

SOFT POWER AS A STRATEGY FOR SAFEGUARDING STATE SECURITY INTERESTS: ONTOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS AND RESEARCH APPROACHES

Ivanna MAKUKH-FEDORKOVA , Svitlana KONSTANTYNYUK 

Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University (Ukraine)

E-mails: i.makuch-fedorkova@chnu.edu.ua;

konstantyniuk.svitlana@chnu.edu.ua

Abstract: *The article reveals the role and nature of soft power as an instrument in protecting national security, reflecting contemporary interpretations of the concept. The authors begin with the axiomatic statement that the production, accumulation, and use of soft power are essential for safeguarding national security in the modern world. Considering the need to study this topic in light of the evolving world order, the increasingly global nature of security threats and the greater interdependence among actor states in the international arena, this article proposes a contextual approach to the analysis of soft security cases. Consequently, the authors outline and discuss the operationalisation of soft power functions for both large and small states. The authors indicate and suggest the main strategies employed by actor-states in the use of soft power, which not only clarifies the key role of non-rigid influence methods in strengthening the security of the state, society, and individuals while also facilitating a comprehensive analysis of the actor-state's behaviour regarding the safeguarding and advancement of its security interests. It is argued that whereas traditionally soft power has been viewed as a means to "attract" recipient actors, within the context of security discourse, soft power may exhibit "hard" characteristics.*

Keywords: *Soft power, national security, security interests, hard power, smart power, security tools, strategy.*

Rezumat: *Articolul explorează rolul și esența „puterii blânde” (soft power), în calitate de instrument de apărare a securității naționale a statului, pe baza sensului contemporan al*

conceptului. Autorii pornesc de la premisa că producerea, acumularea și utilizarea puterii blânde reprezintă în prezent o condiție esențială pentru asigurarea securității naționale. Având în vedere necesitatea cercetării temei, determinată de transformarea ordinii mondiale, internaționalizarea amenințărilor la adresa securității și interdependența tot mai mare dintre actorii statali pe arena internațională, articolul propune o abordare contextuală a analizei cazurilor de utilizare a puterii blânde în scopuri de securitate, dintr-o perspectivă statal-centrică. În consecință, autorii propun și detaliază operaționalizarea funcțiilor puterii blânde pentru statele mari și mici. Sunt, de asemenea, propuse și detaliate principalele strategii ale actorilor statali în cazul utilizării puterii blânde. Aceste strategii contribuie la înțelegerea rolului cheie al metodelor non-coercitive de influență pentru consolidarea securității statului, societății și individului, dar relevă și posibilitățile de analiză aprofundată a comportamentului unui actor statal, în contextul asigurării și promovării propriilor interese de securitate. Se susține că, deși în sens clasic puterea blândă, atât în calitate de resursă, cât și de rezultat, are drept scop „atragerea” actorilor-receptori. În cadrul discursului asupra securității, puterea blândă poate dobândi caracteristici ale „puterii dure” (hard power).

INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the Cold War, it has become clear that analysing a state's security policy towards external threats and challenges cannot be limited to analysing a country's "hard" potential and its "hard practices" in domestic and foreign policy. The classical realist, particularly the neo-realist perspective of interstate relations, which emphasizes quantifiable resources and instruments, appears inadequate for assessing international processes in the post-bipolar era. Thus, issues such as branding, image, mass culture and information interventions, and public and cultural diplomacy received heightened scholarly attention, despite the challenges associated with selecting appropriate analytical tools for their examination.

The subject of this study is soft power [hereafter SP], a concept that, despite its widespread popularity among academics and practitioners, has not been meaningfully explored either in terms of function, theory or concept. Rather, the notion of soft power has prompted new inquiries and debates regarding both the ontological and substantive aspects of the phenomenon, as well as how to measure its potential and establish criteria for its effectiveness. The global experience of addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, the onset of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the escalating tensions between the US and China, and the so-called "crisis of the liberal idea", require enhanced theoretical, conceptual and methodological approaches to understanding the factors that render a state actor

attractive, how the process functions and what conditions influence the attraction of other actors on the world stage.

This article examines SP within the context of security, relying on the axiomatic premise that SP is fundamental to the state's security system. Key events that occurred in international relations have shaped this viewpoint: the declining reliance on hard power as a tool for influencing other actors, increasing interdependence among states driven by globalisation, and the advancement of information and communication technologies, which have introduced new means for effectively influencing foreign audiences. Therefore, how other players view the state directly influences its position in the international arena and the state's security agenda.

Given these considerations, there is a need for a clear understanding of the security contexts in which the direction of the SP by the requesting actor, its consumption by the receiving actor, and the reaction of the competing actor to the use of the SP by the former, are subject to analysis. To address this need, the authors reference the "aggregative model" introduced by Artem Patalakh to understand the processes and patterns of formation, diffusion, consumption, and confrontation of SP in a conflict environment, which involves analysing the behaviour of three actors: "the applicant", "the recipient", and "the competitors"¹. The authors adopt an actor-centred approach to elucidate the patterns of SP articulation, relying on the following understanding of SP: "...it is the availability of such resources and the use of such tools by the applicant actor concerning the recipient actor that can change the latter's perception or behaviour, as well as maintain a favourable attitude towards itself within its own interests"². Accordingly, SP is seen as a non-normative phenomenon that serves the applicant actor's interest in relation to the recipient actor by facilitating the attainment of a specific objective.

After establishing the main contextual framework for the study of the SP as a security instrument and its functions, it is also essential to provide a conceptual framework and structure for the main strategies of the SP applicant actor that can be followed in the analysis of specific research objects.

¹ Artem Patalakh, *Assessment of Soft Power Strategies. Towards an Aggregative Analytical Model for Country-Focused Case Study Research*, in "CIRR XXII", 2016, No. 76, p. 87.

² Svitlana Konstantynyuk, *Suchasni teoretyko-kontseptualni do doslidzhennia "miakoi syly"* [Modern Theoretical and Conceptual Approaches to the Study of Soft Power], in "Istoryko-politychni problemy suchasnoho svitu" [Modern Historical and Political Issues], Vol. 49, Chernivtsi, Chernivetskyi natsionalnyi universytet im. Yu. Fedkovycha, 2024, p. 100.

THE ESSENCE AND ROLE OF SP IN PROTECTING THE SECURITY INTERESTS OF THE STATE: THEORETICAL ASPECTS

The nature of the interaction between state and non-state actors in the twenty-first century, and the global trends that shape the international agenda, contribute to understanding security as a complex, multidimensional phenomenon. Accordingly, protecting the security interests of the state in the context of internationalisation of challenges and threats and growing interdependence requires new flexible approaches, which leads to increased interest of scientists in the capacity and functionality of such phenomena as the SP in the field of state security policy.

To understand the connection and interrelationship between SP and national security, one must first take a deeper look at these concepts. Joseph Nye, the concept's creator, defines SP as "the ability to influence others to get the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment"³. The resources of this power, according to the classical view, encompass culture, foreign and domestic policies, and values, while the tools include public diplomacy and personal diplomacy⁴.

It is important to categorize the relationship between SP and public diplomacy, as the primary instrument of national security, into the following types:

- (1) public diplomacy and SP as conflictual: harsh and sharp instruments undermine the efforts of public diplomacy, rendering it useless or ineffective;
- (2) public diplomacy and national security as complementary: SP contributes to reputational security;
- (3) public diplomacy and SP securitized by national security: public diplomacy becomes an instrument of defence;
- (4) public diplomacy and national security as smart power: a balanced combination of SP with assertive forms of influence;
- (5) national security as engaged or integrated public diplomacy and SP: the applicant actor focuses both on the design of its own SP and on the SP of other actors, which interact within the applicant actor's operational field⁵.

³ Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Public Diplomacy and Soft Power*, in "The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science", Vol. 616, 2008, Issue 1, p. 94.

⁴ Hendrik W. Ohnesorge, *Soft Power. The Forces of Attraction in International Relations*, Springer, 2020, p. 89.

⁵ Roopa Desai-Trilokekar, Hani El Masry, *The Nexus of Public Diplomacy, Soft Power, and National Security: A Comparative Study of International Education in the U.S. and Canada*, in "Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education", Vol. 14, 2022, Issue

Public diplomacy, as a leading instrument of the international community, has proven essential in protecting security interests throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. J. N. Cull, a well-known researcher in international relations and public diplomacy, and the author of the concept of “reputational security”, identifies four strategies of public diplomacy employed by applicant actors during the recent pandemic:

(1) the self as success (emphasizing successful experience in combating threats);

(2) the other as failure (emphasizing the failures of other actors to promote their (more) positive experience in dealing with threats);

(3) the gift involvement of others through gifts/public diplomacy of actions (manifested in the provision of humanitarian and financial assistance to recipient actors, which signals increased cooperation);

(4) partnership (consolidation and unification of partners to address shared challenges and issues)⁶.

This theoretical differentiation of the applicant actor’s “soft” behaviour in protecting its security interests is pertinent for analysing other security contexts. However, it should be added that the system of SP instruments, which enhances the positive attitudes of other actors and promotes intentions to develop trusting relationships, is functionally more extensive. Thus, while investments may be viewed as a means of increasing interdependence, the interest of one actor in the development of another can be considered an act of SP. Humanitarian and development assistance acts as an essential component of SP, prominently evident in most crises and often attracting the attention of the majority of those associated with a specific recipient actor. The positive experience of participation in international organizations extends beyond mere affiliation with a certain interest group and collaborative problem-solving among member states. It is also a competitive arena for identifying challenges and proposing solutions, whereby the applicant actor potentially may gain image and reputational benefits. However, it should be emphasized that the tools of SP, as well as the phenomenon itself, are non-normative, since such means as “...trade, legal norms, and technology are increasingly employed as instruments of coercion”⁷.

5, p. 114-115.

⁶ Nicholas J. Cull, *From Soft Power to Reputational Security: Rethinking Public Diplomacy and Cultural Diplomacy for a Dangerous Age*, in “Place Branding and Public Diplomacy”, Vol. 18, 2022, p.18-21.

⁷ Zaki Laïdi, *The Hardening of Soft Power*, in “Project Syndicate”, November 4, 2019, in

Understanding the nature of SP requires an investigation of its potential effects on the recipient actor, even though the discourse surrounding its resources and instruments has predominantly attracted greater attention throughout its conceptual existence. However, the attainment of the desired outcome by the applicant actor serves as a clear indication of the effectiveness of SP. Despite difficulties involving the qualitative and quantitative analysis of SP results, Hendrik W. Ohnesorge suggests splitting the results into two groups: changes in how the recipient actor sees things and changes in how he acts⁸. This proposal deserves to be accepted because the main goal of the applicant actor may not be to alter the recipient actor's perception, but rather influence a specific foreign policy direction of its government. As a result, in this case, measuring the change in perception does not allow us to determine the effectiveness of a particular SP strategy of the applicant actor. The applicant actor's SP potential is attained or disproved exclusively through interaction with the recipient actor.

The main conditions for the generation of SP, according to modern concepts, are, firstly, a dominant majority of norms and values that are aligned with the prevailing global norms; secondly, communication channels that facilitate expression and dissemination; and thirdly, a balanced domestic and foreign policy that promotes the trust of the international community⁹. E. L. Armistead, an American information operations researcher, underscored the role of US information and communication capabilities and disclosed the country's capacity for information and psychological operations. He argued that "international perception management" helps impose American culture, favours its interests and reduces anti-Americanism¹⁰.

Given the key components of SP, it is essential to consider the evolving perspectives on national security. National security is "the state of protection of the vital interests of the state, society, and the individual from external and internal threats"¹¹. The advantages of this definition are: (1) the inclusion of security actors

<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/hardening-of-soft-power-by-zak-laidi-2019-11> (Accessed on 1.07.2024).

⁸ Hendrik W. Ohnesorge, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

⁹ Dharma Bahadur Baniya, *Soft Power in the Contemporary World: Recommendations to the Small States' Security*, in "Unity Journal", Vol. 2, 2021, p. 56.

¹⁰ Tanner Mirrlees, *American Soft Power, or, American Cultural Imperialism?*, in Colin Mooers (Ed.), *The New Imperialists: Ideologies of Empire*, Oxford, Oneworld Publications, 2006, p. 214.

¹¹ Bogdana Melnychenko, Natalia Fihel, *Osnovni pidkhody do rozuminnia poniattia*

and (2) the description of security as a “state of security”. Regarding the latter, it should be emphasised that when security is viewed as a state, it encompasses the ability to resist existing challenges and the capability to identify, predict, and minimise the possibility of a threat. Another approach to defining security is “...the capacity to control domestic and foreign conditions that the state believes necessary to enjoy its own self-determination or autonomy, prosperity, and wellbeing”¹². This definition emphasises the contextual nature of the concept of security. It should be emphasised that in recent decades all three actors have shifted their focus to different security aspects. Given the current world situation, a view of national security based on conventional concepts is unrealistic.

J. Nye noted in the 1990s, “...instruments such as communications, organisational and institutional skills, and manipulation of interdependence have become important”¹³ in state security. Revealing the essence of the US SP, the author of the concept assigns it the following missions: first, to fight against terrorist networks, and second, to accelerate the modernisation of the Middle Eastern countries through good intentions (taking on the “civilising mission” of modernising the region and fighting terrorism)¹⁴. Thus, many challenges that cannot be solved by military force become part of the security discourse and acquire the status of non-traditional threats. This, in turn, means the need to look for innovative means and strategies to overcome them.

The process of “attraction” in the era of information and communication technologies is much more accessible; however, it requires specific skills in the strategic use of influence. Nonetheless, the first requirement for efficient use is a comprehensive understanding of its essence. Numerous scientific papers demonstrate the problematic aspects of the SP concept; however, in real-world scenarios, this concept lacks well-defined boundaries. A study examining the concepts of the SP and “soft security” in EU regulations indicates that their interpretation is notably broad. The SP primarily occurs within the context of foreign aid, spreading democratic values, state development assistance, EU enlargement, European

“*natsionalna bezpeka*” [Basic Approaches to Understanding the Concept of National Security], in „*Visnyk Natsionalnoho universytetu «Lvivska politekhnika*», Seria: «*Yurydychni nauky*» [Bulletin of Lviv Polytechnic National University, Series: Legal Sciences], 2021, No. 2 (30), p. 69.

¹² Roopa Desai-Trilokekar, Hani El Masry, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

¹³ Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power*, in “Foreign Policy”, No. 80, Twentieth Anniversary, Autumn 1990, p. 158.

¹⁴ Tanner Mirrlees, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

norms, diplomatic efforts, and trade¹⁵. Soft security is found across peacebuilding, reconciliation, conflict prevention planning, reducing poverty, human rights, good governance, etc.¹⁶ The contexts in which these concepts occur are rather chaotic, and the lack of clear definitions poses challenges for normative documents.

When evaluating SP as a security tool, a critical prerequisite is to determine the state's institutional capacity to effectively generate and apply it. This requires attention to three key factors: (1) the security interests of the actor; (2) the externally and internally established guidelines governing the utilization of the SP; and (3) the tactical and strategic goals of the actor. Thus, using China as an example, M. Kalimudin and D. A. Anderson propose the following modes of using the SP to resolve disputes in the region: (1) formulating a specific message; (2) disseminating strategic intent; (3) recalibrating procedures; (4) delegitimising extra-regional actors; (5) augmenting China's role in the region¹⁷.

J. Nye's recent work in 2023 emphasises that the state's approach, particularly SP, encompasses "security, welfare, and identity"¹⁸, applicable across all levels and adaptable to any socio-political context¹⁹. The author asserts that an excessively "rigid approach" to forming such a strategy will not bring the desired results²⁰. The readiness of states to respond to new challenges and devise new approaches for self-protection becomes essential in light of the evolving world order, as these approaches also represent a form of SP.

Alongside the analysis of the intended outcomes of projecting SP outward, it is important to highlight the benefits for the actor's internal security. German scholars insist that the deliberate application of SP to influence foreign audiences can withstand external influences due to intangible resources (norms, values, and identity)²¹. Thus, an effective SP exerts a reciprocal effect and serves as a stabilizing factor within the state. In this context, it is noteworthy to compare the thesis

¹⁵ Sigita Kavaliūnaitė, *Comparative Analysis of Concepts "Soft Security" and "Soft Power" in EU Legislation*, in "Viešoji Politika ir Administravimas", Vol. 10, 2011, No. 2, p. 242.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.240.

¹⁷ Mikail Kalimuddin, David A. Anderson, *Soft Power in China's Security Strategy*, in "Strategic Studies Quarterly", Vol. 12, 2018, No. 3, p. 120.

¹⁸ Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power and Great-Power Competition. Shifting Sands in the Balance of Power Between the United States and China*, Springer, 2023, p. 23.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Gunnar Henrich, Vu Truong, *Hard Power / Soft Power versus Versicherheitlichung*, in "Beiträge zur Internationalen Politik und Sicherheit", 2012, No. 2, p. 49.

of power as “the capacity of the ego to impose its will on others”²².

BASIC CONTEXTUAL MODELS FOR THE STUDY OF SP AS A SECURITY TOOL OF THE APPLICANT ACTOR

Since the authors' analysis of SP is contextual and based on a case study, it is essential to outline the main framework for further research on the topic.

a) SP as a component of smart power

The significance of further research on SP gains particular academic attention and recognition with the emergence of the concept of smart power, defined as a balanced, tactically and strategically considered, complementary use of both “soft” and “hard” instruments. During military operations, SP is an important factor in achieving the desired result. Humanitarian missions, training and advising partners on conducting various military or anti-terrorist operations, diplomatic missions, and communicating with opinion leaders and the population in the war zone are critical for legitimizing their participation in the war and achieving its goals²³.

In this context, it is worth noting that SP is perceived as a means of legitimising hard power, i.e., softening the perception of predominantly allied recipient actors at the normative, cognitive, and affective levels. A good empirical example is the “war on terror” since the early 2000s. However, SP is a capital that is acquired, firstly, through favourable interaction with recipient actors (in the above example, the EU countries), necessitating the concerted efforts of multiple US administrations. Secondly, it should be used preventively, not after the fact, because then the message loses its convincing and sincere good intentions and offsets its previous positive effects. However, the use of both types of “forces” proposed by J. Nye does not imply their reasonable use. Eric Lee, in his analysis of post-Cold War US foreign policy, succinctly notes, “Confidence in the power and legitimacy of soft power was so great that enormous hard power was used in its name”²⁴. The primary prerequisite for employing smart power is the existence of SP strategies

²² Dickson Ogbonnaya Igwe, *The Perception of Power in the Context of National Security and Foreign Policy Thrust*, in “Journal of Military and Strategic Studies”, Vol.14, 2012, No. 2, p. 2.

²³ Josh Burgeess, *Soft Power: “A Mission Critical” Component of National Security*, in U. S. Global Leadership Coalition, March 10, 2021, in <https://www.usglc.org/blog/soft-power-a-mission-critical-component-of-national-security/> (Accessed on 27.04.2024).

²⁴ Eric Li, *The Rise and Fall of Soft Power*, in “Foreign Policy”, August 20, 2018, in <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/08/20/the-rise-and-fall-of-soft-power/> (Accessed on 12.06.2024).

adapted to both the context of the use of hard power and the contextual conditions of relations with the actors whose approval and support are expected by the applicant. When a great power implementing “tough” foreign policy steps fails to justify its decisions through SP, it jeopardises receiving support even from its closest allies, as demonstrated by the US-EU relations after the 09/11 terrorist attacks.

Historical experience demonstrates that in the post-war era information and cultural presence, together with financial support for affected actor states, are crucial in generating the SP's long-term benefits. During crises, it is likely that achieving the desired strategic partnership becomes a short-term task, potentially allowing for enhanced support from the applicant actor to the recipient actor. For example, D. Runde notes that in the United States, 19 out of 20 key partners were aid recipients²⁵. However, it is worth mentioning that only a constant informational and mass-cultural presence can ensure such results.

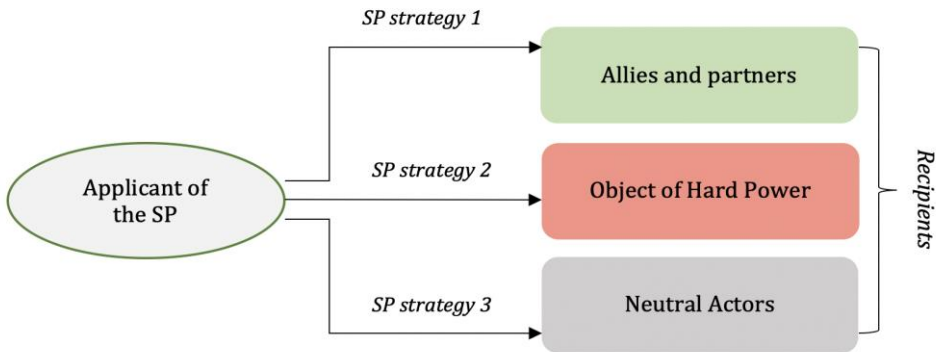


Figure 1. Using an actor-centred approach to channel soft power as part of smart power

b) SP of a competing actor as a threat to an applicant actor

The growth of one country's international relations may threaten another. China's soft capital growth, and its economic, technological, and military development in recent decades, threaten US security by casting a shadow over the latter's global leadership²⁶. This is further substantiated by the acknowledgement of this reality from the international community and the polarization of the two political

²⁵ Daniel F. Runde, *Soft Power and Security*, in “Global Forecast”, 2016, p. 122, in https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/151116_Runde_Power_Security.pdf (Accessed on 16.04.2024).

²⁶ Xu Ping, Wang Li, *The China Model vs. American Soft Power: Going Global and Peaceful*, in “İstanbul Gelişim Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi”, Vol. 2, 2015, No. 2, p. 159.

worlds in both the practical and scientific fields. Prominent academics Xu Ping and Wang Li assert that in the context of China, the strategy of undermining the legitimacy of the United States represents “the art of resistance that coexists with relations of dominance”²⁷. Consequently, expressing discontent with the political, cultural, and value agendas of another actor and, as a result, distancing oneself from may be regarded as a SP strategy. However, as scholars rightly emphasise, the image, rather than the substance, drives such a strategy, which, among other things, fails to ensure a reliable perception by the international community²⁸. It is worth pointing out that, similar to the build-up of military power, if a competing actor increases its SP potential, it challenges actor A in its attempts to maintain the status quo. In other words, the applicant actor can see the mere fact of a competing actor’s SP growth as a threat. Accordingly, in addition to the direct impact of the competing actor on Actor A, the competing actor’s SP is identified as a threat to the recipient actors that are in the area of interest of Actor A.

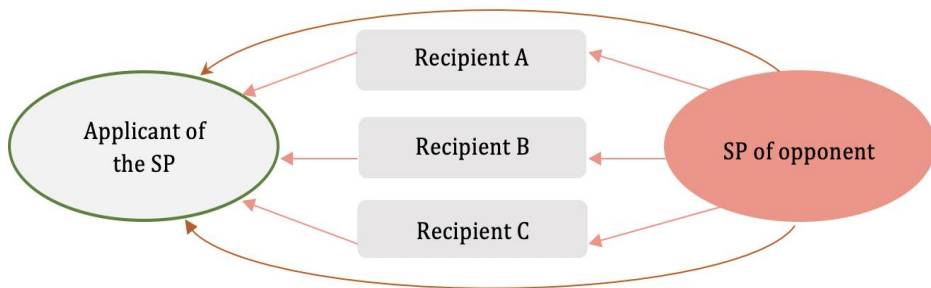


Figure 2. The direct impact of the competing actor's SP and its recipients on the applicant actor

c) Securitisation of a competing actor and self-desecuritisation

One of the important signs of the SP struggle in the international arena is the attempts of actor states to define specific issues and enforce their proposed solutions. Instead, if the international community perceives an actor as problematic, it needs to protect itself through the instrument of desecuritisation.

E. Kingsley, who studies China's SP in the context of regime security, defines it as a means of mitigating the security challenge arising from rapid development,

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.161.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 163-164.

and therefore as a strategy that will help the state achieve a “peaceful rise”²⁹. It is expected that China's closest neighbours, including the United States, will not use a containment strategy and will have fewer ways to undermine China's legitimacy in the international community³⁰. Therefore, in this context, the ability of an actor to construct and deconstruct the issue context and the extent of the threat posed by such an ability to the opposing actor is important.

In this context, the new concept of “negative watch” deserves further investigation. It entails the permanent depreciation of a rival's reputational capital via communication, leading to diminished political legitimacy and credibility³¹. Empirically, this phenomenon can be traced to the attempts of China and Russia to use anti-Western narratives, which the concept's author refers to as “algorithmic radicalization” and views as an element of branding³².

On the other hand, the applicant actor's use of SP against the recipient actor may reduce the likelihood of using hard instruments of influence and promoting a negative image, as soft instruments can reveal the aggressor's intentions and expectations, ultimately resulting in the contrary effect³³.

By examining this perspective on SP, it becomes increasingly clear that the dichotomy between SP and hard power is not entirely accurate given its non-normative nature, since any force is primarily a means for achieving an actor's goals.



Figure 3. Securitisation of competitors and self-securitisation of the applicant actor in a conflict environment

d) SP as a means of consolidating allied actors

²⁹ Kingsley Edney, *Building National Cohesion and Domestic Legitimacy: A Regime Security Approach to Soft Power in China*, in “Politics”, 2015, Vol. 35, 2015, no. 3-4, p. 260.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Sameera Durrani, *What Happens When a Country Bleeds Soft Power? Conceptualising “Negative Watch”: Towards an Epistemology for Negative and Adversarial Place Branding*, in “Place Branding and Public Diplomacy”, Vol. 19, 2023, No. 4, p. 471.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Mohammed Huseyn Akbarov, *Role of Soft Power Means in Ensuring State Security*, in “Revisto Turismo Estudos e Praticas – ERTEP”, Caderno Suplementar 03, 2020, p. 2.

Another context of the study is the use of SP as a means of consolidating partners and allies in addressing security issues, which further contributes to strengthening collective security and enhances the ability to address large-scale challenges and threats. For example, little attention was paid to this in the context of the previously mentioned “fight against terrorism” (a concept that failed to differentiate between tactics and ideology) in the United States, resulting in the perception of terrorist attacks as an exclusively American threat, primarily among its closest allies - the EU countries. As further developments demonstrate, neither entity, benefited from the absence of a unified approach to this issue.

When examining the application of SP within the EU, it is worth pointing out the phenomenon of collective SP, which is a synergy among its members, supported by the exchange and interconnection of resources and instruments. At the same time, the EU's collective SP is distributed to each actor separately, as membership in the union serves as an identification factor that serves as a distinctive feature that enhances the individual capital of each actor.

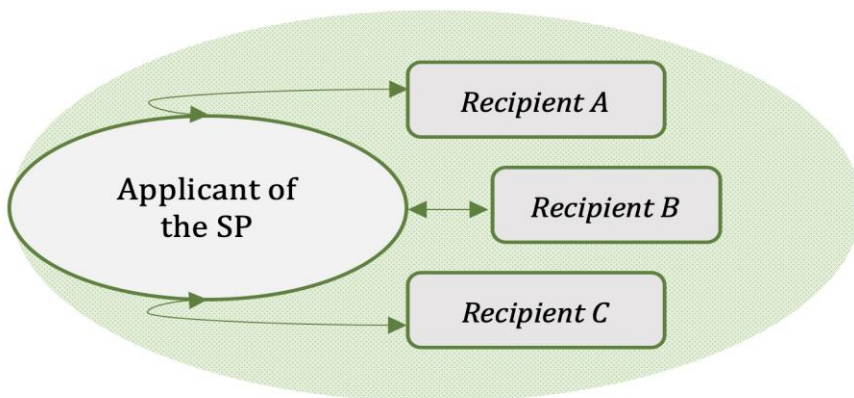


Figure 4. Collective SP: exchange of “soft” resources and instruments

e) The hard power of the applicant actor against actor B as an SP for the recipient actor

Hard power can be viewed as a manifestation of SP, which becomes especially noticeable in bipolar conflicts. For example, anti-Americanism and Russia's threats against Western countries are considered to be SP for certain partner actors and sympathizers of similar ideological orientations. At the same time, Ukraine's ability to localize military operations on the enemy's territory in a full-scale war is seen as a positive practice for certain groups of its supporters. Another example is the imposition of sanctions against the aggressor actor, which,

although a “tough” measure, promotes a trusting attitude of partner actors. That is, the ability to show force and its direct use has its potential for attractiveness and can reinforce the results of “soft influence”.

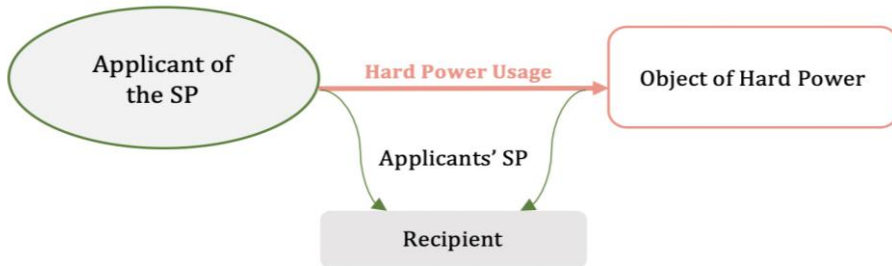


Figure 5. The hard power of the applicant actor as a manifestation of soft power for third actors

e) SP competition for neutral recipients

The competition of SP is especially evident in the Cold War and Cold War 2.0, during which major players, gaining an advantage over a rival actor, try to win the favour of neutral actors. It is the struggle for the trust and favour of neutral actors that shapes the capacity of competing actors' SP. One of the essential criteria for assessing the quality of a state's SP appears to be its constant interaction with foreign audiences, its adaptability to varying political contexts, adherence to state principles and values, credibility and openness. Additionally, it is crucial that this power can be understood at the normative, cognitive, and affective levels of a particular audience's perception. Furthermore, Yongjin Zhang clarifies the rationale behind an actor-applicant's use of SP, with the assertion: “narrating the world in coherent and persuasive stories”³⁴. In the 90s, scholars J. Arkilla and D. Ronfeldt pointed out that the outcome of future conflicts will increasingly depend on “which story wins”³⁵. Accordingly, in the context of transforming world order and escalating conflicts between major players, the study of the influence of competing parties on neutral actors will become increasingly important.

³⁴ Yongjin Zhang, *The Discourse of China's Soft Power and Its Discontents*, in Mingjiang Li (Ed.), *Soft Power: China's Emerging Strategy in International Politics*, UK: Lexington Books, 2009, p. 50.

³⁵ Una Bergmane, *Public Diplomacy as a National Security Tool*, in “Foreign Policy Research Institute”, 2017, in <https://www.fpri.org/article/2017/05/public-diplomacy-national-security-tool/> (Accessed on 10.05.2024).

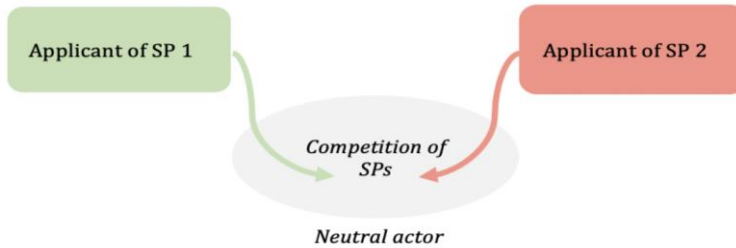


Figure 6. Soft power competition in gaining the trust and favour of a neutral actor

MAIN STRATEGIES FOR USING SP IN THE SECURITY INTERESTS OF THE APPLICANT ACTOR

The struggle and competition of soft power is a new reality that requires more convincing and systematic solutions from both superpowers and smaller states to ensure their visibility and attractiveness on the world stage. With the obvious conflict potential of the modern international arena, it is imperative to identify the main trends in the use of non-military methods of influence in the current situation.

Based on empirical evidence, the following models for employing SP as a method of confrontation or competition may be formulated:

- 1) *The levelling strategy* used to discredit competing actors. For example, in the 2016 CSIS Turning Point report, the American SP is supposed to act as a tool to “blunt” the appeal of extremist ideologies. This model illustrates an interaction framework among recipient actors, wherein the attractiveness of one offsets the attractiveness of the other, thereby inhibiting the radicalization of certain audiences. Such a dynamic undoubtedly necessitates a decentralized approach in the practice of public diplomacy³⁶.
- 2) *The contrasting strategy*, which aims to demonstrate superiority over a competing actor through accomplishments, refraining from employing destructive narratives against the opponent, is similar in logic, leaving room for further interaction. For example, in the current Cold War 2.0 between the United States and

³⁶ Katherine A. Brown, Shannon N. Green, Jian “Jay” Wang, *Public Diplomacy and National Security in 2017*, in Center for Strategic and International Studies (www.csis.org), Report, January 2017, p. 8-9.

China, such a strategy proves advantageous in the struggle for the title of superpower and leaves room for further interaction and dialogue.

3) *The involvement strategy* entails delegating the development and implementation of SP through cooperation with other actors. For example, the US, possessing substantial hard power, delegates the development of SP to the EU, which, in turn, lacks hard power. Although the disparity in hard and soft power capabilities between the US and the EU may be criticized, it may be argued that this configuration of forces is rather complementary within the Western bloc. The strategy of involvement should be considered within the framework of the study of collective SP (see Fig. 4), which ensures the distribution of SP among stronger and weaker actors.

4) *The deterrence strategy*, manifested by the application of SP to constrain applicant actors from employing “hard” instruments. An illustration of this model is the potentially growing impact on China's behaviour, attributed to the deepening of bilateral relations between the United States and India, alongside the former's stimulation of trusting relations, as stated in the American Security Project's recommendation article³⁷. In addition, participation in the security dialogue of the United States, Australia, Japan, and India – viewed as a component of SP in these countries - can be seen as a deterrent to China³⁸. This strategy is especially relevant for security-dependent states. For example, CSIS material on South Korea's foreign policy stance in the post-Cold War era notes that close contact with the United States and the active work of the South Korean diaspora in the country could mitigate the United States “tough” intentions towards security challenges in the East, and, most importantly, constrain China in its foreign policy ambitions³⁹.

5) *The partnership strategy*, on the other hand, manifests as a dynamic phenomenon, encompassing the implementation of specific partnership practices within the framework of interstate and intra-organizational interactions aimed at deepening trusting relations. The basis of such a strategy, in terms of tools, lies in the enhancement of economic, military, and political interdependence, alongside a continuous commitment to public and personal diplomacy aimed at fostering trusting relations.

³⁷ Courtney Manning, Anmol Chowdhary, *The U.S.-India Relationship: Navigating Strategic Multi-Alignment*, in “American Security Project”, Research Report, February 2024, p. 1.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³⁹ Sue Mi Terry, John J. Hamre, *Beyond Security: South Korea's Soft Power and the Future of the U.S.-ROK Alliance in a Post-Pandemic World*, in “Center for Strategic and International Studies”, Transcript: Online Event, October 5, 2021, in https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/211005_Terry_Beyond_Security.pdf (Accessed on 16.04.2024).

6) *The symbolic strategy* uses available resources to strengthen the sense of community and, in turn, “distribute SP” among community members. NATO is a symbol of unity, resilience, and ideological commonality between the US and the EU. A practical indicator is evident in the activities of the Committee on Public Diplomacy and the Committee on Information and Cultural Relations within NATO, which aims “...to encourage public understanding of and support for the aims of NATO”⁴⁰. Thus, the organization's SP is at the same time the SP of an individual member state. For example, G. Gallarotti, justifying the distribution of SP among the BRICS member states, argues that the SP of this organization is an example of the most aggressive “soft” policy in terms of goals and normative narratives, as its main components are multilateralism and reliance on the idea of pacifism⁴¹. The symbolic model can also be traced in the case of sanctions, exemplified by the collective sanctions policy of the EU member states against Russia after the start of the full-scale invasion. This acts as a symbolic demonstration of unity and alliance based on common values⁴².

7) *The SP disguise strategy* consists of employing specific SP tools that may cause harm or pose a direct threat to the recipient actor, all while remaining unnoticed by the recipient actor's audience. Thus, an ambiguous phenomenon in the practice of using SP is the dissemination of attractive information or cultural products that potentially or directly threaten the security of another actor. An example is the danger of the Chinese platform TikTok, which, despite its popularity, firstly, does not ensure the protection of personal data, and, secondly, is an object of interest to the local special services, consequently making the platform a potential Chinese “Trojan horse”⁴³.

8) *The strategy of readiness to cooperate* is relevant when competing actors attempt to diminish the perception of the state actor as one that engages in

⁴⁰ Cansu Güleç, *NATO and Public Diplomacy: Opportunities and Constraints of 21st Century*, in “PERCEPTIONS”, Vol. 26, 2021, No. 1, p. 109.

⁴¹ Giulio M. Gallarotti, *Compound Soft Power: The BRICS and the Multilateralization of Soft Power*, in “Journal of Political Power”, Vol. 9, 2016, No. 3, p. 17.

⁴² Clara Portela, *The EU and the Strategic Use of Sanctions as a Geo-economic Tool? in Between Hard and Soft Power: The European Union in a More Competitive World*, Reader of the 21st Foreign Policy Conference of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Berlin, June 2021, p. 43.

⁴³ Anne Stevenson-Yang, *Amerikas fehlgeleiteter Tech-Krieg*, in “The Market”, August 18, 2020, in <https://themarket.ch/meinung/amerikas-fehlgeleiteter-tech-krieg-ld.2522> (Accessed on 20.05.2024).

negotiation and compromise. An example is China, which has joined the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate, collaborating on technological cooperation and energy saving, in cooperation with Japan, India, the United States, Australia, and South Korea⁴⁴. Such concessions at the cooperation level shape the discourse on the prevalence of national interests over common ones in the eyes of the international community and convey the actor's intention to address global concerns. In addition, demonstrating readiness to interact with a competing actor is also a factor of self-decentralisation.

9) *The exposure strategy* is situational and aims to legitimise the state and strengthen its arguments in the struggle for leadership by exposing the intentions and motives of the rival that are favourable to the applicant actor. A good example is the publication of reconnaissance photos of a U-2 on the initiative of D. Wilson, which showed a missile base under construction in Cuba⁴⁵. Thus, the priority in exposing the intentions of the competing actor conferred “soft” benefits to the applicant actor among the recipients whose appeal the latter relies on.

Thus, considering the variability of manifestations of SP, it can be concluded that the study of SP requires: (1) understanding the context of SP application; (2) analysis of the specifics of relations of those actors involved in the dissemination, consumption, and observation of the SP of certain actors (primarily, the applicant actor, recipient actors, and competing actors); (3) clarification of short-term and long-term goals and objectives of the applicant actor. In addition, the above models offer insight into the challenges associated with selecting SP for security purposes.

CONCLUSIONS

Considering the aforementioned theoretical and conceptual developments about the role of place and modal forms of manifestations of SP as a security tool, the following conclusions can be drawn.

First, although the theoretical and conceptual understanding of SP and its correlation with national security requires improvement and broader analytical tools for their practical study should be pursued, further research into the patterns of “soft” influences in the practice of interstate relations is particularly pertinent amidst global transformations, given the internationalization of security

⁴⁴ Gang Chen, *China's Climate Diplomacy and Its Soft Power*, in Mingjiang Li (Ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 237.

⁴⁵ Nicholas J. Cull, *Public Diplomacy and the Road to Reputational Security: Analogue Lessons from US History for a Digital Age*, Williamsburg, 2022, p.16.

challenges, increasing interdependence between states and instability of the modern world order.

Second, the empirical experience of the post-bipolar world demonstrates that SP as a non-normative tool often has harsh characteristics. This is evidenced by its offensive and deterrent function. Such tools as securitisation and self-desecuritisation, negative watch, and information and mass-cultural interventions are considered elements of the strategies of SP of states. The understanding of soft and hard power as complementary elements that are inherently opposed to each other is not relevant. The soft power of the challenger actor, especially in the context of competition, is increasingly embracing hard qualities, just as the use of hard power by the challenger actor may serve as a manifestation of soft power for allied actors.

Third, the use of SP as a security tool can be considered in different configurations of the relationship among the observed actors. The main ones include the study of SP as a component of smart power, the study of SP competitions between two actors within the context of their conflict-generating development, the study of the processes of securitisation of the opponent actor and self-desecuritisation of the applicant actor to establish legitimacy while undermining the opponent, the evaluation of the applicant actor's employment of hard power as perceived by the observer actor, the struggle of the opposing actors' SP to magnetize the attention of neutral parties and the use of SP as a strategy for reinforcing alliances among cooperative entities.

Fourth, the operationalization of SP strategies shows that, firstly, their use can have both hard and soft features and is contextually dependent on the circumstances of their use and the intentions of the applicant actor. It can be argued that these strategies differ in terms of risk associated with their implementation. While, for example, the attraction strategy, symbolic and partnership models carry minimal risks, the contrasting and levelling strategy, and especially the disguise model, require the applicant actor to master the subtleties of these opportunities for influence, since the recipient actors' misperception of the applicant actor's intentions may lead to a misperception of the applicant actor by both allied and neutral actors.

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