**The soft power in global diplomacy**

[Syed Wajahat Ali](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/syed-wajahat-ali/)

December 5, 2020

The writer is an academic, columnist, and public policy researcher The combination of ‘Soft’ and ‘Power’ is artistically paradoxical. There can be many differentials to the concept. Precisely, it is the power of a human, group, and nation to add value in terms of comfort, skill, and aesthetics to the life of a fellow human, group, and nation. Undisputedly, Knowledge proved to be the primary tributary of soft power in human diplomatic history. Its scope evolved with the evolution in the value matrix constituting human political conscious. The history of internationalism validates that the basic ingredient of such power remained knowledge; blended with argument; garnished using art and etiquette. The foundation of the pyramid of diplomacy, pragmatically speaking, remained the ‘level of usefulness’ of a nation for itself and for other nations of the globe. Knowledge, in its totality, is the trademark of this usefulness.

In ancient times, the diplomatic emergence of Hellenistic societies was deeply influenced by their aptitude for knowledge. Academic contributions in polity and institutions, architecture, agriculture, natural resource, wealth circulation, and infrastructure, played a significant role in shaping the economic and social outlook of those societies 1 . New social philosophies of Cynicism, Epicureanism, and Stoicism furnished overall social conduct of Hellenistic people. Reason-based investigation unveiled horizons of inquiry in Astronomy, Physics, Mathematics, Biology, and Medicine. Ptolemaic kings established research centers, museum, and libraries in Alexandria 2 . Plato’s Academy, 387 th BC was the first official higher education institute of the western world, followed by Aristotle’s Lyceum school, in 335 th BC 3 .

One Belt One Road initiative has tremendously enlarged China’s diplomatic scope. More than 60 countries are chained together forming a grand diplomatic landscape with “double legs” and a “single circle”

Rationalization of political thought, education of virtue, letters, and art, and democratization of civil institutions were major contributions by these philosophy schools. Resultantly, Greeks became more objective in their approach towards the economy and politics. Their opinions were properly listened and reciprocated in the diplomatic capitals of that time 4 .

Peter Termin argues that the soft power behind the successful Roman’s political and trade diplomacy was rooted in their significance value for the contemporary world. The diplomatic core of the ancient roman empire could not be taken for granted at any level. The engine was their contribution in research and education. Roman youth was taught to be brave, upright, and logical. Grammar, orthography,

1 Zosia Archibald, John.K.Davies, The Economies of Hellenistic Societies, Third to First Centuries BC, Oxford University Press

2 Philip J. Adler, Randall L Powels, World Civilizations, 8th Edition

3 Aristotle. (2013). Politics (p.80). In Y. Yan &amp; D. H. Qin (Trans.). Beijing: People’s Press.

4 Hamilton, E. (1993). The Greek way (p.170). New York London.W. Norton &amp; Company

1iterature, geometry, astronomy, music, oratory, and gymnastics were the compulsory courses in education institutes. Aulus Cornelius Celsus (1st century CE) compiled eight volumes of encyclopedia the De medicina on the topics as diet, therapy, and surgery 5 . Columella (50 CE) wrote a comprehensive manual on agricultural best practices. These 12 books on viticulture, horticulture, animal husbandry, farm calendars, and civil architecture multiplied the agriculture revenues 6 . Pliny the Elder (23 CE) compiled 36 volumes of an encyclopedia on the natural world including minerals, vegetables, and animals. Cicero (106 BCE) and Vitruvius (1st century BCE) elaborated the Greek basis for philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, and physics 7 .Seneca worked extensively on the structure of Earth, geological history, earthquakes, volcanoes, comets, and meteors. The culture of knowledge enriched the economy and polity of Roman citizens, engined the development trajectory to a far stable and superior position as compared to the other human clusters of contemporary times.

In Recent history, the per capita GDP of China remained stagnant to almost zero from 1800 to 1950, while Western Europe’s per capita GDP increased steadily during the same period due to industrial revolutions. From 1952 to 1978, the figure increased to 3 percent per year. Since 1978, per capita GDP has accelerated at a rate of more than 8 percent per year 8 . The major boost in per capita GDP was observed after 1978 economic reforms supplemented by rising in education level. In 1999, China devised the 21st Century Education Revitalization Plan, which constructed the prospects of national development on the foundations of research and technology. The gross enrolment ratio of tertiary education throughout China increased from 21% in 2006 to 39% in 2014 9 . China had also quadrupled the number of graduate students over the previous decade, producing approximately 8 million graduates per year from colleges and universities 10 . According to figures compiled by UNESCO, China’s tertiary enrollment reached 34 million students by 2013 and 42 million in 2014. That number was up from roughly 7 million in 2000, representing an increase of 363 percent. 11 The educational planning, focus on knowledge, and cross-cutting methodology turned into an explosion of technology, infrastructure, and manufacturing simultaneously. One Belt One Road initiative has tremendously enlarged China’s diplomatic scope. More than 60 countries are chained together forming a grand diplomatic landscape with “double legs” (a new type of major power relations and the Belt and Road Initiative) and a “single circle” (peripheral diplomacy). The Belt and Road Initiative highlights the spirit of the age, characterized by “peace, mutual respect, openness, and inclusiveness 12 ”. I leave the discussion with an exclamation in response to those critics questioning Pakistan’s diplomatic strength on Kashmir issue or relations with UAE. Chill, please!