's economic growth was escalated by geology, geography, leading innovations in electricity, telephone and naval strategy. Are importance in the US transformation of the world order after WW 1&2. The US transformed NATO, OECD, WTO and the European Marshall plan. The US sustenance of this new world order made the US a guarantor of the International System and this was accepted as legitimate. These included the provision of public good such as security and the functions of the lender of the last resort. Their smart strategy was the inclusion of the bludgeon hard power as an enforcer and the involvement of their allies in decision making.

The United States has economic power to offer in exercising the soft and hard powers. These were the elements of successful economic advancement, diplomatic and military resources to help Europe and Asia get successful and united and their armed forces to protect them on the way to success. The economic success of the US was a wholesome legitimizer and at the end of the cold war, their relevance in the world had enlarged astronomically. The US diplomacy understood that wars are fourth with hard power to establish the kind of soft power system that would govern the affairs of the world. They understood that one of the critical objectives of hard power and goals of soft power through diplomacy and economic empowerment are to transform hard power to soft power by bringing anarchy into order, force to law, power in to legitimate authority to establish domestic and international order. In Contrast, the Soviet Union lost credibility and legitimacy because of economic failure, lack of external threats and inability to transformed hard power into soft power.

The interest of the US includes developing the latest versions of soft power into legal and constitutional order in several countries of the world. It is pertinent to note that behind this soft power, they exhibited the possibility of using force though it was hardly mentioned but the deterrence indicators were prevalent. The US having gained benefits and knowledge from smart power understood that hard power is limited by globalization, economic interdependence, the

resurgence of nationalism in weak states, spread of military technology, access to information and growth of democracy. This knowledge further propelled the change in US foreign policy though they have had previous had power strategic failures too which some will be mentioned in this essay. However, no foreign policy is solely based on hard power resources and most states are in a transition towards using economic tools in foreign policy formulation like most countries within the European Union, India, Brazil and Nigeria.

In consideration of this transition, Cooper (2014, P170) outlined certain weakness of the soft power. This include that the strength of culture does not equate political power, the desirability of the outcomes of soft power strategies depends on particular circumstances which can necessarily be influenced by states and lastly, actual benefits of positive results take time to actualize base on the weakness, the US employed smart power through volunteering and inter-cultural exchanges. This process contributes to the security and well-being of Americans where ever thy may be and contribute to institutional capacity building, social capital, democratic governance and respect for human rights. This exchange is beneficial to host countries and the US as it promotes intercultural understanding and conflict prevention.

The US has promoted the Africa Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA) which is a programme of bilateral agreement bound to certain political, social and economic reforms. There is the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. This is the largest financial commitments ever by a single nation towards an international health initiative. Also, the Millennium Challenge Corporation is a financial aid programmes to reinforce good governance, economic freedom and investment in people and communities. This is a good example of an effective smart power strategy. As Mead (2004, P.51) states "the generosity of US humanitarian assistance abroad enhanced US Soft Power.

The global influence of the United Failure of the invasion and US soft power and undermined their global public confidence in the word leadership. Again, the failure of the AFRICOM (US- AFRICA COMMAND) was an unsuccessful soft power strategic failure. The US tried to set up AFRICOM for 3 reasons namely; Oil, terrorism, ungoverned spaces in Africa States is not limited to its hard power and soft power resources but a high national income, resilient culture and

financial capability of maintaining a huge armed forces and putting other state under social and economic pressure. The dispersion of America Culture within the eastern bloc during the cold war complimented the processes of the EU Crystallization and establishment.

In recent years, the US global influence has dwindled. The negative effects of US invasion of Iraq in 2003. The US failed to understand the elements needed to defeat the emerging war on terrorism. The ignored vital key signs like dependence on allies for intelligence and global public support. This led to the and increasing China Influence in Africa. Despite all these AFRICOM was sold as a soft power strategy which resulted in a perception imperialist intention of the US in Africa and this failed woefully.

Finally, the US is the most formidable power in the world today with economic and military power and a strong diplomatic exposure that regales their interest and that of every democratic country in the international system. The US has been emboldened to apply those capacities since after the 9/11 attack.

CHINA GLOBAL INFLUENCE AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS According to Heng, (2010 P.257) the nature of state's hard and soft power resources and strategies are limited to its historical legacies and societal system. It determines the strength and effectiveness of its power, China's competitive state led economy and model and its authoritarian political system hinders its full utilization of its hard and soft power resources and potentials.

With enormous military capabilities and an ancient historical knowledge of warfare, China has not actually taken control of the Asian axis due to the influence of Japan and American interest in Philippines and Guans secured during the Spanish-American-Cuban-Pilipino War in 1898. The economic and technological advancement of Japan has also made it impossible for China to exercise global influence within the axis except in the East-Asia region where China is a hegemon. This situation has whittled the economic power or military capabilities of China but the China's hard and soft power are nevertheless monumental.

The growth of China was facilitated by the US in the early part of the 20th century by an Open Door Policy between US and China through a fair, universal platform for trading relations based on free

market principles. The US respected the territorial and administrative integrity of China and help prevent a possible disintegration of China. China has become a potential great power challenger and has exercised diplomatic influence within the East-Asia region. The region has not experienced wars or massive domestic turbulence but has enjoyed economic prosperity and growth faster than any other region in the World. The US has displayed the least power and the greatest restraint on its power is within this region.

The World had under-estimated the rise of China and the power rivalry between the US and China region has witnessed a superiority of China over US and afforded a balance of power with stability and economic prosperity. The economic power of China will overtake that of US by 2030 according to projection but it is sad that economic power does not immediately transform to political power. The political and cultural influence of China is still limited and lags behind the soft power of the US. This will remain for a long time due to unfamiliarity of the world to the culture, ideas, language, history, institutions, values and religion of China. This is affirmed by the fact that soft power is based on attraction and emulation.

The soft power of China is limited by its adaptability to the World in spite of globalization except within the East-Asia Region. Its influence is exerted more in the developing countries of the world and Africa. The south China and East China Seas remain their areas of naval superiority through that has not changed the attitude of Japan towards the influence of China, (Jacques, 2014)

China will continually lag behind the US in exerting global influence regardless of their economic capabilities because China is essentially a poor country with a very low poor living standard incomparable to the United States. Its relative poverty is a constraint. Ignorance by the world of Chinese culture, language, history, institutions, values and ideas and the World's unfamiliarity with their political and cultural structures inhibits their arid and fertile global hegemon and influence with a few exceptions. China was never western though it exercises gravitational pull all over the world economically. This has not translated to global influences in hard and soft power comparable to the United States and the rest of Europe.

REFERENCES

1. Cooper. (2014). *American power in the 21st century*.
2. Gallarotti. (2011). Soft power, What it is, it is importance. *Journal of Political Power*, 4(1), 29.
3. Heng, Y. (2010). Mirror, Mirror on the wall. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, P275.
4. Jaque, M. (2014). *Gaiko-diplomacy magazine*.
5. Mead. (2004). *America's sticky Power (Foreign Policy issue 141)*.
6. Nye. (2004). *Soft power. The means to Success in world politics & Public Affairs*.
7. Nye, J. (2006). *A smarter and more secure America*.
8. Nye, J. (2008). *The power to lead*.
9. Nye, J. *Understanding international conflict*.
10. Nye, J. S. (1990). Soft power. *Foreign Policy*, (80). <https://doi.org/10.2307/1148580>

Received on Jan 13, 2025

Accepted on March 07, 2025

Published on April 01, 2025

Exertion of Global Influence with Full Spectrum in both Hard and Soft Power A Study of the United States of America (USA) And The Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) © 2025 by Nura Umar Manya is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0