



The US Soft Power and the Trump Effect on It

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Abstract

This study analyzes the US soft power before and after President Trump took power. It argues that the US soft power had been waning before the Trump administration due to its foreign policy. While the US is still attractive in many cultural and institutional aspects, its foreign policy contributes less to its soft power. In addition, there was a Trump effect on US soft power as such that his unpredictable and contradictory character and 'America First' policy damaged the US image. Besides, the raid into US congress and pro-active foreign policy followed by Biden hint that post-Trump period might also be problematic in terms of soft power. This study also asserts that Trump gave some correct decisions such as withdrawing troops from battlefields. While analyzing the US soft power, this study also questions the conceptualization of soft power and smart power and introduces new arguments. The study aims to propose new ideas about the US soft power and partly the concept of soft power via reviewing the literature.

Keywords

USA, Soft Power, Donald Trump, Smart Power, International Relations

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Amerikan Yumuşak Gücü ve Üzerindeki Trump Etkisi

Öz

Bu çalışma Amerika'nın yumuşak gücünün Donald Trump dönemi öncesi ve sonrasını analiz etmektedir. Çalışma, Amerikan yumuşak gücünün Trump'dan çok önceleri azalmaya başladığını iddia etmektedir. ABD kurumsal ve kültürel bazda halen çok cazibedar bir ülkeyken, dış politikasının yumuşak gücüne çok da bir katkısının olduğu söylenemez. Bunun yanı sıra Trump'ın tahmin edilemez ve çelişkili karakteriyle 'Önce Amerika' mottosu Amerika'nın prestijine büyük zarar vermiştir. Ayrıca 6 Ocak 2021'de Amerikan kongresine yapılan baskın ve Biden'in aktif dış politikası önümüzdeki dönemin de yumuşak güç bağlamında sıkıntılı geçeceğinin işaretlerini vermektedir. Ancak bu çalışma her şeye rağmen Trump'ın Irak ve Afganistan'dan asker çekmek gibi verdiği bazı kararların doğru olduğunu ve Amerika'nın imajına pozitif katkı sunduğunu savunmaktadır. Çalışma Amerikan yumuşak gücünü incelerken genel olarak yumuşak gücü de analiz etmekte ve kendi argümanlarını da literatüre kazandırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Makalenin yazımı için literatür taraması yapılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

ABD, Yumuşak Güç, Donald Trump, Akıllı Güç, Uluslararası İlişkiler

Introduction

Soft power was not a matter of concern until recent decades since states mostly relied on hard power and saw military strength as the only power that would both secure them and help to maximize their interests. When Joseph Nye coined the term in 1990, policymakers put more weight on the concept and started to invest in it. As a result, the concept has become a tool and a policy in almost every state. While hard power is the ugly face and repulsive behavior of states, soft power refers to friendship, sympathy, attraction, legitimacy, and compassion. As usual and expected, Americans invested in soft power more than any other country due to its continuous use of hard power and involvement in almost all conflicts to run the show (Rugeje & Maeresera, 2016: 68). Particularly, the US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq after the September 11 attacks and instability in invaded countries changed the image of the American state negatively across the world. Even US allies criticized its foreign policy and disfavored its overseas operations that ruined states and boosted terrorism. Therefore, the US administration began public diplomacy from the second term of Bush administration and peaked it during Obama's two terms of presidency. It will not be wrong to assess that Obama benefited from soft power more than he did from hard power. While he withdrew US troops from Iraq and switched to proxy groups instead of deploying American soldiers, he appealed for diplomatic solutions rather than coercive power in order to end conflicts, e.g. the Iran nuclear deal. However, as soon as Donald Trump became the President, he reversed a large number of attempts of the Obama administration and neglected soft power. According to surveys that

will be detailed below, Trump's 'America First' policy was based on (1) his zero-sum approach, (2) his exclusionary attitudes toward not only rival countries but allies, and (3) national protectionism.

Yet, this study argues and agrees with Joseph Nye that Americans will recover their soft power after Trump but on the condition that (1) Joe Biden (and next presidents) adapts to politics and realities of the world, and (2) Trumpism does not grow among right-wing Americans. Such zigzags were witnessed in the past and the US could overcome them through governmental or policy changes. Regarding Trump, while he damaged US soft power, he also unconsciously helped it to rise as well. For instance, he insisted on not fighting in wars that were a burden on the US economy and causing more antipathy in foreign countries. Yet, at the same time, Trump also created new conflicts by siding with certain countries against their adversaries without subsidizing and giving military support, e.g. unlimited support of Israel against Iran, and backing the Qatari blockade. Besides, he implemented punitive sanctions not only on America's foes but also friends. This happened mainly due to his inconsistent policies stemming from his personality. In addition, domestically, the raid of Trump supporters into US congress on January 6, 2021 should be worrying as such violent acts self-damage US soft power. The below analysis will question the building bricks of US soft power, the Trump effect on it as well as the concept in general. The study will also analyze the concept of soft power and try to prove hypotheses such as; (1) soft power has no impact without hard power and economic power since it is a derivative of both; (2) the conceptualization of soft power is in a process of maturation. In association with this argument, (3) smart power is neither complementary nor the next phase of soft power. It is not even a combination of hard power and soft power since it is not a power type but a strategy.

Methodologically, the literature review was wielded for writing this article. The article will continue with the first section examining the concept of soft power. Besides general definitions, new arguments will be introduced for scholarship discussion. Section two will focus on US soft power, while section three will elucidate Trump's impact on American soft power.

Soft Power

Attracting public opinion of other countries goes far back to ancient times such as when people were tried to be attracted to the Bible, and Venetians distributed diplomatic newsletters (Melissen, 2005: 3-4). Even fascists and communists tried to gain the hearts of foreign people in-between the two world wars. Scholarly, as a rejection to declinist theories of 1980, Joseph Nye developed the concept of soft power in 1990 and called it co-optive power, which "Rest(s) on the attraction of one's idea or on the ability to set the political agenda in a way that shapes the preferences that others express (Nye, 1990: 31-32)". He later defined soft power simply as "To get others to want

the outcomes that you want – it co-opts people rather than coerces them (Nye, 2004: 5)". Regarding resources of soft power, he argues that soft power is based on a country's "culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority) (Nye, 2002: 8-12)". As Nye and many other scholars contend, since countries are more interdependent and such dependence is useful rather than being harmful, there is no need to use military power to maximize a state's interests. Interdependence also helps multinational corporations to enter foreign markets and represent their countries. For instance, companies like Coca Cola, Ford, Boeing, Microsoft, and McDonalds contribute to American image and boost American culture. Besides Nye, there are also other scholars making distinctive definitions of soft power. For example, for Vuving (2009), it consists of only culture and economic power. Three power currencies are producing both softness and power; benignity, brilliance, and beauty. Benignity is positive and warm attitude when treating people. Brilliance refers to high performance through accomplishing something like producing good quality products or a military victory that produces soft power through admiration. Finally, beauty is to be with like-minded people and act together with shared values and ideals. We can argue that Vuving's definition is more civil when compared to that of Nye, which is quite political and refers to state affairs and policies.

Nye's conceptualization has deficiencies which he later completed or changed. While for Nye the three sources of soft power were American culture, international laws and institutions, and American multinational corporations at the beginning, they were replaced with political values, foreign policy, and culture over time. Thus, there was a process of maturation from 1990 onwards. Besides Nye, other scholars also tried to fill the gaps in the concept and joined the debate with their views. For example, Fan (2008) argues that only culture can be the source of soft power. His view may be wrong because, in this sense, Egyptian, Indian or Iranian cultures with deep roots should have dominated the world till now. Yet, they were all beaten by the popular culture of the West. One reason might be that culture is related to the joy people get from a culture. A person may like to visit pyramids of Egypt or temples of India but this does not mean that he/she will prefer them to a music concert in New York. Thus, newborn traditions, arts, or architecture may prevail over old cultures. In the same vein, it is not weird that people like the culture of their era, which is simultaneously introduced and developed while they are living. Besides, culture as a source of soft power is interrelated with other types of power. It is not a coincidence that France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Sweden, the United States topped *Soft Power 30 Index* in 2019 (McClory, 2019: 40). The common point for the top five and the rest 25 countries is that all of them are militarily and economically strong as well. Particularly economic power feeds

soft power through welfare that produces culture and enables less corrupt and inspiring governance and a constructive foreign policy. Regarding hard power, it also boosts soft power since weak states are not attractive to the foreign population as weakness is not something to be imitated. For instance, US military power protecting its allies is one of the basic reasons for Europeans to favor Americans. Without hard power, there would be no reason to favor the US. However, while economic power does not damage soft power unless economic tools are hardened, e.g. stick diplomacy, hard (coercive) power may ruin soft power. Hard power is the cause of the waning US soft power and the weak Russian soft power. On the other hand, the European Union (EU) has better soft power than the US thanks to its politics based on economic strength. Overall, this study argues that soft power is a derivative power generated from hard power and economic power. There is no single poor country with a salient soft power as they are short of hard power and economic power. Therefore, when power types are compared, soft power should not be put side by side with hard power but posited as a sub-type of power, which is given birth by the marriage of hard power and economic power. However, this view does not claim that if there are hard power and economic power, there will be soft power. If this was the case, Nazi Germany would be a super soft power. What this study argues is that there may be parents (hard power and economic power) without children (soft power) but no children without parents.

Another feature of the concept is the fact that individuals have soft power as well. Nye (2018) is aware that institutions such as universities and companies can produce soft power but he gives less credit to individuals. Whereas, as Nye admits, today's American soft power is suffering from President Trump's damage. Hence, individual behaviors, charisma, bad reputation, etc. matter in soft power. In addition, unlike hard power, soft power is incalculable and intangible. While surveys conducted for measuring soft power give an idea about states' performances, they are not 100% correct. For instance, a democratic government is a basic criterion for soft power but some monarchical governments do well, too. Moreover, while a country with the best respect to human rights, fair governance, good economy, easy business making, and free speech get it heightened to top ranks in soft power index, its involvement in foreign conflicts, the supply of weapons to controversial countries, support of dictatorships against democratic groups are not exactly taken into consideration. On the other hand, a large number of scholars agree with Trump that soft power does not influence international politics. Realists especially do not count on the concept and claim that cooperation, alliance, and trading are still possible even with a bad soft power carnet (Hearn, 2019: 1). In other words, soft power is seen as secondary and not a must for inter-state relations. This is because of the idea that soft power needs hard power for exertion (Fedirka, 2017). For instance, China uses persuasion rather than coercion in its

relations with the Philippines since the latter is located on the international trade routes. In fact, China is strong enough to use coercive power but it knows well that it may find the US behind the Philippines in case of a war. Finally, Nye's conceptualization is American-centric. He believes in the universality of American values and makes his conceptualization over American interests (see next section).

Finally, as an attempt to improve the concept of soft power, another power type called 'smart power' was introduced by Suzanne Nossel in 2004 and developed by Joseph Nye. The term simply means the combination of hard power and soft power. Nye (2011) says "Smart power is the ability to combine hard and soft power into a successful strategy". According to Pallaver (2011), it is a compilation of economic, military, diplomatic, political, legal, and cultural tools. Therefore, scholars assume it as a mixture of various power types or tools generating power. Yet, in almost all definitions, there is no power generator specific to smart power. We know that hard power rests on tangible military sources such as weapons and soldiers. On the other hand, soft power has resources like culture, capital, politics, foreign policy, and even military power that persuade other people to do what you want them to do without coercing them. Yet, when it comes to smart power, there are no resources but the use of two other powers together or interchangeably. To clarify with a question, if someone wants to calculate smart power, which parameters will he/she use? Probably, all parameters put forward will be those already used for the calculation of hard power, economic power, or soft power. From another perspective, for example, can the total smart power of the US be the sum of American military power calculated by Sipri and soft power listed in the Soft Power 30 Index? It can not and should not be, as smart power is not a power type but a strategy to use other powers in the correct sequence, time, and place.

American Soft Power

A Turkish proverb says that the stronger is always imitated. Power is indeed attractive and likened by everyone. The US has taken the attention of foreign people since it became an influential power in the world. After being a superpower, it got more attraction, persuasion, and appreciation thanks to its military strength, giant economy, institutions, brands, movies, and so on. American music, dramas, films, and other cultural tools were/are so influential that even people of adversary countries like them. For example, a survey conducted in China shows that Chinese youth admire American life thanks to American culture (Yanru, 2012). However, despite such advantages of soft power, Americans were either not aware of the influence of soft power or, more likely, the Cold War did not allow them to count on it much as there was a race for military strength. They gave importance to soft power right after the Cold War ended. After being conceptualized by Harvard University

Professor Joseph Nye, soft power was exerted more in American foreign policy. A vivid fact about its implementation is that Democrat governments are more eager to benefit from it. While the Republican Bush administration did not care about the results of invasions in foreign public's hearts, at least during the first term, the Obama administration tried to repair the destroyed image of the US across the world. Yet, the Trump administration damaged US soft power again, causing the re-emergence of American hatred.

Surveys conducted to learn world opinion about the US can give an idea about American soft power. Pew Research Center checks the pulse of foreign people about the US every year. As per its surveys held in various years, America's favorability in some countries are as follow;

Table 1: America's international image

Country	2002	2006	Obama Presidency (2011-2016)	2017	2018
United Kingdom	83%	69%	61%	50%	50%
France	71%	65%	63%	46%	38%
Germany	70%	66%	57%	35%	30%
Turkey	31%	17%	?	18%	?
Russia	67%	57%	15%	41%	26%

Source: Pew Research Center, 2007; Pew Research Center, 2018.

As the table shows, there is a decline not only in the above countries but also in other countries not shown here in terms of favorability. For instance, while Turkey's favoring during the Obama presidency and 2018 is not listed, other surveys show that it slides between 15% and 20%. On the other hand, while Turkey's percentage was 52% in 1999, the ratio has declined to a hatred level as of 2020 (Datta, 2009: 274). In addition, the US presidents and their governments are certainly responsible for the decline but some deep structural reasons are causing a downward trend. What are the reasons then? Do foreigners no longer watch Hollywood movies? Do not they like to study at Harvard University? Are there better social media portals than Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram? Was the reason Trump's unpredictable behaviors? If Hillary Clinton had become the President, would American soft power rise? The answer to all these questions is No. So what then?

According to Riordan (2005), the US imposes its values, which they accept as universal, by hard power. When Americans invaded Iraq, they claimed they would replace the dictatorship with democracy. To this end, they lied to the world audience that the Saddam Hussain regime possessed chemical weapons that can cause mass murders. Whereas, Iraq did not have such weapons,

nor it had ties or support to Al Qaeda. In addition, American officials confessed that they lied to people about Afghanistan. Therefore, the US army ruined two countries for baseless reasons except for Usama Bin Laden's presence in Afghanistan. What is more, democracy did not come to both countries. The two countries are deemed as failed states where terrorist organizations are nested. Besides, there is a discrepancy in American discourse. While the US claims to spread cherished values such as democracy, human rights, and free speech, it remained silent when democratically elected governments were overthrown by dictators in the Middle East just because elected governments distanced themselves from the US. In this sense, it can be argued that Americans support democratic transitions on the condition that new governments are their friends. Otherwise, they prefer a dictator to a democrat leader. Riordan (Ibid) contends that the American administration does not collaborate with Muslim governments during its struggle with terrorism. In addition, when looked at American governments' and people's statements, it can be seen that see themselves as superior to other nations and ignore others' values. One can look at George W. Bush's statements to figure out how sees his country against others. In general, it seems that they self-declare that their values are universal, which is a wrong view causing discomfort on the opposite side. In fact, people affected by American invasions are not against values like democracy and liberalism but the violent method Americans use, rulers they work, and sometimes replacement of a dictator by another one. In other words, people are pro-democracy but anti-American due to America's questionable methods and policies.

On the other hand, even if Americans do not fight, they get involved in majority of conflicts and are blamed for being biased and giving priority to their interests. For example, the US has always supported Israel in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Moreover, while it helped India to produce nuclear weapons, it created difficulties in Pakistan for not producing the same weapons. When Pakistan achieved anyway, it called Pakistan's atomic bomb as an 'Islamic bomb'. Whereas, it named India's bomb as 'Buddha's smile'. Furthermore, it sanctions Iran for attempting to produce nuclear bombs but remains silent about Israel's nuclear weapons inventory. Such biases erode America's reliability and cause enmity. Therefore, invasion, intervention, and biases damage American image and cause disfavor among non-Americans. As a solution, Codevilla (2014: 28) proposes the US administration isolate itself from international conflicts and deal with its domestic problems. In this sense, if there is no involvement, there will be no trouble. This view exactly complies with Trump's foreign policy. However, a superpower lives by overseas interests, a strong economy, currency, and involvement in world affairs. Otherwise, it will lose commendable titles and become an ordinary state. Yet, some Americans do not seem to accept so much isolation. Besides, the problem is not to get

involved in somebody else's conflicts but to pursue wrong policies. Since the US has enough power to use as leverage on almost every country, it could mediate instead of siding with either conflicting party. While it was inevitable to defend its allies during the cold war, it did not opt for neutrality. Supporting friendly but unjust countries will hardly distribute justice but injustice. In some cases, the US administration even supported a friend against another friend, e.g. Israel against Arab allies. Recently, the Trump administration is trying to crush not only China but also Europeans. Thus, there always seems to be a country or group of countries, which Americans confront.

This being the case, other states responded to unfair US treatment perhaps not with their hard powers but with other ways like media. For example, take the Al Jazeera TV network. The American image would not get damaged so much during the Afghan and Iraqi invasions, had there not been Al Jazeera. The Qatari based TV network broadcasted from places hit by US forces, thereby it could offer alternative news to the world audience vis-à-vis American media. Therefore, American officials could not legitimize their operations both in Afghanistan and Iraq. Perhaps, that is why Al Jazeera offices were bombed a few times by US jets, killing and injuring tens of correspondents. Further to traditional media, social media has made every individual a correspondent with almost no charge. It is impossible to cover an event unless there is a mobile phone with an internet connection. Interestingly, President Trump wields Twitter more than anyone else and damages US soft power. In other words, the top American ruler(s) wanes his country's attraction through social media, which is also an American-made platform. Therefore, US soft power instruments (internet media) and implementers (the President) are encroaching their soft power. Meanwhile, despite being elected, Trump was under severe attack from certain groups that think he does not match to US Presidency. Nevertheless, while demonizing Trump, they also harm American democracy through their actions, e.g. calling for a military takeover (Once an American journalist had told me so). Hence, attempts to recover the US image damages it as well.

Finally, the innocence of the intention behind soft power should be questioned, too. If soft power is to get what you want through attraction, then what is that you want? Is it just image-making? Gaining hearts? To show how merciful and helpful you are? A showcase of goodness? When Nye and other American-centric scholars' opinions are read, they make a person feel that soft power is another way to protect and maximize the US ends. Nye (2004), for example, says "When US policies lose their legitimacy in the eyes of others, distrust grows, reducing US leverage in international affairs". However, he does not mention nor questions whether US policies are correct. For example, the US administration itself admitted that they fabricated evidence about Iraq's chemical weapons inventory in order to invade the country but few people questioned the wrongdoing. Thus, perhaps it is not exactly correct,

it can still be argued that Nye advises whitewashing wrong policies that are beneficial for American interests but harming others.

Likewise, Rosenblum (2019) complains about Trump's true decision to withdraw from Syria and assumes it as a rapid demise in American soft power. In addition, the US began to benefit from soft power during Bush and Obama presidencies but their foreign policies did not change, nor circumstances of victims changed. All attempts were looked to change the negative image and legitimize what they did in the past. Former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright had once said it was worth killing 500.000 Iraqis but the point they have come is desirable neither for Iraq nor for America. The US army withdrew from Iraq in 2011 but when the reason was stated, American officials underlined the lives of their soldiers. Nevertheless, there was no mention of settling democracy, assuring security, and better living conditions for Iraqis. As political turmoil continued after the American withdrawal, ISIS emerged in Iraq. Hence, if asked about the perpetrators of terrorist actions, any person living in any city of Iraq would blame the US despite US troops were no longer in Iraq. Overall, it can be argued that Americans sometimes harden soft power and use it as a soft gun when other weapons are not necessary to use. For example, Al-Hurra TV established after Iraqi invasion could not become an alternative to Al Jazeera as its broadcast could not attract Arab people due to, for example, its narrative and preference to support Israel during conflicts between Israel and Palestinian groups (Samei, 2016: 63-65). This is not to say that they always utilize soft power for materialistic ends and neglect the humanitarian aspects and spiritual satisfaction. Yet, state-implemented soft power is generally more interest-based than gaining hearts.

The Trump Effect on US Soft Power

When Donald Trump declared that he will run for the presidency in Republicans ranks, his decision was ridiculed by both Republicans and Democrats. However, he could defeat all other Republican candidates and became the rival of former first lady Hillary Clinton, the candidate of Democrats. He was not expected to win elections. Trump was defined in media as with words such as lecher, rich businessman, masher, celebrity, playboy, and even assumed as a moron. Nonetheless, despite his anti-immigrant, xenophobic, anti-Muslim, anti-leftist, and provocative speeches, he could win elections. While struggling generally alone for elections, most of US media opposed him and used a cynical language against him. Yet, Trump the billionaire surprisingly won elections by addressing to low-strata of American people and nationalists. Thus, American people chose an individual with one of the worst images (soft power) to become the President of the United States, the number one country in the soft power index.

to overturn the governmental system. According to Blackwill (2019), Trump has ignorant, rash, and chaotic actions, which imply both withdrawing from the world and dominate it. He has unpredictable and contradictory behaviors. According to some fact-checkers, he submits several wrong and misleading claims each day. Besides, he is claimed to be addicted to power so much that he likes only strong leaders such as Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Russia's Vladimir Putin (Thompson, 2018). On the other hand, he hates immigrants, arguing that they steal jobs of American people (Haiming, 2019). His being an Evangelical Christian also affected his foreign policy as his creed had already defined the friend and foe, and made him think that he was superior to non-Evangelicals. Another factor that raised his arrogance is his white supremacist thoughts, which are discriminatory and exalt Trump-minded people. Finally, Trump was well aware of American strength but thought it was misused and wasted, thereby eroding. Therefore, he was -self-trying to prevent American power's decline as well as seeming to benefit from it for personal and national satisfaction.

Trump began his term by challenging both American and world order. Domestically, he prohibited the entry of immigrants and tried to build a wall on Mexico border. He also banned citizens of several Muslim countries to enter the United States, which was called as religious discrimination (Michel, 2017). In addition, his nationalistic speeches allegedly fostered white supremacy, which ended up with several mass shootings. He also insulted ethnically and racially diverse Democrat congresswomen to go back to where they came from. Democrat's House Speaker Nancy Pelosi responded to him by saying that Trump's motto should not be "Make America Great Again" but rather "Make America White Again" (Hirsh, 2019). Therefore, President Trump began to harm US soft power in the homeland, thus lessened attraction, one of the basic pillars of soft power. Normally, if a country is admired by foreigners, its soft power is supposed to be high. The US has many things to attract foreign public but Trump's actions implied that they were all for Americans rather than foreigners.

Internationally, he called for US withdrawal from the World Trade Organization (WTO). He also rejected the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) and tried to reverse the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (Stokes, 2018: 134). Trump also withdrew from the Paris climate accord and the UN Human Rights Council (Attias, 2019). O'Sullivan (2017) sees such policies as a "Manifestation of how he (Trump) continues to see US interests as narrowly economic and US influence as exerted solely through hard power". Besides eco-centric policies, Trump also withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) which aimed to curtail Iran's uranium enrichment program and reinstated sanctions on Iran despite that Iran did not violate the deal. In addition, the Trump administration moved the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and recognized illegal Israeli settlements and the annexation of

Golan Heights. In general, his Middle East policy was mostly opposite to that of Obama. Hence, he abandoned most of what Obama commenced before. As for NATO, before he was elected, Trump claimed that NATO was obsolete and threatened to quit it. After becoming the President, he continued to criticize NATO members, particularly for not undertaking the burden of the organization. Yet, from the early days of 2020, he softened his rhetoric against NATO.

Trump had an inconsistent character but not many of his decisions during his era were without rationale. For instance, regarding NATO membership, his accusations about other NATO members that keep defense expenses below 2% of state GDP were not illogical. He complained that the US made more military expenses than other allies, and he was right for thinking as such. Trump also argued that it is costlier but less beneficial to maintain to be the lone stabilizer of the world. As another example, he did not want the US army to fight in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria since he thought America was wasting its sources there for nothing. Withdrawing from the mentioned started during the Obama era but neither Obama nor Trump could achieve to restore the order there. Whereas, if invaded countries had been stabilized, they would contribute a big plus to the American soft power. On the other hand, not so many policies of him were rational. It seems that when Trump gave a decision he recalled his famous motto 'America First'. It was, for example, this self-interested mentality that distributed foreign aid according to recipients' support/opposition to American objectives. Trump clearly said in his 2018 UNGA speech that "Moving forward, we are only going to give foreign aid to those who respect us and, frankly, are our friends (Rogin, 2019)". Foreign aid is the help given to foreign countries to assist their recovery during catastrophes, meet their basic needs, and gain new friends. It is donated free of charge. Yet, the Trump administration weaponized it and blackmailed small countries with foreign aid.

Besides, it is the 'America First' motto that sparked a trade war between China and the European allies. According to Li (2017), Trump was trying to withdraw from multilateral agreements and replace them with bilateral ones as he argued that the US has lost its competitiveness due to the current international economic order (Koh, 2019: 97). According to Guida (2018), the international order in Trump's mind was anarchic. Therefore, Trump probably thought that while the US is the only superpower, it should benefit from its power at the utmost level and avoid wasting it for rival countries. Yet, this national protectionist, anarchic, and zero-sum approach is less likely to be successful in the era of globalization, which the US itself contributed much (Fletcher, 2019). Stiglitz (2018) argued that Trump would fail for several reasons such as overestimating US bargaining power, underestimating legal constraints, and the diminished role of the US in the global economy. Indeed, with 23% of global GDP share, the US economy has no leverage on other economies except for small ones. It is not possible to bring the EU or China to the terms

of America as both have economies almost as big as that of the US. Trump had tested US economic strength through customs tariffs and sanctions but did not get what he wanted. As of during his last days in the White House, since he was not as assertive as he was during the early days of his presidency, he had to step back and agree with China, the EU, NAFTA, NATO, etc.

Regarding the Trump effect on US soft power, the country's soft power had fallen from the first place in 2016 to third place in 2019 (McClory, 2019: 47). This fall is tied to the bad performance of the government that was shut down for the longest time in history at the end of 2018, trade wars with other countries, mass shootings in the country, and Trump's anti-immigrant nationalist policies (Frazee, 2018). Yet, soft power assets functioning independently from the government like education, culture, and technology still topped the list.

Nye once said that Trump has adapted to US foreign policy traditions and does not expect him to go far (Atlantik-Brücke, 2018). He was confident that US soft power will recover after Trump and reminded how the US could get rid of the impact of the Vietnam War on US soft power. On the other hand, a prejudice against Trump seems to exist. For example, according to Rose (2019: 1), only if the leadership of a country is approved by other countries, that country's exports will rise. He also claims that when there is a one percent increase in leadership approval, exports rise by two-thirds of a percent. Yet, this equation does not match Trump since US exports were rising despite that he initiated trade wars (US Census Bureau, 2019). While Bach (2018) complained about the bad performance of the Trump administration, some other analysts thought well about the same government. For example, Blackwill (2019) argued that some of his foreign policies were better than his critics argue. He supported Trump's decision to withdraw from Syria, disengaging from Afghanistan, and challenging China. Therefore, not everyone discredited Trump's policies. In fact, it can be argued that Trump is not the cause but the result, at least to some extent. Globalization has affected all countries negatively and caused suspicions about liberalism. So many immigrants and transnational trade have led to working classes lose their jobs. Besides, globalization also meant the dissemination of international terrorism. Therefore, nationalism rose again and xenophobia increased. In such conditions, it was usual for the population to elect a nationalist candidate as their president. Also, this is not the case only for the US. There are so many nationalist leaders elected in recent elections in the world. Therefore, at a time when nationalism was re-rising, it was not strange to see Trump elected as the president of the US. It is correct that he ignored soft power but he and some American people seem to believe that they first have to preserve American hard power, economic power, and superiority. Hence, for them, they sacrifice the chicken to save goose. Besides, since Trump was not a cause but a result, whom to criticize should also be the American electorate as they elected him to be their president. In other words, they are mostly Americans that waned American soft power, which is seen as a pillar of hegemony together with hard power (Thuy, 2012: 17).

Finally, Biden has replaced Trump but the latter may win next elections in case of becoming the candidate for Republicans. Biden has regained the trust of America's European allies, particularly due to supporting Ukraine against Russia but whether such policies will be beneficial for America's image needs time to be learned. Also, a likely new Trump or any other Republican president's term may take America back to Trump and/or George W. Bush era in terms of soft power. Since more than 70 million people voted for Trump in the last elections, Trump or another hardliner's presidency is highly likely. Such a change in the US throne will certainly affect its soft power. It seems that the US soft power will go through a hard test in upcoming years.

Conclusion

This study has analyzed the concept of soft power, US soft power, and the Trump effect on America's waning soft power. The study asserts that the conceptualization of soft power is still in an evolution process as its resources have always changed and will likely change in the course of time. Besides, it concludes that soft power does not exist without hard power and particularly economic power. While these two powers are basic powers like bricks of a building, soft power is the cement that attaches and plasters them. In addition, the study opposes that there is a power type called smart power since it has no resources and is incalculable. Thus, smart power is just a strategy of using hard power and soft power together or one after the other. Regarding the US soft power, it had been waning before the Trump administration since US foreign policy was not fruitful enough to boost it. When they invaded countries, supported only pro-American parties in conflicts, and punished other countries for their interests, foreigners' views about the American administration worsened. In addition, it seems that sometimes US rulers see soft power as a tool to legitimize their correct as well as wrong policies instead of gaining foreigners' hearts. Finally, there was indeed a Trump effect on US soft power. His unpredictable and contradictory character and 'America First' policy have damaged the US image. Besides, January 6 events hint that Trumpism might be a real threat to US soft power and even the US itself in upcoming years. Yet, to note, Trump also gave correct decisions like withdrawing troops from battlefields though the order was not restored in the withdrawn countries. The strange thing for his correct policies is that some Americans look at them from the other way around and assume them as harming American soft power. Whether the course in soft power will change negatively or positively is dependent on next presidents and for which party they run for since soft power is associated to political wings and leaders more than ever.

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