Soft Power and Small States: A Theoretical Discussion

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Abstract

This paper analyses global debates on soft power and its implications for small states in international relations. It primarily focuses on theoretical debates about the soft power of small states. It examines the conceptual development of soft power and how it relates to small states using a qualitative approach. It has observed small states from quantitative and qualitative definitions and found them to have divergent priorities with distinct characteristics. Furthermore, a soft power taxonomy was used to observe soft power resources, instruments, receptions, and outcomes. Methodologically, this paper follows the qualitative literature review approach, using a systematic framework. Finally, the paper examines the ontological position of soft power in international relations theory, providing a unique proposition that stands out from realism, liberalism, and constructivism. In conclusion, the paper reviews the opportunities, challenges, and practices of soft power in the foreign affairs of small states, drawing on theoretical and philosophical lenses to develop persuasive arguments.

Keywords: Hegemony, international relations, military power, soft power taxonomy, small states

Introduction

Soft power is the capacity to influence the behaviour of others with attraction and persuasion rather than coercion or violence. It is derived from the attractiveness of a nation's culture, values, and policies. A small state is a sovereign state with a relatively small population, territory, and economy and is often disadvantaged in the international arena due to its limited resources, including military and economic strength. Small countries, on the

other hand, can leverage their soft power to build relationships, influence others' behavior, and help them reach their foreign policy objectives. In addition to traditional state actors, non-state actors such as multinational corporations, international organizations, and civil society organizations are playing an increasingly important role in soft power. The role of non-state actors in soft power is not only limited to state actors but also encompasses multinational corporations, international organizations, and civil society organizations.

Governments and non-government organizations are taking advantage of digital technology to reach out to their target audience. For instance, governments are taking advantage of social media to get in touch with people and other governments. Businesses are also taking advantage of digital marketing to get their message out there. The importance of culture and values as a source of soft power is on the rise. For instance, a country with a strong culture and values that others find appealing can be easier to connect with and influence. As the world shifts from a "one-party world" to a "multi-polar world," the ability of smaller states to leverage soft power is becoming increasingly important. This is because smaller countries now have more leverage to engage with and influence the behavior of other countries. Academic discourse on soft power that is suitable for small states is lacking. Consequently, there is a lacuna in the theoretical discourse of soft power that is appropriate for small states

In this context, the primary focus of this study is to examine the existing discourse on soft power and the role of small states in international affairs. Additionally, the study evaluates the theoretical discourse surrounding soft power and how it can be used to determine the suitability of small states for international diplomacy and foreign policy. To achieve this, the questions included in the study are: What is the theoretical argument in favour of soft power for small states? This paper examines the role of soft power in determining the suitability of small states for foreign policy and diplomacy. It also explores the implications of soft power for the survival of these states in international relations. The questions raised by the study are essential to bridge the gap between the theoretical nature of soft power and its application to the foreign policies of small states. Additionally, the study proposes that critical analysis and investigations of the philosophical bases of soft power offer the basis for understanding the status of small states and their prospects in the various geo-political contexts of the world and contextualizing them to form the necessary arguments.

Concepts of Soft Power and Small States

In international relations, power refers to an actor's ability to influence others to do things they would not normally do (Lukes, 2005). It is the capacity to direct the actions of others according to one's desires (Waltz, 1979; Nye, 2004 a). Another academic uses the term "power" to describe the "ability to organize the language of international relations" (Ashley, 1989, p. 241). The concept of power is not a property that is owned or utilized, but rather a productive system that permeates society (Foucault, 1984, p. 26). Thus, it can produce desired outcomes in the international system. Power can be exercised in a variety of ways, including through coercion, persuasion, and diplomacy. Soft power is defined as the ability of an actor (A) to influence another actor (B) to take a course of action (B) that the actor (A) would not have taken on their own (Dahl, 1957, p. 202).

Soft Power and Small States: Theoretical Discussion

Power conceptions and forms are numerous, and they have evolved into state affairs. There are several different sources of power in international relations. Some of the most important sources include military power, economic power, technological power, diplomatic power, and soft power. Whatever the sources, the primary medium of international relations is power. There are three means to achieve power: compulsion (sticks), inducement (carrots), and attractiveness (soft power). Nye (1990). In other words, power can be categorized into three categories: "coercive with threats," "inducing with payments," and "co-optive" (Nye, 2004a; Baniya, 2021, p. 55). Among these categories, the first two, in general, are being expressed in the discourse as hard power and the last one as soft power.

According to Nye (1990), soft power is "the ability to achieve what you want by attraction rather than compulsion or payment" (pp. 5-7). It is "the ability to influence the conduct of others to obtain what one desires" (Baral, 2016, p. 4). To him, "soft power is the capacity to obtain what one desires without the use of force or payment" (Nye, 2004a, pp. X–XI; as cited in Baral, 2016). Indeed, any actor in distinct phenomena may exercise such powers; however, the state is the major actor in international relations.

Discourses of international relations at individual, state, and systemic levels are primarily determined by power relations interrelated with the engagement of small, middle, and great powers. All states and non-state actors, major states as well as small states, can use the intelligent integration and networking of power as "smart power," which is the combined form of "hard and soft" power. (Nye, 2013, p. 565; Nye, 2023). Additionally, Nye (2013) exemplifies how China, which has the largest population and is a rising power in terms of hard economic and military resources, has purposefully chosen to invest heavily in soft power resources to make its hard power appear less threatening to its neighbors. Norway, with a population of 5 million, has increased its attractiveness by legitimizing policies in peace negotiation and development assistance that enhance its soft power. This shows the soft power strategy has been applied in contemporary international relations by small as well as great powers. As a result, in international relations, power continues to be a crucial and hotly debated concept in the theoretical and practical spheres.

To safeguard their national interests, security, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, states use a variety of tools, including hard power, soft power, and smart power. Even though the UN Charter (1945) recognizes every state as a sovereign nation, smaller states face difficulties in international relations because of their limited resources and vulnerability to quantitative and qualitative pressures. Factors such as population, geography, and economic capacity are the most common denominators in determining small states. Small states are sovereign states with a population of less than 1.5 million and limited resources. They face a lot of challenges when it comes to growing their economies, like being too open, not making enough money, having too few institutions and resources, and being vulnerable to natural disasters and climate change (Charles, 1997). However, the above definition does not cover all aspects. For example, Nepal is not a small state in terms of population.

 Small states differ in several ways, including their distance from easily accessible transportation networks, the number of people living in the state, the size of the market, their influence, their administrative capacities, and their ownership and use of resources

(Crowards, 2002). Therefore, to remain competitive in a post-globalized world order, small states need to actively search for soft power resources, appropriate tools and frameworks, and thoroughly evaluate the reception and results of their efforts.

When it comes to small states, Guzzini (2005) argues that "the concept of power is always set in a theoretical context" (p. 495), and the same applies to small states. In such circumstances, small states have relied on their external environment to leverage their soft power in ways that support domestic and foreign policy goals (Karki & Dhungana, 2020).

One of the major questions that arise in international relations for smaller countries is what type of soft power strategy they should adopt to safeguard their sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security, as well as to protect their interests and ensure success both domestically and internationally. This question has both philosophical and theoretical implications.

Literature Review

Scholars have used a wide range of interpretations of the concept of power in international relations. The acquisition of power is at the core of all political activity, including international political activity, and regardless of the ultimate objective of the activity, the attainment of power is the primary objective (Morgenthau, 1954). Power is a major factor in world politics today (Carr, 1964). Guzzini (2005) argues that constructivism is a "meta-theoretic commitment," meaning that there is no single view of power that applies everywhere (p. 507). Thus, military power, economic power, political power, and technological power are often referred to as "soft power" in state affairs. However, scholars and those involved in international affairs have recently begun to refer to this concept as "soft power," even though it has been around since ancient times (Timilsana, 2020). As a result, soft power has already taken center stage and is attracting global attention (Lin & Xiaonan, 2012).

Soft power is becoming a major topic of conversation around the world for different political, social, and economic systems in the context of international relations (IR). Nye (1990) proposed the concept of "soft power" as a means of persuading others to accept the desired outcomes by appealing to them rather than by force. (Boulding, 1989; Nye, 2004a). Lee (2009) argues that the concept of "soft power has been developed in other fields, including Gramsci's 'hegemony', Bourdieu's' symbolic power', Max Weber's 'authority', Foucault's 'discipline', and Habermas's 'communication power'" in the domain (p. 1). These worldviews of international relations have paid much attention to the non-physical aspects of power and ability, similar to the concept of soft power.

 Bates (1975) argues that the idea of hegemony is based on the idea that power and ideas control people. So, even though soft power had not been invented yet, ideas were seen as a source of power. Bourdieu (1984), for example, defines "symbolic power" as "power derived from recognition: reputation, esteem, honor, fame, and authority" (p. 251), all of which are components that have recently appeared in soft power theory. Coser (1971) explains Weber's three types of authority: "conventional authority," "charisma authority,"

and "legal-rational authority," which are basically what soft power is all about. Sheridan (1977) also points out that power isn't just about the strong using their strength to control the weak. Foucault puts a lot of emphasis on the creative power of power in modern times. He is trying to get rid of the negative idea of power and make it more positive. It creates reality and tells the truth

In the words of Foucault, power is understood in terms of how it is used. There are many different kinds of power in society, like legal power, administrative power, economic power, and even military power. To him, the government, a certain group, or a certain person does not own power. It is a relationship between many people and groups that only happens when it is used.

Besides Foucault's connection between soft power content and disciplinary power, Habermas also introduced the idea of 'communicative power'. According to Flynn (2004), "Habermas interprets the concept of 'communicative power' as the primary legal source of opposition to the norm-free control media of money and political authority (p. 434). This is the connection between the concept of communication and the concept of power, and it already suggests a connection between the impersonal power of power and the normative sources of communicative action.

Furthermore, international relations constructivist theory recognized the power of ideas and standards, analogous to the concept of soft power; however, their discussion did not lead to the formulation of a new theory of power that would have policy implications (Lee, 2009; Barnett & Finnemore, 1999; Hass, 1992). In the same way, constructivist ideas have not developed into a neat collection of separate constructivist debates about the power of ideas, even though constructivist perspectives on power in international relations include many fundamental elements of soft power. It is clear, however, that the similarities between constructivist and soft power theories can be easily conceptualized and appreciated. Consequently, there were multiple initiatives and similar forms of essence before the emergence of soft power within the sphere of power. Joseph Nye has said, "Power is like the weather; we all rely on it, we all talk about it, but we don't understand it" (2004a, p. 1).

Soft power is a broad concept that encompasses more than just looks, media, and short-term popularity. Achieving political goals is one of the most significant forms of soft power (Nye, 1990). Soft power means being able to convince, entice, and work together with people to achieve your goals (Nye, 2011). The soft power thesis is based on the idea that a country's popularity will boost its soft power if people admire its values. Chinese academics and political experts think that strong diplomacy and communication skills are the keys to having a soft power presence in the world. To make a country's soft power stronger, they can use advanced public relations strategies and methods to project a good image around the world (Wang & Lu, 2008, p. 429). Nye (2011) says that soft power is something you can use to get what you want without resorting to violence or coercion. It's attractive because of the ideas behind it, the way it's used around the world, and the culture that surrounds it. In 2012, Lin and Xiaonan elaborates.

> Culture is a big part of a nation's soft power, but it's not the only factor that affects it. Political value is the country's political ideal, and it's important to make sure it's accepted and adhered to internationally. International policy is also important, and it's the world ideal a nation wants to promote and the measures it takes to make it happen. These three elements are intertwined and interact, with political value at the heart, culture providing support, and international policy providing action. (p. 50)

Nevertheless, the open or porous characteristics of the Nepal-India borders pose internal and external security threats to both countries (Upreti, 2020). The borders have been unguarded for years with no initiatives to develop infrastructure for securing borders (Upreti, 2020)

In the late 1990s, when the US was facing a group of countries that wanted to use force against it, Nye came up with a plan for how to use soft power (Jain, 2018). The main difference between soft and hard power, according to Nye, is that soft power uses attraction to help governments reach their objectives, while hard power uses either a stick or a carrot to achieve political objectives (Nye Jr., 2004a; Keating & Kaczmarska, 2019).

In reality, researchers have created tools to differentiate between soft power and hard power discourse. Over time, soft power has become increasingly popular in academic discourse worldwide and has gained the attention of politicians and policymakers. When a nation's policies appear to be legitimate and appropriate, its soft power increases significantly. Nye (2004a) has presented a broader concept of soft power from a multidimensional perspective. In this connection, in 2008, Fan stated.

> Soft power refers to the power to influence others' preferences, the power to attract, the power to coerce, and the power to persuade; it's all about getting others to agree with your ideas and values so that you can get the outcomes you want in world politics. Ultimately, soft power is the ability to influence other countries to follow one's example of prosperity and openness and want to emulate it, and it is a key element of leadership. (pp. 1–11)

Soft power is also a term used to describe the power to draw people in, influence others, and shape the agenda of others (Nye, 2004b). Soft power is the power to draw people in, get them to do what you want, and control what others do. Lee (2009) divides soft powers into five sub-categories according to the policy objectives that need to be met, as follows:

> The use of soft power can be used to enhance the external security of a country by creating a peaceful and appealing image; to rally the support of other countries for a country's foreign and security policy; to influence the thinking and preferences of other countries; to maintain the unity of a nation or group of nations; and to bolster the approval ratings of an individual leader or the domestic backing of a government. (p. 4)

Recently, Ohnesorge (2022) summarized the concept of power as the prototypical phenomenon in international affairs linked to social relations—as one of the most heavily contested concepts in the social sciences. Accordingly, soft power is a comprehensive phenomenon among contemporary IR scholars and rigorously reliant on its resources, which include culture, political values, foreign and domestic policies, reputation, innovations, governance, charismatic leaders, engagement, education, preferences, unity in the community, and also being supported by institutions.

Soft Power and Small States: Theoretical Discussion

In the context of the soft power discourse, Lee (2009) argues that there is a clear difference between soft power tools and soft power resources. Lee argues that it has been difficult to find any soft power discourse or policies in a country that go beyond the basic focus on public diplomacy and official development assistance (ODA), consolidating international institutions, engaging in diplomatic activities, engaging in sports, and engaging in cultural exchanges due to the absence of consistent theoretical development.

Soft power refers to the use of communication, attraction, and persuasion methods to gain recognition, acceptance, and support in domestic and international relations. Leaders of the state's government, civil society, and business should use soft power tools to integrate the idea of governing the state and the idea of national value into the national political system and international standards. Therefore, soft power emphasizes the need to improve people's understanding of the national system, rules, and laws through soft means. Just as soft power improves a nation's cohesiveness and attractiveness; it also helps a nation establish its image (Lin & Xiaonan, 2012).

Gallarotti (2011) suggested that the world at the systemic level had changed from a bipolar to a unipolar system after the 1990s and that it had shifted towards a multipolar state gradually. He said that it was hard to get countries and other people to do what needed to be done with the main tools of hard power, so soft power deserves the way to go to have more control over international outcomes (Gallarotti, 2011). Soft power, therefore, plays a wider role in contemporary international relations and geopolitics.

Small states have a "systemic effect," but they cannot change the pattern of the global system, which is determined by major powers (Keohane, 1969; Adhikari, 2018). Thus, soft power is a powerful tool for both big and small powers, but it's especially important for small countries. For small countries, soft power requires a shift in political power and a strong test of their willingness to use it (Chong, 2009). Because of their unique power capacities, "small states face a conceptual and political challenge" (Chong, 2010, p. 383). The soft power of small states differs from each other based on several factors, including the size of the state, influences, the number of people living there, the size of the economy and market, the ability of the government to manage the area, the availability of resources, and the remoteness of the territory.

Diplomacy (public diplomacy, personal diplomacy, niche diplomacy, and economic diplomacy) is one of the soft power tools that enable small states to benefit from international arrangements and commitments. Small states can achieve their foreign policy goals domestically and internationally through peaceful means, primarily through diplomacy (Morgenthau, 1954). The concept of power is also incorporated into theoretical frameworks in the context of soft power and small states (Long, 2017).

Soft power can be employed in a variety of ways, ranging from public diplomacy to cultural exchanges and development assistance. However, small states often employ different forms of soft power to pursue distinct objectives. Examples of the use of soft power by small states in international relations are discussed below.

South Korea has been able to expand its international recognition and influence through the utilization of its popular culture, such as K-pop and K-dramas, which has enabled the country to form alliances and advance its commercial and investment objectives (Kim & Marinec, 2015). Norway has a long history of standing up for human rights, peacebuilding, and global development. This gives Norway a great deal of soft power, which can be used to encourage other countries to adopt progressive policies in these areas (Stokke, 2010). Markovic (2021), on the other hand, argues that Switzerland has a strong international image because it hosts the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Health Organization (WHO), neutrality, democratic values and innovation, and reputation. Switzerland has a great opportunity to show off its values and what it stands for. Sweden has used its commitment to human rights and gender equality as a kind of soft power to spread these values around the world (Agestam & Rosamond, 2019). Costa Rica has had a positive impact on the climate change policies of other countries by increasing its soft power and increasing its focus on environmental protection and service in response to the challenges of climate change (Rojas, 2003). Singapore's soft power is based on 'Good Governance and Foreign Investment' to portray itself as an example of good economic performance and to have earned a distinguished reputation in the world for its political stability and performance-enhancing qualities (Hong, 2007). Nepal has the power to draw in people from around the world because of its commitment to the principle of Panchhasheel, its cultural diversity, the Lumbini mountain range, its role in peacekeeping missions with the UN, its unique way of internal conflict management, its diplomatic engagement, its media presence, and its international diaspora (Thapa, 2022).

After reviewing these large volumes of literature, it is clear that there is a range of priorities among small states, and it can be said that soft power and small-state studies are still in the early stages of development. However, some potential findings can be explored in academic discussions and with stakeholders.

Methods

This paper provides an overview of the qualitative research methodology and systemic discourse applied to the analysis of secondary literature, which has been sourced from a variety of sources. The researcher has used the theoretical lenses of soft power and small states as a basis for their analysis and has concluded that these two perspectives are inextricably linked to gain a critical understanding of the resources, instruments, reception, and outcomes of persuading, attracting, influencing, and co-opting power. It also examines the changing nature of soft power in international relations and its potential for small states to achieve foreign policy objectives and engage in diplomatic outreach through qualitative research.

Data Presentation and Discussion

This study examines the development of soft power, small states, their meanings and definitions, resources, and their place in international politics and diplomacy, with the aim of understanding and exploring the alternatives and suitability of foreign relations with small states. While discussing the conceptual reasons behind soft power and small states, the

focus of the study is on what and how soft power resources, tools, reception, and outcomes have been identified and implemented in particular small states to achieve counter-examples. It may be possible for actors to develop effective soft power programmes for countries, especially small states if they can understand the whole mechanism of soft power exercise from a theoretical perspective. As mentioned earlier in this article, the main approaches used to examine the foreign affairs and policies of small states from the perspective of achieving foreign policy goals are soft power theory and small-state phenomenology. By categorizing and conceptualizing various aspects of soft power, the purpose of this paper is to broaden the scope of soft power discourse in the following sub-titles.

The ontology of the interpretive paradigm is based on the idea that reality is socially constructed and that reality is attached to personal belief, time, space and society. The epistemology of the interpretive paradigm is that knowledge is subjective and socially constructed. This implies that knowledge is not something that can be objectively discovered, but rather it is something that is constructed through social interactions. The axiology for this paradigm is based on the idea that social inquiry is value-laden. The methodology employed in this paradigm includes qualitative methods such as ethnography, case study, and phenomenology.

The Theoretical Position of Soft Power in International Relations

The role of the ontological perspective in the field of social science research, particularly in the area of international relations, is to direct the researcher toward a specific objective. It helps guide and point the researcher in the right direction. The mindset of realists, liberals, or constructivists has been the main driving force behind IR scholarships. The mindset of realists, liberals, or constructivists has been the main driving force behind IR scholarships. The ontological perspective plays a crucial role in social science research, specifically in the field of international relations, by helping to guide and orient the researcher towards a chosen destination. The mindset of realist, liberal, or constructivist orientation has dominated and affected the IR scholarships. The subsequent discussion raises the question of the ontological status of soft power theory and its tendency to adhere to a school of thought: realist, liberalist, or constructivist. Purushothaman (2010) argues that "soft power is often associated with the rise of globalization and neo-liberal ideas" (p. 1). Layne (2010) reviewed soft power as a way of looking at international politics from a liberal perspective, similar to the way institutionalism works. He said it was a way of saying there is more to international politics than what has seen on the surface. People said that this concept was only relevant when you were following a liberal approach to IR (Nye, 2008a). According to Christopher Layne and others, "soft power and realism are inextricably linked" (Layne, 2010, p. xiii). Soft power is not like liberalism or idealism. Instead, it is simply a tool for power—a tool for achieving the desired outcomes. In this sense, the concept of soft power follows some fundamental principles of interdependent theory, including the power of international exchanges, interactions, and communications and the power of non-state actors (Ohnesorge, 2020; Nye & Keohane, 1971). Soft power is a way of looking at foreign affairs that goes beyond the traditional ideas of realism, liberalism, and constructivism. A holistic approach looks at the resources, tools, reception, and outcomes of soft power and how well

it works in practice.

Soft power resources

A country's soft power comes from three main sources: its culture, which makes it attractive to others; its political values, which are upheld both domestically and internationally; and its foreign policy, which is seen as legitimate and moral." (Nye, 2004a, p. 11; Nye, 2008b, p. 96). In addition to these indications, Ohnesorge (2022) has identified and elucidated a fourth and previously largely overlooked soft power source that has the potential to generate a great deal of soft power on its own: the soft power of individuals (p. 113). According to Ohnesorge (2022), soft power can be classified as resources (cultural, values, policies, and personalities), tools (public and personal diplomacy), reception (attractiveness, apathy, and resistance), and results (compliance, neutrality, and opposition) (p. 89).

Similarly, leadership strength is a key soft power asset that encompasses the leader's natural personality traits and communication skills. Personal leadership traits include charisma and emotional drive. Communication skills include persuasive and non-verbal communication. In addition, the personalities and charisma of decision-makers, the composition of cabinet and advisory teams, and the inter-institutional and inter-institutional relations among decision-makers all contribute to the potentialities of soft power, which can be conceptualized as soft power personality resources (Ohensorge, 2020).

Soft power instruments

Soft power instruments thrive in an environment of trust, credibility, and respect and are used to leverage soft power levers. There are, of course, many ways to deploy soft power levers, such as broadcasting, nation branding, exchange initiatives, disaster aid, military-to-military cooperation, public diplomacy, personal diplomacy, global public relations, and reputation management and promotion. According to Zykas (2012), country branding and public diplomacy institutions (PDIs) serve the purpose of soft power credentials.

Zykas (2012) asserts that country branding and public diplomacy institutes are in practice for soft power credentials. According to Geiger (2010), soft power is "found in people, objects, systems, institutions, and activities." Government programs and instruments are not sufficient for the effective implementation of soft power because it is shaped by civil society within a state (for example, by corporations, universities, NGOs, etc.). Soft power is better suited to broad rather than specific goals and works by changing the attitudes of target audiences in foreign countries, directly or indirectly. Soft power is not limited to the government but also includes civil society. It has a broader operational time horizon than hard power (Nye, 2021). According to this view, soft power, also known as public diplomacy and personal diplomacy, encompasses all aspects of society. Public diplomacy, in this view, is the collective direct or collective mediated communication activities of various individuals and complex actors towards foreign or domestic individuals (for example, multipliers) or other complex actors (for example, the government) to achieve objectives such as persuasion or mutual understanding (Auer & Srugies, 2013, p. 18).

In this context, Ondrej (2020) challenges Nye's prescribed views on soft power instruments and argues that soft power instruments play an essential role in the implementation of soft power (p. 136). Ohnesorge (2022) has further developed soft power tools with their associated indicators, including a classification of soft powers. Operational indicators for soft power instruments include the overall organization of public diplomacy in a state, personnel (leaders and staff) involved in diplomatic activities, the budget allocated to public diplomacy, and specific programs and initiatives of the state.

Soft power reception

Soft power supports in the context of fair exchange, trust, agreement, cooperation, confidence, and respect from either party involved in the relationship. Receiving actor B's soft power resources or tools is a perception of actor A's soft power resources (Ohnesorge, 2020, p. 171). Therefore, it is necessary to analyze B's view of reception by A and whether resources and tools are being used for foreign policy goals. Soft power is a form of attraction that is contingent upon the perception of those who view it (Joseph Nye, 2010, p. 4). Like soft power is about attraction, the 'power' is not in the hands of those who hold it but rather in the hands and reactions of those who receive it (Fan, 2008, p. 14). For soft power to be effective, it must take into account the characteristics of the intended audience. Failure to do so can result in misinterpretation and, in some cases, even harm.

For example, during the Persian Gulf crisis of 1990–1991, Japan did not participate at all in the global cooperation efforts. This contributed to American perceptions that Japan was shirking its global obligations. This perception has had an impact on Japanese foreign policy. The Japanese Foreign Ministry, known as the "Ministry of Foreign Affairs," recognized that Japanese foreign policy has reached a critical point and needs a new approach to overcome these challenges. The Japanese government endorsed Take Shita's "international cooperation initiative" based on the three pillars of "cooperation for peace," "enhancement of official development assistance," and "enhancing international cultural exchange" in the expectation that it would meet Japan's diplomatic requirements in the changing global environment (Ogawa, 2020, p. 275). This is a great example of how to think about soft power reception from the perspective of the target state and how to think about it from a self-assessment point of view. That's why reception is so important in soft-power conversations. Ohnesorge has identified three ideal types of reception: attraction, apathy, or repulsion. Additionally, he has proposed public opinion and recent comments from decision-makers, elites, and media figures as criteria for measuring reception (2020, p. 173).

Soft power outcomes

The purpose of any important conversation is to have an idea of what the outcome will be, and the same is true of soft power. Soft power is using attraction to get other people to do what you want. Public opinion on foreign policy is highly influential, particularly when a particular foreign policy topic is of particular relevance to foreign audiences (Goldsmith & Horiuchi, 2012, p. 33). When it comes to judgments that can be seen as results, foreign leaders seem to consider the views of their domestic audiences. According to Nye, soft

power is about "results, not resources" (2013, p. 561). Soft power can be measured by evaluating a country's ability to achieve its foreign policy objectives. The innate capacity of any country to engage in international relations can be evaluated by analyzing the results of the target country's policy change as perceived by the host country. The most renowned academician, Ohnesorge (2020), has developed a classification of soft power, with the conclusion that soft power outcomes should be given the utmost importance. The indicators for soft power outcomes are, in descending order of importance, compliance, neutrality, and opposition. Soft power outcomes can be determined by a variety of factors, including the compliance of a country with international organizations, its voting habits in the UN General Assembly, its adherence to foreign policy decisions, as well as the number and type of treaties it has concluded or joined (Ohnesorge, 2020, p. 204).

Role of soft power in a small state

Soft Power and the Role of Small States in International Affairs: How and What Can It Contribute? This question can be answered in multiple ways, depending on various perspectives. Recent developments in global politics have led to a shift in the balance between soft and hard power. Those with limited hard-power resources should therefore rely on soft power to remain competitive and prosperous.

The international system is mainly made up of big and middle states, known as superpowers and middle powers, respectively. This means that small states are not getting the best of it when it comes to international relations. On the other hand, the international system is formed by various states in which small countries are the majority; however, the system is influenced by a few big powers. The number of small powers has been on the rise in the 20th century, even though the international system isn't always kind to small states (Thorhallson & Steinsson, 2017).

Williams (1998) found that openness, seclusion, adaptability, vulnerability, and dependence are the main factors that affect the involvement of small states in the global system. Even big and small states are facing new challenges, like natural disasters caused by climate change, cyber war, terrorism, refugees, misinformation, and technology. Even a superpower wouldn't be able to tackle these problems without the help of small states from all over the world.

Small State Discourses

The definition of a "small state" is based on how many resources they have. Generally, if a state has a lot of resources, like population, GDP, land, and military resources, it's considered a big state. If they don't have those things, they're considered a small state. Small states have limited influence in the international system due to a lack of such resources. Nevertheless, the current climate is an opportune time for them to be small states, as established conventions, organizations, and United Nations policies guarantee their survival and territorial integrity. Due to the principle of sovereign equality, small states play an important role in many international organizations. The United Nations offers small states, which have limited resources of power, a system of international agreements and legislation

that safeguards their sovereignty, protects their borders, and fulfills their national interests (Suilleabhain, 2014).

By contrast, a free-trade agreement has allowed many small states to develop and specialize at their own pace. As a result, the potential for harm to small states has decreased while the number of such states has grown (Long, 2017). For this reason, it is beneficial to be in a small state at this stage of history. Additionally, the current trend of de-concentration, de-polarization, democratization, de-regulation, and digitization in the world has been beneficial for small states (Henrikson, 2001). These waves are connected to small states' soft power. There are some downsides and some upsides to being in a small state from a systemic point of view. Soft power potentialities can help small states stand out and be more sustainable in the world.

Diverse small states with diverse priorities

The international system is replete with small states, ranging from Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to Landlocked Developing Small States (LSS). As a result of their diverse characteristics, small states face a variety of development challenges. It has been observed that small states tend to favour multilateral institutions due to their ability to reduce power asymmetries, reduce the cost of diplomatic transactions, and limit the influence of major powers. Furthermore, small state security strategies, national interests, foreign policy objectives, and diplomatic procedures differ greatly based on internal and international circumstances, as well as their diplomatic actors.

Small states are at a disadvantage when it comes to Track I diplomacy. Therefore, they are more likely to benefit from the soft power tools of Track II or Track III actors. These actors include business leaders, media personalities, academics, retired civil servants, think tanks, politicians, legislators, research scientists, and other influential figures who collaborate to create innovative ideas, shape public opinion, and promote policy shifts that encourage cooperative development. (Dahal, 2009). Engaging in these activities helps to protect the national interests of small states.

Every country has a concept called 'National Interest' that plays a crucial role in international relations and using soft power resources. Regardless of their size, all countries strive to meet their national interests. Foreign policy is formulated based on the interests of each country, and it continuously works to achieve them. A nation's desire to be considered an independent entity, distinct from the interests of other countries, is what national interest represents. The consequences of not meeting national interests don't differ for small countries.

Small states often struggle to adapt to external changes such as economic downturns, natural disasters, and climate change due to limited resources, economic opportunities, and increased migration (World Bank, 2021). Foreign aid and foreign Direct Investment (FDI) are crucial for the long-term development of small states. However, external aid alone is insufficient to establish institutions that are both legitimate and sustainable in the national interest (Bhatta, 2013, p. 183).

Soft Power and Small States: Theoretical Discussion

The United Nations Regional Commission consists of 58 members, including 38 United Nations member states and 20 non-United Nations members or associate members. The small states that make up this commission face unique challenges related to their social, economic, and environmental conditions. However, each country has its own set of priorities that differ from one another.

Small states face difficulties in diplomacy due to high transaction costs, which can impede their ability to interact with other countries and create comprehensive foreign policies. This can also hinder their ability to prioritize issues in negotiations. However, with the emergence of IT and mass media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WeChat, websites, and broadcast media, it has become easier for these countries to communicate their interests to other nations.

The concerns of small states that have already developed and those that are still developing differ significantly in international systems. For instance, the priorities of European small states such as Austria and Switzerland, Asian small states like Sri Lanka, Qatar, the UAE, Nepal, and Singapore, and African small states like Botswana are not the same. To achieve state-specific goals, small states should incorporate them into their foreign policies and implement them through diplomatic means in bilateral and multi-regional forums.

In the preceding discussion, it was pointed out that small states have a different approach to soft power compared to realists, idealists, and constructivists in international affairs. For small states, the use of soft power tools is crucial in building their image, credibility, and stability in the international system of self-help. Due to the limited resources available to them in terms of hard power, small states rely heavily on attraction and aspiration to survive. Therefore, soft power is an essential theory of international affairs for them.

Conclusion

Soft power and small-state discourse have been evolving due to various philosophical, ontological, and theoretical developments in international relations. Information, communication, and technological developments have contributed to the nature and form of the changes in soft power discourse. However, the theoretical status of soft power has an assembled typo but a distinctive character in the phenomenology of international affairs.

Soft power and its discourse for small states have been evolving due to various philosophical, ontological, and theoretical developments in the field of international relations. Progress in information, communication, and technology has played a significant role in shaping the nature and form of these changes in the discourse on soft power. However, the theoretical status of soft power is still somewhat ambiguous, but it holds a unique character in the phenomenology of international affairs.

Soft power is a force that attracts others through persuasion and appeal rather than through coercion. It is a means for weak nations to survive, protect their sovereignty, fulfil their national interests, and promote prosperity in a world where policies, international law, and institutions under the United Nations are the norm. While the concept of soft power has

mainly been discussed with small states, analyzing its sources, instruments, reception, and outcomes can offer insights into different types of soft power.

Small states have their own unique characteristics that are closely linked to the priorities they focus on. This connection has become more evident in the post-Cold War era, where soft power discourse has gained momentum. To understand the impact of soft power theory on small states, a targeted and concrete approach is essential. It is important to acknowledge that soft power has its own distinct field of study, different from the conventional frameworks of realism, liberalism, and constructionism. Therefore, to comprehend the complex issues faced by small states, a comprehensive approach that considers all aspects of soft power is necessary.

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