

Robert łoś

Soft Power

in Contemporary International Relations



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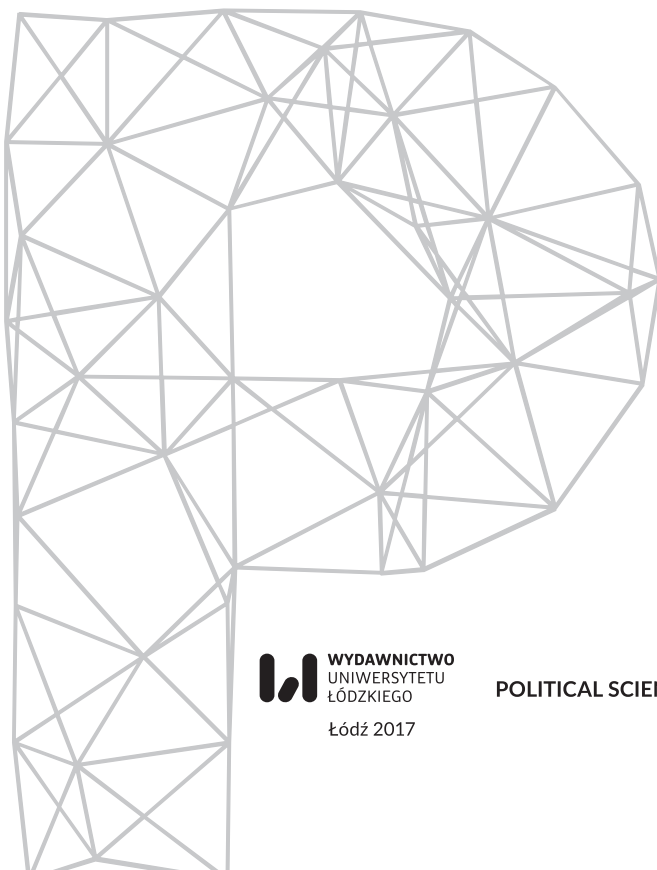


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POLITICAL SCIENCE

Robert Łoś – University of Łódź, Faculty of International and Political Studies
Department of Theory of Foreign and Security Policy
90-127 Łódź, 41/43 Składowa St.

INITIATING EDITOR

Agnieszka Kałowska

REVIEWER

Lubomir Zyblikiewicz

TRANSLATION

Krystyna Krzemińska

PROOFREADING

Aleksandra Urzędowska

TYPESETTING

AGENT PR

TECHNICAL EDITOR

Leonora Wojciechowska

COVER DESIGN

Katarzyna Turkowska

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INTRODUCTION

Soft power is not a new subject in the political practice, however, in the theory of international relations, it may be considered a novelty, popularized thanks to J.S. Nye. The concept is difficult to define: it may as well mean soft authority or power or the third face of authority or power. It is best to refer to it as soft power in order to avoid terminological inconsequences.

One of the weaknesses identified by soft power researchers is the inability to conduct full and clear evaluation and division into hard and soft power areas. It is difficult to identify a single definition of this phenomenon, but it can be assumed that soft power is the ability of a state to meet goals thanks to attractiveness of its culture, values, political style void of aggression and pressure, replacing the use of military power or economic pressure. Soft power makes the state attractive to others, enhances impact and encourages other entities to do what is expected from them.

It is worth mentioning that the concept of soft power reflects the character of changes that have begun to take place in international relations. Within this concept shaping of the new international order has meant diminishing role of the military factor and more significant role of soft power resources. At the same time the concept of security has broadened due to new threats and challenges of non-military character, which have also redefined the concept of power.

In the changing world order there have appeared threats that states cannot face single-handedly. New threats and challenges require new tools. The tools are related to soft power, thanks to which the participation of a great number of entities and use of resources have ensured a dialogue, cooperation between states, which as

a result, could have contributed to providing the sense of security. Having assumed that the role of soft power has grown in importance, it is necessary to determine whether this kind of power is sufficient to build and stabilize the world order.

One must assume that soft power has grown in importance since power was spread. However, it is difficult to determine whether it happened due to the influence of soft power or the other way round, the significance of soft power has grown as a result of new tendencies in the process of shaping the world order.

Discussing the significance of soft power, one should identify its efficiency and degree of its dependence on typical indicators of power such as the size of a territory and demographic potential and, if so, whether it is connected with a specific cultural background. If soft power operates in various civilisation areas, one must answer the question whether increased importance of soft power is affected by universal values. It is necessary to emphasise the status of a homogeneous culture which, according to research, plays a minor role in the growth of soft power. Its significance may, however, turn out to be greater as it protects the society and its identity from the influence of other nations and states.

At present the most powerful states in the world cannot ignore the role of soft power. Nevertheless, the potential of soft power should not be overrated and one should not assume that a state or nations are ready to blindly follow other participants of international relations.

On the other hand, it is necessary to assume that culture, norms and values can be found appealing only when the success of a state and its citizens is visible. Therefore, one may risk putting forward a thesis that the influence of soft power may increase when it is

supported by the success of an economic model, attractive lifestyle or wealth of the society.

Another important issue is determining whether soft power affects the world order on a short-term basis or in an evolutionary manner and, thus, whether it solves global problems such as migration or climatic changes effectively.

Assuming confrontation potential among states, one should determine whether international entities, having limited soft power resources, are able to compensate for and strengthen their power by using only military and economic tools. Soft power may affect only the soft area of power whereas in the military and economic areas it may appear useless.

Equally important is symmetry in the development of individual soft power categories, which allows to exploit soft potential of resources. Asymmetry in this respect encourages a state to strengthen weaker categories of soft power, which may raise concerns among other states that soft power is strengthened by means of propaganda.

In this context, by analysing individual categories defining soft power, it is important to determine to what degree states with balanced soft power factors are able to increase the growth of its own power. Therefore, efficiency of soft power may involve applying and combining various elements of soft power in a balanced way, turning it into an extremely dynamic process which is difficult to control.

As a consequence, one should assume that soft power operates in an active manner (e.g. public diplomacy) and a passive manner (eliminating institutions). Both cases involve interaction which affects other international entities in various ways. In the active

interaction tools play a greater role whereas in the passive interaction only resources matter.

The construction of this work has been determined by the difficulties in identifying the range of soft power and its place in general power of a state. That is why, the first chapter presents changes that took place at the turn of the 20th and the 21st centuries in the world order, which altered the way of looking at power resources, mechanisms of its creation and the environment of its operation. Another part of the chapter defines power presented by representatives of main streams in international relations. As the subject of power and power status is too broad, this chapter focuses only on the most important problems which are necessary to formulate theses connected with the categories that may be useful to determine soft power.

The final sub-chapter shows operating indicators and models determining power. Selected definitions and formulas, quoted by the author, are aimed at defining the place of soft power in the overall power status of the state.

Another chapter defines the role and potential of hard and soft power interaction, mutual connections between their resources and interaction tools. This part of the chapter is aimed at defining soft power, showing its borders and ability to create 'soft' influence by means of resources traditionally attributed to hard power.

Determining the degree and dependence related to hard power resources is extremely important as they, to a great extent, allow to determine the degree of functioning of its soft elements.

The next important step is classification of soft power resources, starting with the values that determine many other types of behaviour. The values are not only those referred to as political ones, but also norms which allow self-determination and acceptance of other norms and values on the basis of co-optation.

Further on one should take into account high culture, popular culture and education. These elements, to a great degree, protect from influence and have actual attraction aspect.

Naturally, the preferred style of foreign policy, its resources and methods including the ability to determine its functioning once the state's actions have been legitimized by the international community, belong to soft power resources. Only these foreign policy actions are acceptable and may generate soft power.

Equally important are abilities and functioning on the basis of consensus. It requires new instruments to create soft power by means of public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy and national branding. However, it is difficult to determine borders between these categories as supporters of each believe that their method of research into influence should be considered as the most appropriate and superior.

In case of soft power it is necessary to consider public diplomacy as an instrument of operation strategy, which in cultural diplomacy is limited to culture. Therefore, it must be assumed that it is the instrument of influence within the scope of soft power interaction. The concept of national branding refers to building the brand of the state, which influences its image.

Further considerations on the substance of soft power require determining how state mechanisms connected with state institutions can support or prevent soft power operations. This is the reason why it is so important to take into consideration and determine the efficiency of democracy and authoritarian governments. More difficult to demonstrate is the mechanism of support for the soft power created by the society and self-identification of the community which is able to strengthen soft power resources. The ability of soft power to interact is also related to well-operating mechanism,

communication and media used in this process. Defining the potential of media and think tanks as elements of support in this respect, is important to generate soft power.

The first two chapters are aimed at demonstrating mechanisms of generating, functioning and interaction of power including soft power whereas another chapter focuses on demonstrating its potential by referring to measurable indicators defining the scale of generated power.

In the first sub-chapter indicators necessary to determine the power of a state have been presented. It includes indicators related to demographic and territorial potential, military forces and economy. These indicators may not fully reflect military and economic power of states but it is not the author's intention to position states in terms of hard power but only to demonstrate the potential of thirty individual states.

The most important part of the third chapter is a separate original index based on a number of evaluation categories. The first category is *diplomacy* which includes indicators related to foreign policy, public diplomacy, cultural and digital diplomacy. This category takes into account participation of a state in international organisations as they are able to determine the scope of influence through participation and operation on the broader cooperation arena.

Representatives of a state can interact in a slightly different way by means of diplomatic posts or foreign culture centres. Naturally, in terms of quality, it is difficult to determine the potential of soft power and the scope of its influence generated by foreign culture centres, but the very possibility of popularizing it, may serve as the evidence of a state's and community's power and will to interact.

In *diplomacy* category a certain novelty is the adjective *digital*. The state that intends to generate a considerable number of soft

power resources must operate in a virtual sphere. Therefore, it is important to present the number of Internet users, which shows the influence through the net. It is happening although it poses a threat of being susceptible to the influence of others. Two other factors in this category are determined by the number of the Noble Peace Prize Winners and world leaders who authoritative magazines consider to be the most influential people in the world.

Another category is *social-political resource*. This category takes into account the evaluation of a state's functioning by means of its operational potential and execution of specific functions, transparency of regulations, political freedom and civil liberties, efficient government, effective and fair legal regulations, the degree of preventing corruption, free access to both traditional and electronic media.

These elements, to a great degree, are aimed at demonstrating the scope of a state's potential to engage in the process of generating soft power, but they can be helpful in determining the scope of a community's ability to operate, which thanks to its commitment can support soft power. *Social-political* category determines internal policy to a great extent, however, its scope of operation is much broader. It is connected with the principle, which makes policy credible, referring to the compliance of its internal and external profile. No other thing can be as effective as an example and clear rules: institutions-citizen.

Next two categories are *high culture and popular culture*. In these categories the language, which is a factor determining understanding, plays the key role. The area of high culture is supported by the number of the Noble Prize winners in literature; the number of objects on the prestigious UNESCO list, which determines attractiveness of a state as for culture (monuments) and geographic environment. This factor may determine the part of resources which

makes national heritage attractive to others. Museums are of similar character as they may serve as the evidence of the power of national heritage and they may also determine interest in a country in terms of tourism.

An important sphere of popular culture is the scope of influence measured by the number of tourists. It may be a sign of mass interaction as tourists are, to a great extent, ambassadors of the state that they have got to know to some extent. Indirect power of attraction is the beauty of landscapes, lifestyle, which may enhance attractiveness.

Equally important for shaping soft power are mass events, especially sports events. At this point it is necessary to take into account a state's sports tradition, rivalry spirit, which translates into medal ranking and the choice of a discipline which is able to gather and engage a considerable part of the society. Therefore, football ranks first among the most prestigious sports disciplines. Football olympic games and championships including the most important mass events build the image and enable the state to demonstrate efficiency of its operation and community's team spirit.

Another group determining cultural influence is the cinema which on *culture* ranking list has been placed in two categories. They include films which have won awards at the most prestigious film festivals and their ability to influence does not necessarily translate into the size of the audience.

In the popular category there are films the influence of which is reflected by the number of films produced by the national cinematography and the amount of box-office income. Similar can be said about music market data. The number of sold CDs certainly affects the perception of states' culture or cultural circle. The ranking also takes into account export of cultural goods, which refers

to the products based on artistic design (e.g. jewellery), TV programmes, licence fees, CD production. This factor may be slightly problematic as produced cultural goods do not have to be identified with the country of origin.

Another category determining soft power is *education*. The influence of this factor is determined by the ranking of higher education schools and foreigners who study there. Both factors reflect the net of relationships but they may also affect the behaviours of leaders. Educated foreigners become the subject of the influence and important investment for the future when they attain an appropriate professional status in their country.

Education category also includes think tanks as the institutions whose interaction may be crucial for state structures. Due to their international relations they are connected mainly with the scientific domain but they also constitute a form of influence in public diplomacy. Yet, the majority have scientific character and should be taken into account in the educational sphere.

In *education* category it is necessary to consider the world ranking of efficiency of elementary and secondary education. The main basis of the ranking is not the size of resources allocated to education (public and private), because it does not determine the actual level of education. Most important in this case is to define the efficiency of the educational system. The Nobel Prize winners make the ranking complete, in sciences and medicine in this case.

The last category of soft power factors are these connected, to a great extent, with economy. In the book they are referred to as a *social-economic* category. An important factor defining this category constitutes great enterprises as they are able to have impact on the wealth of nations, generate great profits, create recognisable brands worldwide, which may affect building the state image.

Another point in this category is the scale of innovation, which proves attractiveness of the administration model. An important factor is the extent of social justice, which strengthens community spirit, identification and most importantly, encourages to take mutual action in order to enhance the significance of the state.

The level of social dissatisfaction which is also a factor generated by an economic indicator, reflects the level of social development. This level is determined by a long and prosperous life, which may lead to the (national) community's interest in generating the power of the state. The last point in this category is the size of development aid which contributes greatly to creating the net of relationships and support among countries. It is certainly a very important mechanism of influence, determined, to a great extent, by economic factors. Thanks to the aid provided to poorer countries, beneficiaries may feel grateful to their benefactors.

Basic categories have been ranked and influence factors determined in proportion to their meaning and their total number is strictly limited. In each category there are 30 best states. In practice it means that intensifying actions of state institutions and the nation in order to increase a factor in a given category may be monitored and connected with the growth or weakening of soft power. It may be an attempt to introduce changes in order to increase the significance of own status through soft power in a systematic way.

In this arrangement of indicators, their choice in individual categories may raise doubts. Some qualitative factors may not translate into influence, others are of purely subjective character and have not been taken into account in the ranking. Equally problematic is an enormous number of players in public diplomacy, which makes it difficult to determine which elements in individual categories are decisive.

Even if we assume that the choice raises no objections, it is clear that some elements of soft power cannot be evaluated. These are subjective elements, therefore, it is hard to determine their potential of contributing to the success of the country. Presented index of countries with the highest indicator of soft power is a model approach, requires updating, including changeable data and its interpretation in time.

Supporters of soft power are often criticized as soft power is believed to be vague. This view is far-fetched. One should bear in mind that soft power is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, has its dynamics and this is the reason why it is difficult to observe and capture how it affects attitudes and actions of countries and societies. Ignoring soft power is based on one-dimensional perception of power and wrong conviction that attracting others and stimulating emulation does not fit the category of power. Nevertheless, opponents may claim that the use of military power or economic pressure is a weakness whereas achieving the aim by attracting others and convincing them about the validity of own actions is a success.

Soft power should not be overestimated at the expense of hard power as it is difficult to imagine functioning of a state without all elements of power. Soft power is certainly an important dimension of power and excluding it from the plans of states may lead to problems with realizing its basic aims.