

UDK: 378.8:351.746.1

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DOI 10.29038/2524-2679-2025-02-19-28

FROM DEFENSE TO OFFENSE: SECURITY FUNCTIONS OF THE COUNTRY'S SOFT POWER

The article examines the functions of soft power in the context of protecting the national security of states with high and low soft power potential. The purpose of the article is determined by the need for theoretical and conceptual improvement of the phenomenon of soft power as an instrument of influence of the actor-applicant in the conditions of the crisis of the world order, and accordingly, the study of the role of non-force methods of influence in the national interests' protection of large and small states. As part of the operationalization of the functions, the author identifies two groups of recipients to whom the soft power of a subject is directed: partner actors and rival actors. Thanks to this division, the author offers a detailed analysis of functions, considering the interests and motives of the actor and the specifics of its relations with the recipient. The author also substantiates the thesis of the predominantly manipulative nature of soft power and argues that soft power, especially in the context of interstate conflict, has destructive consequences for the recipient and, accordingly, has harsh characteristics. The article emphasizes that the analysis of the use of soft power by a particular actor is relevant in a particular case and should consider both the behavior of the soft power actor and the recipient's reaction, as well as the behavior of a competing actor. The article points out that if for major players soft power becomes an "offensive" tool and performs the functions of maintaining legitimacy in the international arena, then for small actors the system of soft power functions has a more defensive nature. Taking into account the proposed operationalization, the author comes to the conclusion

that the soft power of the state can play a key role in the sphere of protecting security interests, however, requires further empirical research and systematization of the practical experience of states in conditions of increased conflict potential in the international arena.

Key words: soft power, hard power, security, security policy, challenge, manipulation, hybrid warfare, information policy.

ВІД ЗАХИСТУ ДО НАСТУПУ: БЕЗПЕКОВІ ФУНКЦІЇ «М'ЯКОЇ СИЛИ» ДЕРЖАВИ

У статті розглянуто функції «м'якої сили» в рамках захисту національної безпеки держав із високим і низьким потенціалами «м'якої сили». Мета статті зумовлена необхідністю теоретико-концептуального вдосконалення феномену «м'якої сили» як інструменту впливу актора-заявника в умовах кризи світового порядку та, відповідно, дослідження ролі й змісту несилових методів впливу в захисті безпекових інтересів великих і малих держав. У рамках операціоналізації безпекових функцій «м'якої сили» виділено дві групи реципієнтів, на яких спрямована «м'яка сила» суб'єкта – акторів-партнерів та акторів-суперників. Завдяки такому розподілу пропонуємо розгорнутий аналіз функцій з огляду на інтереси й мотиви актора-заявника та специфіку його відносин із реципієнтом. З огляду на аналіз, обґрунтовуємо її переважно маніпулятивну природу та стверджуємо, що «м'яка сила», особливо в контексті міждержавного конфлікту, може мати деструктивні наслідки для реципієнта, а також характерні ознаки «жорсткої сили». У статті наголошено на тому, що аналіз використання «м'якої сили» певним актором є релевантним у рамках конкретного кейсу та мусить урахувати як поведінку суб'єкта «м'якої сили» й реакцію реципієнта, так і поведінку актора-конкурента. У статті також обґрунтовано, що якщо для великих гравців «м'яка сила» стає інструментом «наступу» й виконує функції утримання легітимності на міжнародній арені, то система функцій «м'якої сили» малих держав відзначається здебільшого оборонним характером. З огляду на запропоновану операціоналізацію, доходимо висновку, що «м'яка сила» держави, хоч і може відігравати ключову роль у сфері захисту безпекових інтересів, утім, потребує подальших емпіричних досліджень і систематизації практичного досвіду держав в умовах підвищеної конфліктогенності на міжнародній арені.

Ключові слова: «м'яка сила», «жорстка сила», безпека, безпекова політика, виклик, маніпулювання, гібридна війна, інформаційна політика.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Statement of Scientific Problem. The question of the mechanisms of influence of one actor on another, especially in the analysis of current trends in international relations, is one of the main issues in scientific discourse. Special attention, both from a practical and theoretical point of view, is paid to the so-called “non-military” methods of influence, which certainly require an interdisciplinary approach to their study. As S. Lukes notes, the issues of the degree of influence, its mechanisms, and instruments of influence in this context are poorly understood and limited by the views of certain theoretical directions and approaches [1, p. 492–493]. The importance of theoretical and conceptual improvement of methods, processes, and results of soft influence is necessary because of, firstly, the constant development of information and communication technologies that significantly expand the ability to shape the perception of oneself among foreign audiences, secondly, the avoidance or delay of actors’ resort to aggressive forms of influence, and thirdly, globalization processes that promote cultural intertwining between actors.

However, in a time of international instability, manifested by local conflicts and wars, uncertainty in the development of relations between major powers, and the crisis of the world order, the question arises as to the role and potential of using soft power mechanisms in the context of protecting national security. It is worth emphasizing that if any force, as well as any influence, does not have a normative nature and is based solely on the interest of the subject, then soft power (hereinafter: SP) should not be considered a “good” for the recipient actor. Modern ideas about the nature of SP and its manifestations show that it is, first, manipulative in nature, second, can have “hard” manifestations, and third, as the historical experience of the Cold War demonstrates, it is an important complementary factor in the confrontation between states. That is why, as the study below demonstrates, the potential of a state’s SP is no less important in protecting the state’s security interests than military and economic indicators.

Literature Review. In the last decade, the number of works on the role of the SP in the security context has increased. For example, the importance of using the SP in the context of protecting national interests in the context of global interstate tensions was studied by the author of the concept Joseph S. Nye (especially this aspect is emphasized in his latest work *“Soft Power and Great-Power Competition. Shifting Sands in the Balance of Power Between the United States and China”* (2023), Margaret Seymour (2021), Huseyn Mohammed Akbarov (2020) and Steven Lukes (2005). A detailed study of SP instruments is presented in the works of Roopa Desai-Trilokekar, Hani El

Masry (2022), and Eytan Gilboa (2008). The “hard” as well as manipulative instruments of SP, such as securitization and desecuritization, are discussed in detail by Małgorzata Jakimów (2019) and Mikail Kalimuddin (2018).

The Purpose of this Article is to operationalize and reveal the security functions of the international organizations of large and small states in their interaction with two groups of actors: partner and rival actors.

2. THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

SP is a rather complicated subject of research, given the lack of commonality in the scientific community in understanding its nature, defining its tools and resources, and identifying its effects [2, p. 100–101]. At the same time, it is difficult to deny that the SP, whose resources and tools are aimed at attracting other actors in the short term and promoting their trust in the long term, is crucial in ensuring the protection of state interests, especially security interests. In the context of current trends in international relations, the potential of the SP is a critical resource that is conditioned by “the changing nature and security” [3, p. 112]. Ukrainian scholar I. O. Kyrychenko notes that the SP reveals “the dichotomy of political and security factors of global development” [4, p. 217], which contributes to the new emergence of interaction between actors in the international arena. In addition, the emergence of new instruments and actors in interaction with the world community and individual actors is significant.

Before attempting to understand the functional burden of SP within the framework of protecting the security of the actor that directs the SP, it is important to understand the contextual framework in which it can be considered. First, when analyzing the use of a particular SP strategy, it is significant to understand the specifics of the relationship between the SP actor and its recipient. The motives, goals, methods, and expected results of the subject of the SP concerning an ally and an adversary will differ. For example, while the US SP aimed at the EU countries is aimed at strengthening political and ideological unity, the goal of the Chinese SP is primarily to delegitimize the regime among the population. It is also worth emphasizing that in the context of ideological, information-psychological, and cognitive confrontation, SP is becoming an integral tool that, on the one hand, acts more invisibly on wide audiences, and on the other hand, has a manipulative nature.

Another important aspect in this context is to consider the geopolitical position of the actor and the potential of the SP, which directs it, as this will determine its priorities in shaping the security agenda. Thus, for major pla-

yers, the security interest will be related to maintaining leadership in the international arena in competition with other geopolitical actors, while for semi-peripheral and peripheral countries, especially in the context of the crisis of the world order, the main motive will be to recognize their importance in the international arena and to preserve themselves.

Thus, considering the potential of the actor's SP and the conditionally defined context of relations with the recipient, we can propose the following distribution of SP functions within the framework of protecting the actor's security interests:

Table 1

**Operationalization of the Functions of the SP as a Security Tool
for Big and Small States**

	Regarding Allied and/or Neutral Actors	As for the Rival Actors
Big States	Legitimization function Consolidation function	Offensive function Containment function Displacement function
Small States	Identification function Demarginalization function Integration function The function of involving partners	Protective function Separation function

In the context of the transformation of the international order, visibility, and the ability to attract support is the greatest capital to be gained in the long run for both the first and the second group of states. It is obvious that for great powers such as the United States and China, the SP is a tool for maintaining their status and legitimizing their influence [5, p. 96]. In a post-bipolar world order in a competitive environment of rival actors, legitimizing their foreign policy activities is the most important capital in establishing a dominant status. It is significant to emphasize that for superpowers to become more attractive, it is essential to support the SP in neutral countries, which is ensured through a balanced strategy of economic, military, political, and cultural cooperation, as well as through the implementation of an effective system of public diplomacy. The latter is possible only through a detailed study of the audience (recipient) and an understanding of those aspects of the relationship that will meet the interests of the recipient actors or will be perceived as such.

Instead, the *consolidation function* is mainly focused on partner actors and is considered within the framework of the analysis of “collective SP”. Delegation, exchange, and, as a result, intensification of the SP among partner and allied actors is a factor in strengthening political and ideological blocs within a competitive environment. Demonstration of common soft power and harmonious, interaction-oriented relations, firstly, increases the potential for attractiveness of political and ideological ideas represented by actor states, secondly, it is an incentive for further interaction or integration of neutral actors, and thirdly, it strengthens the SP of individual actors and the leader.

However, as the historical experience of the bipolar and post-bipolar world shows, the SP also takes on “hard” functions, as it is applied to competing actors. For great powers with a high potential for attractiveness, the SP can play an offensive, i.e., *offensive function*, as well as *the functions of deterrence and displacement*, the use of which is natural and necessary for superpowers in a competitive environment. The *offensive function* is to look for opportunities to promote their own SP through information, mass-cultural interventions, as well as public diplomacy, which is focused on the request of the audience of a competing actor. Logically, the function of deterrence is ensured through the advantages of the applicant actor’s SP in the competition and the obstruction of the spread of its narratives. Similar is the function of displacement, which consists in imposing and articulating one’s own SP within the framework of interaction with neutral actors in which the competing actor is interested. It should be noted that all three functions are also realized through such tools as the securitization of the competing actor and its narratives, and its desecuritization in problematic locations for the applicant actor. It can be assumed that the ability to impose a security and problematic context on target actors is one of the key qualities of the applicant actor.

If we talk about historical examples, we should refer to the experience of the Cold War, which clearly distinguishes between competing parties, partner actors of each side, and neutral actors for whom the main parties to the confrontation competed and traces the dynamics of their interaction. For example, M. Seymour is convinced that both after World War II and after the Cold War, the current world order was possible only thanks to the American SP, because the country was able to retain power abroad through the “power of example” [6]. The victory in the Cold War against the giant USSR is a perfect example of this assumption, and the characteristic signs of the US-China competition, namely the penetration of socio-cultural patterns in China within the framework of the so-called Cold War 2.0, reinforce it.

For small countries and countries that do not claim to be hyperpowers, as noted above, the SP is ensured primarily by institutional capacity, public

diplomacy efforts, balanced foreign and domestic policies, and stability in development, which in the long run will inspire more confidence in international actors. Accordingly, lacking sufficient potential for attractiveness, or rather a resource springboard for broadcasting themselves in the international arena, peripheral and semi-peripheral states should focus on the defensive and demarginalization functions of the SP, which can provide sufficient visibility, especially in addressing security threats, and demonstrate their role and importance to the international community. Singapore is a good example in this context, as the country receives significant soft dividends due to its political and cultural values, trade through the Strait of Malacca, high level of education, and cultural diversity [7, p. 59]. Other examples are Canada, which focuses on humanitarian aid in crisis regions, and Norway, which emphasizes its role in international mediation and peacekeeping [8, p.71]. In this process, the SP will also play an actor identification function.

Accordingly, the function of distinction is responsible for consolidating its subjectivity and promoting its distinct otherness from rival actors who demonstrate aggressive intentions toward the subject of study. Logically, the need to “separate” small states is most often caused in the context of postcolonial relations and toxic neighborhoods with a potential aggressor. No wonder there is a vision of the SP as a means of “boundary making between Self and Other” [9, p. 374] i.e. concentration in the development of the SP strategy as an act of otherness and selfhood. Thus, SP is more of a tool for demarginalization (as in Mexico or Brazil) or even survival (the best examples are Ukraine and Taiwan).

This subjectivity is reinforced by the second function of the SP, namely the integration function, which is already focused on potential partner actors and consists of integrating itself into certain ideological and political contexts (such as active participation in international organizations, and membership in relevant alliances). Such integration is both a source of SP, as it can better identify the actor-state, promotes interdependence with stronger actors, helps to broadcast the important role of the actor, and a result of SP, as it contributes to changing the behavior and perception of larger actor-states through co-optation.

For small states with low military capital, the SP becomes a means of mobilizing potential partners and allies in case of danger. The best example is Ukraine, which had neglected the development of its attractiveness capital before the Russian military intervention and recognized the need to develop a public diplomacy apparatus during the military invasion. Ukraine is also an excellent example of contextualization in SP research. Despite the absence of a balanced, strategically oriented public diplomacy for the sake of visibility in the international arena, its attractiveness in the eyes of potential partners was due to

the fact of the Russian invasion rather than the efforts of the Ukrainian government. Nevertheless, it is Ukraine's reputation that is the basis of its security in times of war [10, p. 197], as the image of a "hero country" provides constant military and information support and somehow ensures resistance to Russia. This is a lesson for most small states that "claim to survive" and are geographically located with potential aggressor states.

China's approach is similar in a more practical sense. Thus, the Chinese 16+1 platform, proposed in 2012 as part of China-European cooperation, although aimed at deepening interdependence with European countries, is perceived by the vast majority of the European establishment as a direct threat to the EU, despite China's narrative of its contribution to the "revival of Europe" [9, p. 375].

In this context, it is also important to reveal the SP's potential functional load in the state's security system. The functions of the SP are operationalized by distinguishing between large and small states, considering the SP potential of the actor, which means a set of resources, tools, and capabilities that allow an applicant actor to generate and multiply SP in the context of its application to a particular recipient actor. Beyond the SP potential, it is also important to consider the motives and intentions of the use of soft influence towards a particular recipient. These aspects are significant for understanding the security agendas of great powers and the periphery.

Thus, it can be stated that sometimes the "tough" manifestations of the applicant actor have the opposite effect and are identified as SP. It is also important to add that even though SP is acquired through a long and sophisticated foreign and domestic policy, its manifestations, in particular through acts of public diplomacy, can be situational.

Another example is the use of cultural instruments of SP, provided that the applicant and recipient actors share a colonial past and the applicant actor aims to restore dominance over the recipient actor (culturally, socially, politically, and informationally). An obvious example is the Chinese SP on Taiwan, which aims to undermine Taiwan's identity in the eyes of the international community, which is achieved through the discourse of a common historical past, deepening social ties between the two countries, demonstrating respect for Taiwanese state interests, strengthening economic interdependence, and spreading the narrative of shared "shared prosperity" [11, p. 127].

Despite the obviousness of the key role of the SP in the game of the grand chessboard, it is still not enough to ensure influence on other actors. The point here is not so much the ability of an actor to use hard instruments, but their availability. For example, the EU's priority of the SP and its lagging behind in

the development of its hard tools reduces the weight of diplomatic influence on its closest allies, the United States. Another example is Ukraine, whose compromise in its security interests before the war (namely, the abandonment of nuclear weapons and the lack of development of military capabilities) hinders the development of its SP capabilities during the war, as it is not seen by the international community as a country that may not be able to defend itself without the help of its allies.

In addition, the potential effectiveness of the SP toolkit depends on the systematic use of information and communication technologies, the country's economic and scientific potential, the effectiveness, and clarity of domestic and foreign policy, and the level of trust it inspires in both domestic and foreign audiences. Thus, M. G. Akbarov believes that the concept of the SP includes factors of the political, economic, legal, and information spheres [12, p. 4]. The same trend is reinforced by J. Nye's example, revealing the potential of the US-Japan Security Treaty and the 1996–1997 principles of defense cooperation as a factor in restricting China [13, p. 94].

3. CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS OF FURTHER RESEARCH

Analyzing the role, functions, and peculiarities of using SP in the security dimension requires a case study framework, considering the context of the relationship between the SP actor and the recipient, the motives of the actor directing the SP, and the analysis of the recipient's response to certain SP practices.

In addition to this, the functions of the SP as a security tool should be operationalized according to the SP potential possessed by the applicant actor and the intentions towards the chosen recipient and opponent actor. While for powerful states, the main functions of the SP are to maintain the status quo of their attractiveness, for small states, the main functions are those demarginalize, subjectify, and make them visually more distinct in the international arena.

It is worth emphasizing that the SP has an offensive nature in hybrid conflicts and may include non-soft approaches, such as securitization and manipulation, which suggests that the recipient actor may perceive the SP as a threat. However, as part of the consolidation of allied and partner actors, the SP is an indispensable tool for strengthening both its own and collective security.

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Матеріал надійшов до редакції 02.04.2025 р.