**Soft Power and Diplomacy**

**Since becoming the second largest economy in the world, China has despera-tely looked to enhance its soft power to produce goodwill and enhance its global reputa-tion.**

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In the age of multipolarity, the world is changing rapidly, and elements of power projections too. Those days are gone when hard power is the only tool of power projection.

Power is the ability to influence other states to drive out of their national interest, in terms of International Relations and Global Politics. Not long ago, military power is considered the real toolkit of power projection. History bears testimony to the fact that military power remained a dominant force throughout human history that defined the trajectory of world history. From the Romans to the British and the Battle of Lake Regillus to World War 2, military power is considered the real currency of power. That’s why many classical war expert scholars like Carl von Clausewitz, an eminent Prussian general and military theorist, opted for ultimate authority, and currency in international politics is military power.

Moving forward, the Cold War between the USA and the USSR, expanded and enhanced the scope of power projections, beyond military means. In that era, both adversaries were involved in proxy wars, espionage, economic sanctions, space race, and propaganda campaigns against each other. The result of the Cold War was obvious: the USA emerged as the sole superpower as the USSR dissolved into 15 republics on Dec 1991.

The peaceful end of the Cold War prompted eminent scholars to expand the toolkit of power projections. Here, eminent scholars, like Joseph Nye, coined the term soft power defined as the ability to influence other states, without the usage of coercion, rather than attraction. Nye opted that military means and economic sanctions are merely tools of hard power and their scope and reach have been waning since the end of the Cold War. Another eminent scholar, Robert Keohane, viewed hard power as a strategy of carrot and stick, having a limited outlook in the complex world of interdependency.

On the other hand, a toolkit of soft power is composed of political values, foreign policy, trade and investment and cultural attractions. Thereby, these elements of soft power are endangered for the much-needed goodwill of other states for the protection of one’s national interest.

For example, for decades, the USA has become a cornerstone of soft power because of its pluralistic outlook on politics, democratic-oriented foreign policy, trade and investment in Global North and Global South, and cultural attraction of its powerful media network, Hollywood and splendid lifestyle of life-based on the American dream. However, the US invasion of Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) dented the soft power of America. Recently, America’s relentless support of Israel in its campaign of slaughtering a mass chunk of the Innocent population of Gaza badly tarnished its global reputation and goodwill, especially in the Global South, giving a massive blow to the soft power of the USA.

China is another example of a nation that is marching onto the mountain of soft power. Since becoming the second largest economy in the world, China has desperately looked to enhance its soft power to produce goodwill and enhance global reputation. Therefore, in 2013, China launched a massive trade and investment program- the Belt and Road Initiative-(BRI) which not only serves the economic necessities of China but also expands the scope of its soft power. According to the PEW Research Poll, China’s approval has seen a massive uptick since the inauguration of BRI, especially in the Global South. Furthermore, under President XI, the Chinese government has also planted a series of Confucius Institute and Chinese Languages departments across the world to nurture Chinese soft power projection.

Meanwhile, our eastern neighbor, India has also pumped massive investment in uplifting the soft power of the country. Initiatives like Shinning India, 5 trillion Economy, Modern India, Bollywood and Yoga are a handful of implying tools before the Indian government for encroachment of its soft power. Nevertheless, the Hindutva project of BJP-RSS under Modi could present a formidable challenge to Indian soft power.

While Pakistan’s elements of soft power are poorly managed, it is no surprise that the country is lacking ground on that. Political instability, terrorism, economic downturns, unemployment, massive population, religious extremism and sectarian, gender inequality, and crime are notable challenges in the way of the soft power of Pakistan.

That’s so striking for me as a young citizen of Pakistan, why the government is not paying much attention to the soft power of Pakistan. For example, Pakistan, being an ancient land, is the birthplace of many civilizations from the Indus Valley Civilization to the Gandhara Civilization to the Mehrgarh Civilization. Pakistan’s soft power can be rebranded by the projection of these civilizations. Furthermore, the Land of Pakistan was also the center point of Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Sufi Islam. Pakistan can initiate both religious and cultural diplomacy in that regard. Kartarpur Corridor is a fine example of that diplomacy.

Pakistan has also enriched in tourism. The country has high-peak mountains (5 out of 14 highest peaks), deserts, plains, valleys, and a beautiful coastal area of 1046km along the Arabian Sea. Tourism diplomacy will enhance not only Pakistan’s soft power but also economic prosperity and peace.

Pakistan’s music and food could also use as the true source of soft power of the country. The country has witnessed globally ranked artists and musicians, who sparked goodwill in Pakistan across the world. Meanwhile, the food and hospitality of Pakistani people are also laudable in this regard. In addition to that, Pakistani people’s craze for cricket can also be used as another tool of soft power and equally used for peace initiatives for South Asia.

A nation of 250 million, in my view, can’t underestimate the potential of soft power.

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