

Critical Review:

Hard and Soft Powers Week 8 Readings

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Introduction

In this week's readings, we explored a range of perspectives on hard and soft power, and their implications for U.S. foreign policy. The readings included *Power and Interdependence* written by Keohane, Robert and Nye, Joseph, *Soft Power and US Foreign Policy* edited by Parmar, Inderjeet and Cox, Michael, “*Soft Power as a State's Foreign Policy Resource*” written by Leonova, Olga, and *Soft Power and Hard Power Approaches in U.S. In U.S. Foreign Policy: A Case Study Comparison in Latin America*” written by Weinbrenner, John. We also watched the video showing a debate between Nye, Joseph and Kristol, William titles “*America in the World: Hard vs. Soft Power*” These texts and the video give an in depth look at the concept of hard and soft power, and the role they play in shaping international relations between nations. They also discuss the challenges brought about by hard and soft powers and the complications that arise when one is ignored over the other.

Summary of Key Points From each Source:

Power and Interdependence:

In the book *Power and Interdependence*, authors Keohane and Nye develop a framework for understanding world politics in an increasingly interdependent global system and look at it through the lens of hard and soft power. Their main goals are to distinguish between realist and complex interdependence perspectives, construct explanatory models of international regime change, and evaluate the implications of their analysis.

The authors argue that realism provides an incomplete view of modern politics that fails to account for new issues arising from economic and social interdependence. And state that “exchange realism for an equally simple view—for instance, that military force is obsolete and economic interdependence benign—would condemn one to equally grave, though different,

errors" (Keohane & Nye, 2012). They also pose complex interdependence as an alternative ideal type characterized by multiple actors, multiple issues, and less reliance on military force. Keohane and Nye then propose four models to explain regime changes: economic, overall power structure, issue-specific power distribution, and international organization.

They apply this framework to case studies of oceans and monetary regimes each author taking one of the subjects, "Keohane took primary responsibility for the case studies on money and Australia; Nye for oceans and Canada" (Keohane & Nye, 2012). Their research helping them in finding that issue structuralism and organizational models best explain changes under complex interdependence. The authors also draw policy implications, advocating United States (US) leadership through coordination rather than hegemony. Subsequent chapters evaluate globalization and specific issue areas it causes.

Soft Power and US Foreign Policy:

Chapters 5-13 from this book examine the concept of soft power, its history and applications in various contexts. Joseph Nye, who coined the term soft power, defines it as the ability to shape preferences of others through attraction rather than coercion. Several chapters analyze Nye's work and use of the concept. They note that while Nye provides a clear definition, he has applied it differently over time to intervene in debates about American strategy. The chapters also point out limitations in measuring soft power.

The chapters evaluate uses of soft power by different actors like the US, European Union (EU), and China. The text seems to find that the EU has had more success using soft power implementation through its history and ideology that seems to celebrate cooperation. For example, in chapter 11, the author talks about how soft power is associated more with the EU than any other actor. However, the EU still struggles with balancing soft and hard power. The

chapters also delve into how China is still developing its soft power strategy and faces challenges in articulating a clear policy due to contradictory motivations and audiences. The tension between China and the US also causes issues with China's development of balancing its soft and hard power strategy.

Other chapters analyze the declining US soft power in the post-9/11 era. The focus on the war on terror and the militarized diplomacy under Bush caused a major decline in the US soft power around the world due to the lack of support. However, the author also discusses how the election of Obama boosted US image for billions of people. Despite this fact, many challenges remain. As can be seen as the chapters go on to explain the importance of smart power, which is also known as the act of balancing soft and hard power together, and how it is the most effective path. Overall, the chapters provide a thoughtful analysis of soft power as a concept and its applications.

Soft Power as a State's Foreign Policy Resource:

In the article "Soft Power as a State's Foreign Policy Resource" by Olga G. Leonova, delves into the intricacies of the concept of soft power and how it can be utilized as a tool for governments. Leonova highlights the increasing importance of soft power in the globalized world that we find ourselves living in today. She discusses the factors such as economic success, cultural attractiveness, and ideological persuasiveness and how they hold a higher value and greater importance than even military power.

What I got from the reading is that the main point that is made by Leonova is that soft power allows countries to exert influence based on their attractiveness and appeal, rather than through coercion or military force. She even includes nuclear weapons when she talks about military force. Olga also gives an accurate explanation of soft power and references Nye's work

as the man who coined the term. As mentioned before, Leonova also argues that traditional political tools, such as nuclear weapons, are no longer effective in the current structure of our globalized world. Leonova uses the examples of Libya, Afghanistan, and Iraq to illustrate the ineffectiveness of hard power and the potential damage it can cause to a country's reputation, especially when allies do not approve or support the military action. Case in point, the negative response to the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq and the damages it had on the US reputation around the world.

The article also emphasizes the importance of soft power in shaping a country's foreign policy. She goes into great detail on the new modern global realities and the importance of soft power. Olga stresses the importance of using soft power as a means for countries to influence international processes to achieve their strategic goals, even with limited traditional resources as leverage. Leonova discusses the external and internal factors that contribute to a country's soft power, including its foreign policy authority, geopolitical status, national culture, and creative potential. Leonova even discusses Russia's soft power potential.

Soft Power and Hard Power Approaches in U.S. In U.S. Foreign Policy: A Case Study

Comparison in Latin America:

This thesis by John Weinbrenner examines the use of soft power and hard power in U.S. foreign policy regarding Latin America and the impacts it has brought about. Weinbrenner analyzes two case studies, FDR's Good Neighbor Policy and Reagan's contra war policies, to understand the effectiveness of these different power approaches. Through a qualitative case study comparison, he assesses the short and long-term goals of each policy case and whether they achieved the intended influence.

Weinbrenner also discusses the fact that policymakers often lack context on Latin American issues, which has a negative impact on US influence. He delves into this points by discussing the work of Latin Americanist and professor Howard J. Wiarda. He states how Wiarda sought to uncover the truth behind the accusation that the US tends to ignore its neighbors in the southern hemisphere and this lack of attention reaches the point of neglect. However, he points out that Wiarda states that it is not “necessarily one of neglect, but rather active engagement at relatively low policy and bureaucratic levels” (Weinbrenner, 2007). He uses the example of the Hoover administration as proof.

The literature review shows that scholars generally portray troubled U.S.-Latin America relations, affecting American influence. Realists favor hard power while liberals emphasize soft power. Understanding these approaches is key for effective policymaking. The methodology acknowledges challenges in studying intangible concepts like power and influence. A case study method allows deeper analysis of causal processes in real events. The analysis finds that both soft and hard power can increase or decrease influence, depending on goals and timeframe. Challenging notions that the approaches must be combined, each may be more impactful for different objectives.

America in the World: Hard vs. Soft Power:

The video showed the debate between William Kristol and Joseph Nye and the merits of hard and soft power. Each speaker supported their argument very well and provided historical examples of how their chosen power was successful or how it failed to achieve the targeted goals. I did not declare a winner of the debate. In my opinion, they both argued admirably for their perspective sides.

Analysis, Evaluation, Connections and Interpretations:

When evaluating and examining the connections and interpretations made by the authors, it is clear that the readings collectively emphasize the evolving nature of power and international relations within the global dynamic of power structure. Keohane and Nye's framework in "Power and Interdependence" lays the groundwork for understanding how traditional notions of power are evolving in an interconnected world and the others all seem to reference this work in some way. This is to be expected given the fact that Joseph Nye is the one who coined the term soft power. And all the writings deal with this concept. However, some of them have an emphasis on coordination and cooperation and how it reflects the contemporary shift towards multilateralism.

Olga G. Leonova's article, "Soft Power as a State's Foreign Policy Resource," provides an interpretation of soft power as a critical tool in shaping foreign policy. While focusing on Russia's soft power potential, it indirectly raises questions about how other countries employ soft power strategies. This prompts readers to consider the broader implications of soft power in international relations. This work is deeply connected to the work of Keohane and Nye. Olga discusses the outdated concept of hard power and how even the use of nuclear weapons is obsolete in navigating the new global power dynamic.

John Weinbrenner's thesis further explores the practical implications of soft and hard power in U.S. foreign policy. However, his primary focus is on Latin America. His emphasis on the context-specific effectiveness of each approach challenges conventional wisdom and encourages a more nuanced understanding of the power dynamics.

Agreement or Disagreement:

In considering whether I agree or disagree with the required readings for this week, I believe it is important to recognize the value of each perspective and grade each writing separately. Therefore, that is what I have done. First, in regards to Keohane and Nye's book. It

establishes the framework for the whole concept of hard and soft power and offers a compelling alternative to traditional realist views. It emphasizes cooperation over dominance and delves deeper into the concept of smart power. While this shift aligns with contemporary global trends, it may also raise concerns about the complexities of coordinating multiple actors and interests. However, found this book to be extremely engaging and find myself agreeing with the concepts within.

Joseph Nye's concept of soft power resonates with me because of how it covers the evolving nature of international relations, and how attraction and persuasion are powerful tools when utilized correctly. However, the chapters in "Soft Power and US Foreign Policy" reveal the challenges and limitations of implementing soft power effectively. I did enjoy the read, however, there were areas I disagreed with. I do admit that the ideas within it, prompts consideration of whether soft power can truly replace hard power or if a balance between the two is necessary. This concept I do agree with, which is also a concept Joseph Nye discusses and refers to as Smart Power, of which I am an avid supporter. History supports this idea as well. I know I mention it a hundred times this semester, but the historical example dramatized by the movie "Charlie Wilson's War" is a prime example of this. It clearly shows the risks of strictly hard power and forgetting the importance of soft power. Had the US utilized smart power during this timeframe, it is a very good change that the situation in the Middle East would never have gotten as bad as it is today with another war waging.

On another note, Olga G. Leonova's emphasis on the importance of soft power in foreign policy is also agreeable, especially in today's interconnected world. However, in my opinion, her article seems to lack empirical evidence to support its claims. Unless I missed something, this lack of support makes it challenging to fully endorse her arguments. I believe she does make a

strong case. But I disagree with the seemingly complete disregard for the importance of hard power. Soft power is a great tool, but having a toolbox with only screwdrivers is pointless. Sometimes you need a hammer.

John Weinbrenner's thesis challenges preconceived notions about the necessity of combining soft and hard power. While his case studies provide valuable insights, the thesis could benefit from a more concise presentation. I found it a little dry and a little hard to follow in some places. Listening to it being read to me with my apple screen reader while I was sleepy put me to sleep. Making it difficult to finish. I am not dismissing the paper altogether, I just found it a little hard to focus on in some parts. I do blame my exhaustion and ADD for some of that. But I do believe he makes some strong points. I did find the historical analysis of the two case studies pertinent to his topic.

In the video debate between William Kristol and Joseph Nye, both speakers presented compelling arguments for hard and soft power, respectively. The balanced nature of the debate makes it difficult to declare a winner, highlighting the ongoing relevance of this discussion in international relations. However, given my support of Smart power, I would side more with Nye during this debate.

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