



e-ISSN:2582-7219



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH IN SCIENCE, ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY

Volume 6, Issue 3, March 2023



INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA

Impact Factor: 7.54



6381 907 438



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# 'Soft Power' of China and United States in Africa with special reference to Foreign Policy: Economic Impact in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper will look at how China and United States employ 'soft power' through foreign policies in Africa to attain their economic interests. The paper also will explore the authenticity of the argument: 'China's soft power through foreign policies and its economic interests among African countries have been successful and United States is in a state of failure'.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Sino Africa and United States Africa relationships have become a matter of immense interest within the field of international relations, since both powers use 'Soft Power' to increase their influence in the international sphere. Originally the term 'soft power' was coined by American political scientist Joseph S. Nye, Jr., who explained it as the ability to attain the interests of a state through 'attraction' and 'co-option' without using threat or payment. In international relations, culture, political ideals and foreign policies are the major resources of 'soft power'.

This research will look at how China and United States employ 'soft power' through foreign policies in Africa to attain their economic interests. The study also will explore the authenticity of the argument: 'China's soft power through foreign policies and its economic interests among African countries have been successful and United States is in a state of failure'.

### Soft Power: A Review

Joseph S. Nye introduced the term 'soft power' and he defines Soft power is the ability to get the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than using coercion or payment. A country's soft power rests on three resources. Firstly culture, a state is perceived as attractive to other states, second, a state's commitment to political values at home and abroad, finally the perception that a state's foreign policies are legitimate and moral. If a state's resources of soft power are legitimate and attractive, that country does not need any kind of hard resources to achieve its end. Nye points out, a state may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other states will admire its values, emulate its example and aspire to its level of prosperity.(Jr., 2004), (Joseph S. Nye, 1990), (Joseph S. Nye, Soft Power, 1990)

Nye Says, the agenda of world politics has become like a three dimensional chess board. Here one has to play vertically and horizontally to win its goals. On top board classic interstate military issues, in the middle economic issues and bottom board transnational issues can be found. Nye Says in the first board US can play unilaterally because it is the super power but in the middle and bottom US can't play alone and it needs cooperation. Here winning hearts and minds or soft power is necessary(Jr., 2004). Nye says, a successful leader "is those who help a group create and achieve share goals". (Joseph S. Nye, The Powers to Lead, 2008)

Mark Leonard claims that Europe will lead the international politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century due to its attractive policies (soft power) rather than its hard power. Soft Power will help Europe to win the 21<sup>st</sup> century world politics(Leonard, 2005).

Young Nam Cho & Jong Ho Jang argue, China's recognition of 'soft power' as a domestic and international strategy facilitates the country to expand its influence among other countries especially in Asia (Jeong, 2008)

China's focus on soft power building through culture, political values and foreign policies, and institution compiles to some extent with Nye's analysis. Scholarship and debates around Chinese soft power seems to view it as coinciding with Nye's framework. There is an evidence of consensus around the importance of culture, political values and foreign policies (soft power). (Heng,2010) (Hackbarth, 2008) (Mingjiang, 2008) (Siow, 2008).



In order to promote its “peaceful rise”, China seeks to develop its relationships offering attractive incentives such as economic aid, development, and as a non-Western ally. China has focused on alignment and building relationships with the Global South in distinctive ways. In contrast to other soft power wielders such as the United States, China offers a relationship that doesn’t expect political reform. Applying an innovative approach, a relationship with China provides developing countries to the ability to develop economically and still retain their individual sovereignty. (Patrick Mazimhaka, 2013)

Maria Wey-ShenSiow describes soft power as a Western concept that has only recently found acceptance within Chinese policy-making circles. Broadly speaking Siow confirms that Chinese analysts agree with Nye's definition of soft power. The importance of Chinese thought in the soft power debate should be included. (Siow, 2010)

Nye’s theory of soft power is American-centric but it can be applied to other states and people. For China, this is particularly true because China openly acknowledges soft power as an important component of its domestic and foreign policy objectives. (Hyun-Kyung, 2008) Stephen Chan points out that that in Sino-African case, Western “universal values” such as “liberty, democracy, and human rights (soft power resources) have been replaced with Confucian values”. Confucian values outlined by Chan include brotherhood, benevolence, harmony, loyalty, and reciprocation (Patrick Mazimhaka, 2013).

Chinese discourse moves beyond Nye's original theory because it attaches great importance to the mass media. Mingjiang explains that for China, effective mass communications help with soft power cultivation. (Mingjiang, 2008) Sheng Ding writes, Beijing understands the importance of establishing international norms through soft power. (Ding, 2008) Culture matters an important components of soft power. China cannot compete internationally without building up its culture(Mingjiang, 2008). Sheng Ding points out that when scholarship examines Chinese soft power, it often overlooks moral attraction, which is a fundamental element of soft power (Ding, 2008)

Wendy W. Luers President and founder of the Foundation for a Civil Society believes it is important for the United States to expand cultural activities and exchanges including theater, dance, and the graphic arts in order to establish and solidify friendly bonds with people of other nations (U.S. – Cuban Relations in the 21st Century: A Follow-on Report, 2001). Former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara urged the use of multilateralism and empathy to be included in America’s foreign relations to increase its level of influence in the foreign affairs in his 2001 coauthored book titled, *Wilson’s Ghost* (Mcnamara, 2001).

German writer Josef Joffe commented in 2000 that America’s attractive “culture, low-brow or high, radiates outward,” which is responsible for making the United States out to be a “bumbling” elephant rather than an “800-pound gorilla . . . in search of conquest and empire (Joffe, 2000). Julia Sweig, mentioned in the importance of America’s political ideals as a means to remain influential; “the best antidote to Anti-America may well come not from how we fight (or prevent) the next war but from the degree to which we keep intact the social contract and international appeal of American society” (Sweig, 2006).

## II. FOREIGN POLICY AS SOFT POWER TACTIC OF CHINA AND UNITED STATES IN AFRICA

In general United States’ soft power in Africa relies on different resources like its attractive culture, political values and foreign policy. However there are some of the important soft power resources especially legitimate foreign policies which help US to get influence in the continent. Firstly US assistance in the name of USAID for different activities such as education, health, infrastructure development, water, sanitation, agriculture, food security, humanitarian work, logistic, nutrition etc. Promotion of values like democracy, good governance, human rights and economic liberalization are also attractive for many African leaders.

US effort for peace keeping under UNMISS in Africa, conflict resolution, War on Terror, trade and investments, security and diplomatic presence also enhances its soft power. United States also provides basic service to the citizens; promote effective, inclusive, and accountable governance, combating poverty. The US is committed to meet the humanitarian needs of the refugees also. US commitment towards democracy, development, business also contributes to its soft power. The four showcase programs by US in Africa also enhance its soft power in Africa: The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) (to bolster trade) The President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, (to curb the disease) Millennium Challenge Cooperation (MCC) (it assures new approach to development) and US Africa command





(AFRICOM) (New means for military engagement) improved its soft power (Hackbarth, 2008). Standing up for good governance, anti-corruption measures and economic reforms also enhances US's soft power in Africa.

On the other hand, China also enjoys outstanding soft power in Africa. Generally its exceptional culture, values and foreign policies from Africa, are the factors that helped China to get high soft power influence in the continent. In the foreign policy level, since the first Forum on China-Africa cooperation in 2000, China has made systematic effort to expand soft power strategies in Africa.

In Africa the principal source of China's soft power through foreign policy is strength of its economy and its economic engagement. The cachet of China as a rising global super power profoundly appeals African countries and prompts them to have close ties with China. Africa considers that connections with Chinese economy will ultimately benefit them. China's growing economy and its stability during crisis like Asian Economic Crisis encourage these countries to move closer to China. The Chinese economic engagement such as expanding trade and investment and the proliferation of Chinese led infrastructure project, aid, credit, loans, cancelling debts and duty free market for specific goods are often seen as optimistic and legitimate by the African countries. Many Africans believe China's engagement in the continent as more pragmatic and in line with their priorities. They are optimistic about the Economic take off of Africa and thereby development due to China's Economic Engagement. China is focusing development as the priority in doing business with Africa.

'Respect for Africa's sovereignty and the policy of noninterference' in the internal affairs of the continent is the second major resource for the Chinese Soft power in the continent. Apart from that, China's emphasis on the "win-win" aspect and lack of conditionality in its engagement with Africa also facilitates China to enhance its soft power. There is appreciation for China's pragmatism and the idea that it comes to Africa as a business partner, not to proselytize or offer charity. Becoming business partner will benefit both countries and it can bring growth and development for Africa. Finally 'No String attached' policy of China also help the country immensely. While employing Chinese business, aid, economic assistance and so on in Africa, China follows a "no string attached" policy in which Government of China pledges not to have conditions for its assistance. Besides these China's efforts for maintaining peace through UNMISS, scholarships for students, training, absence of military intervention, non-threatening and responsible approach, diplomatic engagement, support in international forums, conflict resolution through non-confrontational ways, self-restraint policy, visits by senior leaders and humanitarian and developmental assistance in Africa also bring soft power for China.

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**INNO SPACE**  
SJIF Scientific Journal Impact Factor  
Impact Factor  
7.54

**ISSN**

INTERNATIONAL  
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