

The Analysis of Joseph Nye's Soft Power Theory

Lin Li¹, Hongtao Leng²

¹School of Marxism, Dalian Ocean University, Dalian, 116023, China

²School of Mechanical Engineering, Dalian University of Technology, Dalian, 116023, China

Abstract:

Since Joseph Nye has brought the theory of the Soft Power, this theory has caught the concern and emphasis of plenty of scholars from different nations. Our research focus on the production of soft power from political science, science of international relations, philosophy and ideological, outlines and analyzes the basic contents of Joseph Nye's "Soft Power" theory. Further, with the direction of Marxism our research combines both macroeconomic research and microanalysis, utilizes the hybrid method which contains both the history and logics, scientific comparison methods to analyze the "Soft Power" theory comprehensively. The soft power is compared with the hard power, Compared with the hard power, it has such characteristics as intangibility, permeability, complementarity, comprehensiveness and expansibility. The soft power mainly stems from culture, political values, and international policies, we can conclude that the core of "Soft Power" theory is to emphasize the attraction, emotional appeal and influence of the national culture, the sense of value and political system. The soft power provides us with a new direction to view the power, which avoids the one-sidedness to determine the power of a country mainly based on the physical power. It does provide the United States with a new strategy direction to maintain the international hegemony which can also be well used as reference for the development of soft power by other countries. But the "Soft Power" theory is still a complete new concept and has the limitations to some extent. This passage proves the rationality and the limitation of the soft power through the analysis of the concept, the components and the characters for the soft power.

Keywords: Joseph Nye, Soft Power, Hard Power

I. THE RAISE OF THE SOFT POWER THEORY BY JOSEPH NYE

Joseph Nye pointed in the book "The destined leadership: the nature of the power in the changed America", in the international politic, the result achieved by a country may be due to the example of other countries, or may accept a kind of rule which can lead to the result. "This power is just the soft power which can affect the will of others accompanied by the culture, ideology and the social rule."^[1] This is the original understanding and definition of the soft power by him. Ever since the soft power came into being, Joseph Nye gradually developed and improved it. The soft power theory has been explained and discussed in the latter articles "The hard power and the soft power" and "The soft power-the successful way to world politics. In these work, Joseph Nye conclude the soft power as follows, "The soft power is a kind of ability,

which can achieve the goal through attraction rather than the force. This attraction stems from the culture of a nation, political value and international policy. When the policy of a nation is logical, right in the eyes of others, the soft power of a nation is enhanced.”^[2].

Joseph Nye treated the soft power as a kind ability which can affect the preference of others. The leader of a dictatorial nation can choose the force and command way, while the democratic nation will prefer to use attraction and temptation. So the soft power will become the major way in the daily life of the democratic politics. The expected result of a nation in the international politics is due to the respect towards the value, the desire to reach that level of the nation, thus would like to follow. This consequence lies in the attraction. The soft power not only focuses on ability to persuade or lead, but also contain the ability to attract. The attraction will make someone choose the defaulted attitude, so the soft power is a kind of power to attract others. The soft power is to improve the cooperation using different means, to produce the attraction using the common value.

II. THE COMPONENTS OF THE SOFT POWER

The soft power comes from soft application by a resource to use another resource. If the soft power can make difference, it must contain the applicable resources. For a nation, the resources which can produce the soft power are various, different countries will use different resources. Joseph Nye treated the fact in the paper published in the “Soft Power” in 1990, culture, ideology, international rule can construct the soft power. In the book “The hard power and the soft power” published in 2004, he pointed that “The ability to determine the prospect is usually related to unshaped resources, such as the attractive culture, political value, political rule, the policy treated legal and moral.”^[1]. Later in the articles and books, Nye combines the culture, political value and international policy as the components of the soft power.

2.1 Culture is the Superstructure which is very Significant for the Contribution of a Nation.

Joseph Nye defines the culture as the total of the series of value and practice which can contribute to the society^[2]. If the culture of a nation contains the value, the policy can easily accept other countries’ value and interests, the possibility of a nation to achieve the desired can enhance.

The styles of the culture are various. Joseph Nye divides the culture into noble culture and pop culture. The former contains the ideology, the advanced ideology is the major source of the soft power, which is the attraction in the thoughts. Nye thinks that the western democratic countries show the priority of the democracy. He holds the opinion that the democracy can bring the free and equal life. Democracy can gradually become the sense of worth. The western countries attract the attention of other countries by advocating the priority of the democratic thinking pattern, in order to accelerate the pace of the democracy. So advanced ideology will become the major way to attract other countries. However, the noble culture is not the sole source of the soft power, pop culture also makes significant difference, the American pop culture affects the whole world widely, such as the Nike, the Mcdonald, the Hollywood fully show the power of the pop culture to the whole world. They gradually influence the life style and preference of the people. So we can see the permeability of the pop culture is very strong, which has spread to the whole

world. The pop culture also helps the US to realize many political purposes. The American companies and Hollywood sell not only the goods, but also the culture and the sense of worth. As the pop culture permeates more deeply, the culture and the ideology of the US also spread^[3].

Powerful culture attraction is a kind of significant component which can ensure a nation can stand successfully in the world competition. Although the culture is invisible, it is everywhere and it can affect the daily life of everyone. Famous scholar Huning Wang ever said, "The soft power of a nation more relies on the international culture, namely the whole trend of the culture and the worth."^[4] The western countries advocate the sense of worth and the spread of the pop culture, which is just the permeability and expansion of the culture attraction.

2.2 Political Value Represents a Political Ideal of a Nation, and can Present the Legality and Self-Identity.

The policy of a nation is another component of the soft power. The policy can be divided into short-term influence and the long-term according to the changes of the background. The policy is the sense of political worth and people can feel the attraction of the sense of the political worth from the effect of the policy. The sense advocated by the nation makes difference through their act and policies in the national and international environment. A nation can use the effect of the example to attract or repel others.

The ideology and the sense of worth have direct and profound significance. Once a country has the thinking system which can affect the whole world, the country can become strong. "Whether a country is a socialist state or a capital one, any countries in history need an ideology which can adapt to the political demand and can serve for the economical foundation and social rule. If not, the national rule will lose the rule to govern the country, the proof for the legality, which can lead the loss of the political system for a country. " ^[5]. The sense of the political worth represents the political ideal, and has international recognition or the international legality. The western countries advocate the democratic and free political ideal, which not represents the desire for the freedom and democracy of some countries perfectly but still obtains the praise of some countries. The US is always standing at the dominate place in the whole world in the politics, economy, religion and other fields, which largely rely on the effect of the American sense of the political worth.

2.3 The International Policy Contains the World Ideal and Measures towards other Countries, which is the Major Component of the Soft Power Theory

The international policy is the means to implement the national culture and the sense of political value, through which it can realize the recognition of the national value and the image of the country through practice. "The policy of the government can increase or decrease the soft power of a nation. If the internal affairs and international policy is fake, arrogant, always doing something without consideration or solely focusing on the national interests, it will do harm to the soft power." ^[2]. Joseph Nye thinks that, the attraction of the US largely depends on the sense of worth of the American international policy. Many

countries always seek for their own interests through the international policy, but the soft power is to earn the cooperation with other countries through the persuasion, attraction rather than the force or threaten, which relies on a country's way to construct the international goal^[6]. If the policy bases on the long-term national interest, it will become more attractive than the policy just in the short run. Thus, the logical international policy can bring the fame and prestige which is helpful to set up and realize the strategical goal. Seeking for the national interest is the instinct of a nation, and the international policy should not only be good for its own country but also be good for other countries. Doing harm to the other countries' interests will do harm to its own country to some extent, because the interests of different countries will accompany with each other. The friendly and positive sense of worth shown through the international policy will attract the attention and recognition of other countries, which can make difference to other countries. The international policy not only makes difference to the international status of a country and the welcome level but also to the international political and economical environment, furthermore it can directly affect the national politics and economy^[7].

To sum up, the components of the soft power has close relationship with each other and can make difference to each other. The sense of political worth is the core, the culture is the support and the international policy is the means. Through the culture and the sense of political worth, we can do research on the international policy. And the international policy will be beneficial to enhance the political value and attraction of the culture, the international policy and the national culture has close relationship with each other. Thus, the culture, the sense of political worth and the international policy has close relationship, rely on each other.

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SOFT POWER

The soft power is relative to the hard power, the two has much difference. Compared with the hard power, the soft power has such following characteristics:

3.1 The Soft Power is Invisible

The soft power is a kind of invisible spiritual power, it can't be measured. The attraction of culture, the effect of sense of worth, the legality of politics, the cohesive force of a nation, the quality of the people and the affinity of the image in a nation are also hard to measure, there is not a constant level to remark, people usually remark and decide through subjective consciousness. Although the soft power is invisible, it still leaves deep impression in the heart of the people.

3.2 The Soft Power has Permeability

The hard power usually urges othersto obey the desire through the force, which is passive. The soft power usually spread the desire, the viewpoints to others gradually through attraction, persuasion and guidance, the acceptance and the change of the idea is natural. In this way can the hope be realized, the development be carried out. The developing process of the soft power is a long time and the effect is also

going on stilly which are not easily obtained, effective instantly like the hard power. The soft power has the strong ability the spread, especially under the era when information develops dramatically fast. At this time, the soft power spread to the country, to the daily life of the people, which can bring profound effect.

3.3 The Soft Power has Comprehensiveness and will Change

The soft power's different components have close relationship, make difference to each other. The coming into being and conversion are produced under the interactive effect. If the development of the soft power mainly focus on one or several aspects, it's hard to bring the comprehensive effect. So it's important to construct and develop the soft power.

The soft power isn't constant and it will change and develop with the change of the components and resources. As the society develops further, especially as the globalization and information era comes, the culture and policy of the nation are also changing. The change of the culture will bring the change of the sense of worth and the change of the worth will bring the change of the policy. Thus, during the process of construction and applying the soft power theory in a nation, it is necessary to improve and develop the soft power in order to adapt to the strategic demand of the nation.

3.4 The Soft Power has Complementation

The soft power and the hard power can help and constrain each other. The hard power is the basis of the soft power, and the soft power is the stretch of the hard power. The soft power of a country with powerful hard power will be more attractive and more effective. However, a country which is falling behind in the economy may have plenty of resources of the soft power, but it may not have the powerful soft power. If a country solely focuses on the development of the hard power regardless of the development of the soft power or has solid economy strength lacking the cultural resources and adequate participation into the international policy, it will not have the true soft power. Only the combination of the two aspects can we make good use of the advantages of the nation. So the soft power and the hard power have relationship with each other, affect each other and complement for each other.

IV. THE REMARK OF THE JOSEPH NYE TOWARDS THE SOFT POWER

4.1 The Rationality of the Joseph Nye's Soft Power Theory

Joseph Nye's soft power theory explains the sense of worth, reveals the changes of the strategic core and the trend of the competitive of the power for a nation due to the changes of the source of the national power. This can explain the soft power theory is not only the discovery of the national power and function not coming from the material but also has the obvious trend of the sense of worth.

Firstly, it will strengthen legality and recognition of the government. The legality of the government must gain the volunteered recognition of the people and the world society. Although the founding of a

country is on the basis of the force, the management of a nation should not rely on the force at the expensive of large costs. Because it will bring heavy burden and can't enhance the legality of the political power. Once the political power obtains the recognition of the people and the whole world, it will have the legality.

Secondly, we can strengthen the self-identity and legality of the people and the whole world towards a nation through a gentle manner. The legal and moral policy is the major source of the soft power and the government can make use of the soft power, especially the attraction of the soft power, to achieve the applicable policies.

Thirdly, the soft power can achieve the understanding, recognition and support of others through communication, guidance and gentle persuasion. Especially on the sense of worth, the ideology it will have the function of the attraction and guidance. The leader of the political power may enhance the national politics, economy and life quality through the application of the soft power and through which it will construct the image, enhance the self-identity towards the government and enhance the legality of the political power. The soft power theory can be beneficial to boost the culture of a nation, the sense of worth and the spread of the policy.

4.2 The Limitation of Joseph Nye's Soft Power Theory

Firstly, the soft power has inner contradiction. Nye separates the soft power from the hard power obviously. Nye thinks that the hard power contains the economy and military affairs which is force and the soft power consists of the culture, the sense of worth and the policy which is a kind of attraction. Meanwhile, he points out that the soft power and the hard power have close relationship. The soft power can be produced from the hard power, the soft power should be based on the hard power and the hard power will have the soft aspect. Nye doesn't lay obvious boundary between the soft power and the hard power. The soft power is a kind of strong attraction. But the attraction not only can be produced from the culture, the sense of the political worth, but also can be produced from the powerful economy, military affairs. Thus, without the obvious boundary between the soft power and the hard power, it will be difficult to define the soft power and the hard power. According to Nye's theory, many resources contain both the soft power and the hard power and the lack of the theoretical explanation of the two sides make Nye's soft power not so persuasive.

Secondly, the concept of the soft power is too general, lack the concrete level to measure. Since the concept of the soft power is too huge, contains the general contents, it will be difficult to divide and measure. For instance, the increase or the decrease of the soft power in China or the US, we don't have a clear level to measure. Instead, we can only describe or feel without the logical analysis.

Thirdly, the soft power lacks the integrity, the theoretical system. Joseph Nye doesn't conclude the basic domain of the soft power theory. In the book "The soft power: the successful way to world politics", he concludes the relative soft power theory into change of the nature for power. Power is the basic domain

of the soft power but isn't sole domain. It also includes the culture, sense of worth. So it is important to control the domain of the soft power. If we can't grasp the basic domain of the soft power, we can't come to the whole theoretical system.

To be peaceful and to develop are the theme of the current world. The soft power has become major component of the comprehensive ability for a nation and plays an utmost role. In the current world, culture is the carrier for the soft power, is the major aspects of the sense of worth and the ideology and make significant contributions to economical fields. And all these can produce the powerful productivity. After the cold war, the western countries strengthen the advocacy of the culture. Especially, the US is always putting the culture, the ideology, the social rule the equal place as the military affairs and economy and spread their sense of worth. Faced with the dominate place of the western culture, China must accelerate the pace of the construction of the soft power, strengthen the cohesive force of the nation. The survival, development and prosperity of nation can't leave the support of the soft power. When the soft power of a nation decrease or loses, the country will get depressed no matter how strong the economy is.

The soft power can strengthen both the cohesive force and will power and the ability to deal with national and international affairs. In addition, politicians can make full use of this to struggle for the hearts of the people through various methods to leave effect on the government and the people. The soft power theory can realize the purpose through the persuasion, which can be more effective than the economical and military methods. The soft power is the major comprehensive power for a nation and can accompany the hard power, these make up the two major aspects of the power for a nation. The soft power theory's basic characteristic is to achieve the goal through the attraction of the sense of the worth, which reveals that the soft power has the core function to guide.

The soft power theory is beneficial to boost the effect of the international politics and competitive edge world competition. It is the major component realize the national interests and safety and helpful to enhance the comprehensive power of a nation. So the soft power theory is significant for all countries. Thus, take advantage of the priorities of the soft power theory will be beneficial to realize the national interests and the strategic goal for the international policies. Enhance the understanding of the soft power theory will be helpful for us both to protect other countries to use the soft power as the means to carry out the peaceful evolution and protect other countries to generalize their own sense of a nation into the sense of the whole world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Fund Project National: Social Science Fund Youth Project "Research on Improving Chinese Cultural Soft Power and International Influence" (16CKS023).

REFERENCE

- [1] [US] Joseph S. Nye, Jr, Honghua Men translate. *Hard & Soft Power*. Beijing: Peking University Press, 2005.17,
- [2] [US] Joseph S. Nye, Jr, Xiaohui Wu, Cheng Qian translate. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. Beijing: Oriental Press, 2005.11, 2, 54
- [3] Joseph S. Nye. *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002:xi.
- [4] Huning Wang. *The culture of the national power: The soft power*. *Fudan Journal (Social Sciences Edition)*, 1993, 3
- [5] The soft power research group in China, Peking University. (The 2nd part for the application of the soft power in China—National soft power) <http://theory.people.com.cn/GB/49157/49165/6962844.html>
- [6] Joseph S. Nye Jr. *Soft Power*. *Foreign Policy*, Fall, 1990 autumn (80): 153-171.
- [7] Joseph S. Nye Jr. *The Transformation of World Power*. *Dialogue*, 1990 (4): 2-7.