

# Soft Power Diplomacy: Leveraging International Organizations in The Age of Globalization

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**Abstract:** This article explores the intersection of soft power diplomacy, international relations, and the role of international organizations in the era of globalization. Soft power diplomacy, conceptualized by Joseph Nye, refers to the ability of nations to influence others through non-coercive means such as culture, values, and policies. The article underscores the importance of soft power in contemporary international relations, highlighting its capacity to foster cooperation, understanding, and mutual respect among nations. In the context of globalization, where traditional power dynamics are evolving, soft power offers a nuanced approach to global engagement, complementing traditional hard power tactics. Furthermore, the article provides an overview of the pivotal role played by international organizations in shaping global governance and facilitating multilateral cooperation. By serving as platforms for dialogue, negotiation, and policy coordination, international organizations contribute to the diffusion of norms, values, and soft power initiatives on a global scale. Through case studies and analysis, the article examines successful instances of leveraging soft power diplomacy through international organizations, while also addressing the challenges and opportunities associated with this approach.

**Keywords:** Soft power diplomacy, international relations, globalization, international organizations, cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy, multilateral cooperation, global governance, Joseph Nye, soft power initiatives.

## Introduction:

Soft power diplomacy, coined by political scientist Joseph Nye, refers to the ability of nations to influence others through non-coercive means such as culture, values, and policies, rather than through military or economic force. It encompasses the ability to shape the preferences of others through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion, often achieved through cultural exchange, diplomacy, and international cooperation. Soft power complements hard power, which relies on military and economic might, and it has become increasingly recognized as a crucial aspect of modern diplomacy. Unlike hard power, which can generate resistance and resentment, soft power has the potential to create lasting relationships and positive perceptions among nations.

The importance of soft power in international relations cannot be overstated. In an interconnected and interdependent world, where traditional power dynamics are shifting, soft power offers a nuanced approach to global engagement. It allows nations to wield influence without resorting to force, fostering cooperation, understanding, and mutual respect. Soft power initiatives such as cultural exchanges, educational programs, and humanitarian aid efforts contribute to building bridges between nations and promoting peace and stability. Moreover, soft power enhances a nation's reputation and credibility on the world stage, bolstering its diplomatic efforts and increasing its capacity to address global challenges collaboratively.

Against the backdrop of globalization, international organizations play a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of global governance. These organizations, ranging from the United Nations to regional bodies and non-governmental organizations, serve as platforms for multilateral cooperation, policy coordination, and conflict

resolution. In the age of globalization, characterized by increased interconnectedness and interdependence, international organizations have become indispensable actors in addressing transnational issues such as climate change, pandemics, and terrorism. They provide a forum for dialogue and negotiation among diverse stakeholders, facilitating the exchange of ideas, best practices, and resources. Additionally, international organizations contribute to the diffusion of norms and values, promoting human rights, democracy, and sustainable development on a global scale. As such, they play a crucial role in harnessing soft power and fostering collaboration among nations in pursuit of common goals.

### **Literature Review:**

Soft power diplomacy, as conceptualized by Joseph Nye, has gained significant attention in the field of international relations due to its non-coercive nature and its ability to influence and shape global interactions. In the context of globalization, characterized by increased interconnectedness and interdependence among nations, soft power has emerged as a crucial tool for fostering cooperation, promoting shared values, and addressing transnational challenges. This literature review explores key scholarly works and theoretical frameworks related to soft power diplomacy, its significance in international relations, and the role of international organizations in leveraging soft power initiatives in the age of globalization.

- **The Concept of Soft Power Diplomacy:**

Joseph Nye introduced the concept of soft power in the late 20th century as a counterpoint to traditional notions of power that rely on coercion and force. Soft power refers to the ability of a nation to shape the preferences and behaviours of others through attraction, persuasion, and cultural influence. Nye argues that soft power rests on three main pillars: culture, political values, and foreign policies. Cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy, and educational exchange programs are among the primary instruments through which soft power is exercised (Nye, 2004).

Scholars have explored various dimensions of soft power diplomacy, including its effectiveness, sources, and limitations. For instance, Haass (2008) emphasizes the importance of credibility and legitimacy in wielding soft power, arguing that a nation's actions must align with its stated values for soft power to be influential. Similarly, Melissen (2005) examines the role of public diplomacy in shaping perceptions and attitudes towards a country, highlighting the need for strategic communication and engagement with foreign audiences.

- **Soft Power in International Relations:**

In the realm of international relations, soft power has become increasingly relevant as states seek to advance their interests and objectives through non-coercive means. Soft power strategies are seen as essential components of a nation's diplomatic toolkit, alongside traditional hard power capabilities. Several scholars have explored the complementary relationship between soft power and hard power, arguing that a judicious combination of both approaches can yield optimal results in achieving foreign policy goals (Nye, 2009; Drezner, 2008).

Moreover, soft power is seen as particularly effective in addressing complex transnational challenges such as climate change, terrorism, and pandemics. By fostering cooperation, building trust, and promoting dialogue among nations, soft power initiatives contribute to the development of multilateral solutions to global problems (Foot & Walter, 2011). For instance, cultural exchange programs and educational partnerships facilitate cross-cultural understanding and collaboration, laying the groundwork for effective international cooperation (Kiehl, 2010).

- **Role of International Organizations in Leveraging Soft Power:**

International organizations play a crucial role in harnessing soft power and facilitating global governance in the age of globalization. These organizations serve as forums for multilateral cooperation, policy coordination, and conflict resolution, providing platforms for dialogue and negotiation among diverse stakeholders (Abbott et al., 2000). The United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), and regional bodies such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are among the key actors in this regard.

One of the primary functions of international organizations is to promote shared norms, values, and principles that underpin global cooperation. Through their advocacy efforts and normative frameworks, international organizations contribute to the diffusion of soft power initiatives such as human rights, democracy, and sustainable development (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004). For example, the UN's cultural agency, UNESCO, promotes cultural diversity and heritage preservation as a means of fostering mutual understanding and respect among nations (Boulden, 2006).

Furthermore, international organizations facilitate practical cooperation in areas such as education, healthcare, and environmental protection, thereby enhancing soft power outcomes. By coordinating development projects, humanitarian assistance, and capacity-building initiatives, these organizations promote goodwill and solidarity among nations, strengthening their soft power influence (Davies & Crane, 2006). For instance, the World Health Organization (WHO) collaborates with member states to address global health challenges and promote public health initiatives, enhancing trust and cooperation among countries (Fidler, 2010).

### 1. Understanding Soft Power Diplomacy:

Soft power diplomacy, a concept introduced by Joseph Nye, has become increasingly relevant in the realm of international relations due to its non-coercive nature and its ability to shape global interactions through attraction and persuasion. This section explores the conceptual framework of soft power, its key elements, and provides examples of soft power diplomacy in action.

#### A. Conceptual Framework of Soft Power:

Soft power is defined as the ability of a nation to influence others through non-coercive means such as culture, values, and policies, rather than through military or economic force (Nye, 2004). Unlike hard power, which relies on coercion and tangible resources, soft power operates through intangible assets such as cultural appeal, ideological attraction, and diplomatic persuasion. Nye argues that a nation's soft power resources derive from three main pillars: culture, political values, and foreign policies (Nye, 2004). These pillars collectively contribute to a nation's ability to shape the preferences and behaviours of others, enhancing its influence and credibility on the world stage.

#### B. Elements of Soft Power Diplomacy:

- i. **Cultural Diplomacy:** Cultural diplomacy involves the promotion of a nation's cultural assets, including language, arts, cuisine, and heritage, as a means of fostering goodwill and understanding among foreign audiences (Zaharna, 2010). Through cultural exchange programs, artistic collaborations, and cultural festivals, countries showcase their cultural richness and diversity, building bridges between nations and promoting mutual respect and appreciation (Hoffmann, 2012). For example, the British Council and Alliance Française are organizations dedicated to promoting cultural exchange and language learning worldwide, enhancing the soft power of the United Kingdom and France, respectively.
- ii. **Public Diplomacy:** Public diplomacy focuses on engaging with foreign publics and shaping public perceptions of a nation through strategic communication and outreach efforts (Gilboa, 2008). It encompasses a range of activities, including media campaigns, digital diplomacy, and people-to-people exchanges, aimed at building positive narratives about a country and its policies (Leonard, 2002). Public diplomacy initiatives seek to foster dialogue, counter misinformation, and promote understanding between nations, thereby strengthening bilateral relations and enhancing soft power influence (Snow & Taylor, 2006). For instance, the United States' Fulbright Program, which facilitates educational exchanges between American and foreign students, serves as a flagship public diplomacy initiative, promoting cross-cultural understanding and academic collaboration (Hocking, 2005).
- iii. **Education and Exchange Programs:** Education and exchange programs play a vital role in soft power diplomacy by facilitating cross-cultural learning and building networks of goodwill and cooperation (Twining, 2013). Through scholarships, academic partnerships, and student exchanges, countries invest in the education and training of future leaders, fostering long-term relationships and enhancing their soft

power influence (McAllister, 2017). Educational institutions such as universities and research centers serve as hubs for international collaboration and knowledge exchange, contributing to the diffusion of ideas and values across borders (Wang, 2019). For example, the Erasmus+ program, funded by the European Union, promotes student mobility and academic cooperation among European countries, strengthening the bonds of solidarity and unity within the EU (Forster, 2015).

### **C. Examples of Soft Power Diplomacy in Action:**

Several examples illustrate the effectiveness of soft power diplomacy in shaping global perceptions and advancing national interests. One prominent example is Japan's use of cultural diplomacy through its "Cool Japan" campaign, which showcases Japanese pop culture, including anime, manga, and video games, to enhance the country's global appeal and influence (Katada & Kallender-Umezu, 2016). Similarly, South Korea's "Korean Wave" phenomenon, known as Hallyu, has propelled Korean popular culture, music, and entertainment to international prominence, contributing to the country's soft power projection and economic success (Kim, 2015).

Furthermore, public diplomacy initiatives such as Germany's Goethe-Institute and the British Council have played crucial roles in promoting German and British culture, language, and values worldwide, fostering dialogue and understanding between Germany, the United Kingdom, and other countries (Hocking, 2005; Leitsinger, 2015).

In the realm of education and exchange programs, initiatives such as the Chevening Scholarships in the United Kingdom and the Fulbright Program in the United States have facilitated academic exchange and collaboration, strengthened bilateral relations and enhanced mutual understanding between participating countries (Papadimitriou et al., 2015; McAllister, 2017).

Overall, these examples demonstrate the multifaceted nature of soft power diplomacy and its potential to shape global interactions through cultural engagement, strategic communication, and educational exchange, ultimately enhancing a nation's influence and prestige on the world stage.

## **2. The Role of International Organizations in Facilitating Soft Power Diplomacy:**

International organizations play a crucial role in facilitating soft power diplomacy, leveraging their institutional frameworks and global reach to promote cooperation, cultural exchange, and development initiatives among nations. This section provides an overview of key international organizations involved in soft power diplomacy, explores their functions in promoting soft power initiatives, and examines case studies of successful implementation.

**A. Overview of Key International Organizations:** International organizations encompass a diverse array of institutions, ranging from the United Nations (UN) to regional bodies such as the European Union (EU) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These organizations serve as platforms for multilateral cooperation, policy coordination, and conflict resolution on a global scale. The United Nations, with its specialized agencies such as UNESCO, WHO, and UNICEF, plays a central role in promoting peace, security, and development worldwide. Regional organizations such as the European Union and ASEAN focus on fostering integration and cooperation among member states in their respective regions (Abbott et al., 2000).

### **B. Functions of International Organizations in Promoting Soft Power Diplomacy:**

- i. **Providing Platforms for Cultural Exchange:** International organizations serve as facilitators of cultural exchange by organizing festivals, exhibitions, and cultural events that promote cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. For example, UNESCO's Cultural Heritage sites program highlights the importance of preserving cultural diversity and heritage, promoting mutual respect and dialogue among nations (UNESCO, n.d.). Additionally, initiatives such as the UN Alliance of Civilizations and the EU's Creative Europe program promote cultural cooperation and dialogue as means of building trust and fostering peace (UNAOC, n.d.; European Commission, n.d.).

- ii. **Facilitating Collaboration in Education and Research:** International organizations play a crucial role in facilitating collaboration in education and research, promoting academic exchange programs, joint research projects, and knowledge-sharing initiatives. For instance, the Fulbright Program, administered by the U.S. Department of State, promotes mutual understanding between the United States and other countries through educational and cultural exchange (IIE, n.d.). Similarly, organizations such as the World Bank and UNESCO support education and research projects worldwide, contributing to human capital development and capacity-building efforts (World Bank, n.d.; UNESCO, n.d.).
- iii. **Supporting Development Projects with Soft Power Components:** International organizations support development projects with soft power components, such as community empowerment, capacity-building, and cultural preservation efforts. For example, the World Health Organization collaborates with member states to address global health challenges and promote public health initiatives, enhancing trust and cooperation among countries (Fidler, 2010). Additionally, initiatives such as UNESCO's World Heritage Sites program and the World Bank's cultural heritage preservation projects promote sustainable development and cultural diplomacy by preserving cultural landmarks and promoting tourism (UNESCO, n.d.; World Bank, n.d.).

**C. Case Studies:** Successful Implementation of Soft Power Diplomacy through International Organizations: Several case studies illustrate the successful implementation of soft power diplomacy through international organizations. For example, UNESCO's World Heritage Sites program has facilitated cultural exchange and cooperation among nations while promoting mutual understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity (UNESCO, n.d.). Similarly, the Fulbright Program, administered by the U.S. Department of State, has fostered academic and cultural exchange between the United States and other countries, promoting goodwill and cooperation (IIE, n.d.). Additionally, the EU's Erasmus+ program, which supports student exchange and cooperation in higher education, has contributed to building a sense of European identity and solidarity among member states (European Commission, n.d.).

### 3. Challenges and Opportunities:

#### A. Limitations of Soft Power Diplomacy:

While soft power diplomacy offers numerous advantages in international relations, it also faces certain limitations. One significant challenge is its intangible nature, which makes it difficult to measure and quantify its impact. Unlike hard power capabilities such as military strength or economic influence, the effectiveness of soft power initiatives is often subjective and context-dependent (Nye, 2004). Additionally, the transmission of soft power relies on cultural affinity and resonance, which may vary across different societies and regions (Melissen, 2005). As a result, soft power efforts may not always yield the desired outcomes, especially in cultures where there is resistance or skepticism towards foreign influence.

Furthermore, the credibility and legitimacy of soft power initiatives can be undermined if they are perceived as mere propaganda or attempts to impose values and ideologies on others (Haass, 2008). In an increasingly interconnected world where information flows freely, audiences are often discerning and resistant to overt persuasion tactics. Thus, soft power strategies must be authentic, transparent, and aligned with the interests and values of the target audience to be effective (Nye, 2008).

#### B. Political and Cultural Barriers to Leveraging Soft Power:

Political and cultural barriers also pose significant challenges to leveraging soft power effectively. In some cases, political tensions and rivalries between nations may impede cooperation and mutual understanding, hindering the exchange of ideas and cultural expressions (Kiehl, 2010). Moreover, cultural differences and historical grievances can create barriers to communication and collaboration, leading to misunderstandings and conflicts (Galtung, 1996). For example, cultural stereotypes and biases may reinforce negative perceptions of foreign cultures, making it difficult to build trust and rapport (Melissen, 2005).

Additionally, the instrumentalization of culture for political purposes can undermine the authenticity and credibility of soft power efforts. Governments may use cultural diplomacy as a tool for propaganda or to advance geopolitical agendas, leading to perceptions of manipulation and exploitation (Irvine, 2008). Such politicization of culture can erode trust and goodwill, complicating efforts to foster genuine cultural exchange and dialogue (Cull, 2008).

### **C. Opportunities for Enhancing Soft Power Diplomacy through International Organizations:**

Despite these challenges, there are several opportunities for enhancing soft power diplomacy through international organizations:

#### **i. Harnessing Digital Platforms for Global Outreach:**

In an increasingly digitalized world, digital platforms offer unprecedented opportunities for global outreach and cultural exchange. Social media, online forums, and digital storytelling platforms enable nations to engage with diverse audiences and share their cultural heritage, values, and narratives (Cull, 2019). By leveraging digital technologies, international organizations can amplify soft power initiatives and reach wider audiences, transcending geographical and cultural boundaries (Chitty & Neff, 2018).

For example, UNESCO's Digital Library provides a platform for sharing cultural heritage artifacts and promoting intercultural dialogue among member states (UNESCO, n.d.). Similarly, the British Council's online platforms facilitate language learning, cultural exchange, and collaboration among young people from different countries (British Council, n.d.). These digital initiatives enhance the visibility and accessibility of soft power efforts, fostering mutual understanding and cooperation among nations.

#### **ii. Strengthening Partnerships among International Organizations and Member States:**

Collaboration and partnerships among international organizations and member states present another opportunity for enhancing soft power diplomacy. By pooling resources, expertise, and networks, international organizations can maximize their impact and effectiveness in promoting shared values and addressing global challenges (Abbott et al., 2000). Moreover, partnerships between governments, civil society organizations, and the private sector can amplify soft power initiatives and generate innovative solutions to complex issues (Foot & Walter, 2011).

For instance, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a framework for multi-stakeholder collaboration and collective action towards achieving common objectives (United Nations, 2015). Through partnerships with governments, NGOs, and businesses, international organizations can advance soft power goals such as poverty alleviation, environmental sustainability, and gender equality (United Nations Development Programme, n.d.). Similarly, cultural exchange programs and educational partnerships promote dialogue, understanding, and cooperation among nations, fostering goodwill and mutual respect (Kiehl, 2010).

## **4. Case Studies: Leveraging Soft Power Diplomacy through International Organizations**

### **A. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO):**

UNESCO stands as a prominent example of how international organizations can effectively utilize soft power diplomacy to promote cultural exchange, education, and scientific cooperation worldwide. With its mission to build peace through international cooperation in education, science, and culture, UNESCO has become a key player in fostering mutual understanding and respect among nations (UNESCO, n.d.).

One of UNESCO's primary soft power initiatives is its designation of World Heritage Sites, which not only preserves cultural and natural heritage but also promotes cross-cultural dialogue and appreciation. By recognizing and protecting sites of universal value, UNESCO facilitates cultural exchange and encourages cooperation among nations (UNESCO, n.d.).

Furthermore, UNESCO's educational programs aim to promote literacy, inclusive education, and global citizenship, contributing to the development of human capital and fostering international cooperation (UNESCO,



n.d.). For instance, the organization's Education for Sustainable Development initiative emphasizes the role of education in promoting sustainable development goals and empowering individuals to contribute to positive social change (UNESCO, n.d.).

### **B. World Health Organization (WHO):**

The World Health Organization (WHO) exemplifies how international organizations leverage soft power diplomacy to address global health challenges and promote public health initiatives. As the leading authority on international public health, WHO plays a critical role in coordinating global responses to health emergencies, advocating for equitable access to healthcare, and advancing health-related research and innovation (WHO, n.d.).

WHO's soft power influence is evident in its ability to mobilize international support and resources during health crises such as pandemics and epidemics. Through its coordination of emergency responses and dissemination of timely information and guidance, WHO fosters cooperation and solidarity among nations (WHO, n.d.).

Moreover, WHO's advocacy efforts promote evidence-based policies and practices that improve public health outcomes worldwide. By advocating for initiatives such as vaccination campaigns, disease prevention strategies, and healthcare infrastructure development, WHO contributes to building trust and cooperation among countries (WHO, n.d.).

### **C. International Monetary Fund (IMF):**

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) provides an example of how international organizations wield soft power diplomacy in the realm of global finance and economic governance. As a key institution in the international monetary system, IMF plays a central role in stabilizing financial markets, promoting economic growth, and facilitating cooperation among member states (IMF, n.d.).

One of IMF's soft power initiatives is its provision of financial assistance and technical expertise to countries facing economic challenges. Through its lending programs and policy advice, IMF promotes economic stability and development, while also fostering dialogue and cooperation among nations (IMF, n.d.).

Additionally, IMF's research and policy analysis contribute to the development of global economic governance frameworks and best practices. By providing insights into economic trends, risks, and policy options, IMF enhances its soft power influence and promotes collaboration among policymakers and stakeholders (IMF, n.d.).

## **Conclusion:**

### **A. Recap of the Role of Soft Power Diplomacy:**

Throughout this article, we have delved into the concept of soft power diplomacy and its significance in shaping contemporary international relations. Soft power, as articulated by Joseph Nye, refers to the ability of nations to influence others through attraction, persuasion, and cultural appeal, rather than coercion or force. We have seen how soft power initiatives, including cultural exchanges, public diplomacy, and educational programs, contribute to fostering cooperation, building trust, and promoting mutual understanding among nations. Soft power complements traditional hard power strategies and offers a more nuanced approach to global engagement, particularly in the age of globalization where interconnectedness and interdependence are paramount.

### **B. Emphasizing the Significance of International Organizations in Amplifying Soft Power Efforts:**

A crucial aspect highlighted in this article is the pivotal role played by international organizations in amplifying soft power efforts on the global stage. International organizations serve as platforms for multilateral cooperation, policy coordination, and norm diffusion among nations. They provide the infrastructure and mechanisms through which soft power initiatives can be leveraged to address common challenges and promote shared values. Through their advocacy, capacity-building, and development projects, international organizations enhance trust, cooperation, and solidarity among member states, thereby strengthening the soft power influence of nations.

Examples such as UNESCO's promotion of cultural diversity and the WHO's efforts in global health cooperation underscore the significant contributions of international organizations in advancing soft power diplomacy.

### **C. Future Prospects and Recommendations for Enhancing Soft Power Diplomacy through International Organizations:**

Looking ahead, there are several future prospects and recommendations for enhancing soft power diplomacy through international organizations. Firstly, there is a need for increased investment in cultural exchange programs, educational partnerships, and public diplomacy initiatives to expand soft power outreach and influence. By fostering people-to-people connections and promoting cross-cultural understanding, these initiatives can help bridge divides and build bridges between nations.

Secondly, international organizations should prioritize strategic communication and engagement with diverse stakeholders, including civil society groups, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector. By fostering inclusive dialogue and collaboration, international organizations can amplify soft power efforts and mobilize collective action towards common goals.

Furthermore, there is a growing recognition of the importance of harnessing digital platforms and technology in enhancing soft power diplomacy. International organizations should leverage digital tools and social media channels to reach wider audiences, disseminate information, and foster virtual exchanges and interactions.

Lastly, there is a need for greater coordination and cooperation among international organizations to maximize the impact of soft power initiatives. By sharing best practices, resources, and expertise, international organizations can amplify their collective influence and contribute more effectively to global peace, stability, and prosperity.

In conclusion, the future of soft power diplomacy lies in harnessing the collective efforts of international organizations to promote cooperation, understanding, and mutual respect among nations. By prioritizing cultural exchange, strategic communication, and digital engagement, international organizations can play a pivotal role in shaping a more inclusive, interconnected, and harmonious world.

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