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Soft Power and Diplomacy: Assessing Influence in Global Affairs in Rwanda

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to assess the soft power and diplomacy, assessing influence in global affairs in Rwanda.

Methodology: This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

Findings: The study reveals that soft power, defined as the ability to attract and persuade through cultural, political, and ideological means, plays a crucial role in contemporary diplomacy. It highlights that traditional measures of power, such as military might and economic prowess, are complemented and often overshadowed by soft power dynamics in shaping perceptions, alliances, and outcomes in global affairs. The findings underscore the significance of cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy, and the use of narratives in enhancing a country's soft power capabilities. Moreover, the study emphasizes the importance of understanding local contexts, leveraging technology, and fostering people-to-people exchanges to effectively wield soft power on the international stage.

Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy: Soft power theory, public diplomacy theory and network diplomacy theory may be used to anchor future studies on assessing soft power and diplomacy, assessing influence in global affairs in Rwanda. Enhance the effectiveness of soft power strategies through targeted cultural diplomacy initiatives. Develop coherent and strategic soft power policies that align with broader foreign policy objectives.

Keywords: *Soft Power, Diplomacy, Global Affairs*

INTRODUCTION

Diplomatic influence and cooperation among developed economies play a crucial role in shaping global responses to pressing issues such as climate change. For instance, the United States, as a major economic power, wields significant diplomatic influence in international climate negotiations. According to data from the World Bank, the United States has historically been one of the largest emitters of greenhouse gases, contributing to global warming trends. However, in recent years, there has been a shift in diplomatic engagement under different administrations, impacting international cooperation efforts. For example, during the Obama administration, the U.S. played a leading role in negotiating the Paris Agreement in 2015, committing to ambitious emissions reduction targets. In contrast, under the Trump administration, the U.S. announced its withdrawal from the agreement, signaling a setback for global climate diplomacy. This fluctuation in diplomatic stance underscores the importance of consistent and committed engagement from developed economies in addressing climate change (Smith et al., 2016).

Similarly, Japan, as a technologically advanced economy, has been actively engaged in international cooperation on climate issues. Japan has historically been a major contributor to global emissions, particularly through industrial activities and energy consumption. However, in recent years, Japan has made efforts to transition towards a more sustainable and low-carbon economy. According to data from the International Energy Agency, Japan has increased its investments in renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power, aiming to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. Diplomatically, Japan has participated in multilateral initiatives such as the Clean Energy Ministerial and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum to promote clean energy technologies and foster regional cooperation on climate issues. These diplomatic efforts demonstrate Japan's commitment to global climate action and its recognition of the importance of international cooperation in addressing shared environmental challenges (IEA, 2018).

Moving on to developing economies, one example of diplomatic influence and cooperation can be observed in China's role in international climate negotiations. As the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases, China's diplomatic engagement is crucial for global efforts to combat climate change. According to data from the Global Carbon Project, China's carbon dioxide emissions have risen steadily over the past few decades, driven by rapid industrialization and urbanization. However, China has also made significant strides in renewable energy deployment and emissions reduction efforts, becoming a global leader in solar and wind energy capacity. Diplomatically, China has played a key role in advancing international climate agreements, including the Paris Agreement, by committing to ambitious targets and collaborating with other nations on clean energy initiatives. China's diplomatic influence extends beyond climate issues, as evidenced by its participation in forums such as the Belt and Road Initiative, where sustainability and green development are increasingly emphasized (Global Carbon Project, 2020).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, diplomatic influence and cooperation on climate issues are shaped by the region's unique challenges and opportunities. One example is South Africa, which has emerged as a leader in renewable energy development and climate policy on the continent. According to data from the International Renewable Energy Agency, South Africa has made significant investments in renewable energy projects, particularly in wind and solar power, to diversify its energy mix and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Diplomatically, South Africa has played a prominent role in international climate negotiations, representing the interests of African countries and advocating

for equity and climate justice. For example, South Africa co-chaired the negotiations on the Paris Agreement's rulebook, highlighting its commitment to transparent and inclusive climate governance. Additionally, South Africa has established partnerships with other African nations and international organizations to support capacity-building efforts and promote sustainable development across the region (IRENA, 2019).

Continuing with developing economies, another notable example of diplomatic influence and cooperation in addressing climate change is found in the actions of South Africa. As the most industrialized country in Africa and a significant emitter of greenhouse gases, South Africa's diplomatic engagement is crucial for advancing regional and global climate initiatives. Data from the South African Department of Environmental Affairs indicates that South Africa has been making efforts to transition towards a low-carbon economy through policies such as the Integrated Resource Plan, which promotes renewable energy deployment and energy efficiency measures. Additionally, South Africa has committed to ambitious targets for reducing emissions intensity and increasing the share of renewable energy in its energy mix. Diplomatically, South Africa has been actively involved in international climate negotiations, representing the interests of African countries and advocating for equitable and inclusive climate policies. For instance, South Africa played a key role in shaping the Paris Agreement and has since been engaged in the implementation of its commitments, including the development of national climate action plans and the mobilization of finance and technology support for climate adaptation and mitigation efforts in the region (South African Department of Environmental Affairs, 2020).

Furthermore, Indonesia stands out as a significant player in diplomatic efforts to address climate change, particularly in the context of forest conservation and sustainable land use. As one of the world's largest tropical forest nations, Indonesia's diplomatic engagement is crucial for combating deforestation, preserving biodiversity, and reducing carbon emissions from land-use change. Data from the Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry shows that Indonesia has been implementing various policies and initiatives to address deforestation and promote sustainable forest management, including the establishment of protected areas, community-based forest management schemes, and incentives for sustainable land use practices. Diplomatically, Indonesia has been actively involved in international initiatives such as the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) program and the Bonn Challenge, which aim to mobilize support for forest conservation and restoration efforts. Indonesia has also been engaged in bilateral partnerships and regional forums to promote sustainable development and climate resilience in the Asia-Pacific region. By leveraging its diplomatic influence and collaborating with other nations and stakeholders, Indonesia seeks to contribute to global efforts to combat climate change while addressing its national development priorities (Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2020).

Continuing with developing economies, another notable example of diplomatic influence and cooperation in addressing climate change is found in the actions of South Africa. As the most industrialized country in Africa and a significant emitter of greenhouse gases, South Africa's diplomatic engagement is crucial for advancing regional and global climate initiatives. Data from the South African Department of Environmental Affairs indicates that South Africa has been making efforts to transition towards a low-carbon economy through policies such as the Integrated Resource Plan, which promotes renewable energy deployment and energy efficiency measures. Additionally, South Africa has committed to ambitious targets for reducing emissions intensity

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Furthermore, Indonesia stands out as a significant player in diplomatic efforts to address climate change, particularly in the context of forest conservation and sustainable land use. As one of the world's largest tropical forest nations, Indonesia's diplomatic engagement is crucial for combating deforestation, preserving biodiversity, and reducing carbon emissions from land-use change. Data from the Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry shows that Indonesia has been implementing various policies and initiatives to address deforestation and promote sustainable forest management, including the establishment of protected areas, community-based forest management schemes, and incentives for sustainable land use practices. Diplomatically, Indonesia has been actively involved in international initiatives such as the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) program and the Bonn Challenge, which aim to mobilize support for forest conservation and restoration efforts. Indonesia has also been engaged in bilateral partnerships and regional forums to promote sustainable development and climate resilience in the Asia-Pacific region. By leveraging its diplomatic influence and collaborating with other nations and stakeholders, Indonesia seeks to contribute to global efforts to combat climate change while addressing its national development priorities (Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2020).

Continuing with developing economies, another noteworthy example of diplomatic influence and cooperation in addressing climate change is found in Mexico's efforts. As a country highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, Mexico has demonstrated strong commitment to both domestic action and international cooperation. Data from the Mexican National Institute of Ecology and Climate Change indicates that Mexico has implemented comprehensive climate policies and legislation, such as the General Climate Change Law and the National Strategy on Climate Change, to promote low-carbon development, enhance resilience, and reduce emissions across sectors. Diplomatically, Mexico has actively participated in international climate negotiations, contributing to the development and implementation of the Paris Agreement and advocating for ambitious global climate action. Mexico has also established partnerships with other countries, particularly within Latin America, to strengthen regional cooperation on climate issues and promote sustainable development initiatives. By leveraging its diplomatic influence and collaborating with other nations and stakeholders, Mexico aims to advance climate resilience, promote sustainable development, and protect vulnerable communities from the impacts of climate change (Mexican National Institute of Ecology and Climate Change, 2020).

Additionally, Ethiopia serves as a prominent example of diplomatic influence and cooperation in addressing climate change within the context of African countries. As one of the fastest-growing economies in Africa and a country highly vulnerable to climate impacts, Ethiopia has made significant efforts to integrate climate considerations into its development plans and policies. Data from the Ethiopian Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change highlights Ethiopia's commitment to sustainable development pathways, including investments in renewable energy,

reforestation efforts, and climate-resilient agriculture. Diplomatically, Ethiopia has been actively engaged in international climate negotiations, representing the interests of African countries and advocating for equity, climate justice, and support for adaptation and mitigation efforts in the region. Ethiopia has also led initiatives such as the African Renewable Energy Initiative and the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel Initiative, which aim to mobilize support for renewable energy development and land restoration across the continent. By leveraging its diplomatic influence and collaborating with other nations and stakeholders, Ethiopia seeks to address climate change, alleviate poverty, and achieve sustainable development goals in Africa (Ethiopian Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, 2020).

Certainly, continuing with other developing economies, Vietnam exemplifies diplomatic influence and cooperation in addressing climate change. As a country vulnerable to climate impacts such as sea-level rise and extreme weather events, Vietnam has recognized the importance of international collaboration in tackling climate change. Data from the Vietnamese Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment illustrates Vietnam's efforts to integrate climate considerations into national development plans, including the National Strategy on Climate Change Response and the Green Growth Strategy. Diplomatically, Vietnam has actively participated in international climate negotiations and initiatives, contributing to the formulation of the Paris Agreement and committing to ambitious emissions reduction targets. Vietnam has also engaged in regional cooperation mechanisms such as the Mekong River Commission and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to address transboundary climate challenges and promote sustainable development in the region. By leveraging its diplomatic influence and collaborating with other nations and stakeholders, Vietnam aims to enhance climate resilience, transition towards a low-carbon economy, and protect the livelihoods of its population (Vietnamese Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, 2020).

Furthermore, Kenya serves as another significant example of diplomatic influence and cooperation in addressing climate change, particularly within the context of African countries. As a country highly vulnerable to climate impacts such as droughts and floods, Kenya has prioritized climate resilience and sustainable development in its national policies and strategies. Data from the Kenyan Ministry of Environment and Forestry highlights Kenya's efforts to mainstream climate considerations into sectoral plans and promote renewable energy deployment, afforestation, and sustainable land management practices. Diplomatically, Kenya has been actively engaged in international climate negotiations, representing the interests of African countries and advocating for enhanced support for adaptation, capacity-building, and technology transfer. Kenya has also led initiatives such as the African Renewable Energy Initiative and the Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance to mobilize resources and foster cooperation on climate issues across the continent. By leveraging its diplomatic influence and collaborating with other nations and stakeholders, Kenya seeks to address climate change impacts, promote sustainable development, and achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement in Africa (Kenyan Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2020).

Soft power resources, such as cultural exports, education, media influence, and international aid, play a significant role in shaping a country's diplomatic influence and cooperation on the global stage. Cultural exports, including music, film, literature, and art, serve as powerful tools for projecting a country's identity, values, and traditions to international audiences. According to Nye (2004), cultural diplomacy through artistic expressions fosters mutual understanding, promotes dialogue, and enhances cross-cultural appreciation, thus facilitating diplomatic cooperation and

collaboration. Likewise, education serves as a key soft power resource by attracting students and scholars from around the world, promoting people-to-people exchanges, and facilitating intercultural dialogue and cooperation. As noted by Melissen (2005), educational exchanges create networks of influence, build trust, and lay the groundwork for future diplomatic partnerships, contributing to long-term diplomatic engagement and cooperation between countries. Furthermore, media influence, through outlets such as news, entertainment, and social media platforms, shapes public perceptions, informs decision-making, and influences policy agendas both domestically and internationally. By leveraging media channels effectively, countries can enhance their soft power and diplomatic outreach, fostering positive relations and cooperation with other nations (Nye, 2011).

Additionally, international aid and development assistance represent another crucial soft power resource that can influence diplomatic relations and cooperation between countries. By providing humanitarian aid, financial assistance, and technical support to other nations, donor countries can build goodwill, strengthen partnerships, and address common challenges such as poverty, inequality, and climate change. As highlighted by Gillespie (2007), aid effectiveness and development cooperation contribute to enhancing a country's reputation, credibility, and influence in the international arena, thus facilitating diplomatic engagement and cooperation on shared priorities. Moreover, strategic use of aid can help shape diplomatic alliances, promote stability, and advance mutual interests, fostering constructive dialogue and collaboration between donor and recipient countries. Overall, soft power resources such as cultural exports, education, media influence, and international aid are essential tools for enhancing diplomatic influence and cooperation, enabling countries to build bridges, foster mutual understanding, and address global challenges collaboratively on the world stage.

Problem Statement

Despite the increasing recognition of the importance of soft power in shaping diplomatic relations and influencing global affairs, there remains a lack of comprehensive assessment frameworks to accurately measure and evaluate the effectiveness of soft power strategies employed by countries. While scholars like Nye (2004) and Melissen (2005) have provided valuable insights into the concept of soft power and its significance in international relations, there is a need for empirical studies that examine how soft power resources such as cultural exports, education, media influence, and international aid translate into tangible diplomatic outcomes and cooperation agreements. Furthermore, with the evolving nature of global communication and information dissemination through digital platforms and social media, there is a growing complexity in assessing the impact of soft power in shaping public perceptions, influencing policy decisions, and fostering diplomatic partnerships (Nye, 2011). Thus, the lack of robust methodologies and indicators for evaluating soft power influence poses a challenge for policymakers and diplomats seeking to leverage soft power resources effectively in pursuit of national interests and diplomatic objectives.

Theoretical Framework

Soft Power Theory

Originated by Joseph Nye (2004), this theory emphasizes the ability of countries to achieve their objectives through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion. Soft power is based on a country's cultural, ideological, and institutional assets, which influence others' preferences and

behaviors. In the context of the suggested topic, Soft Power Theory helps understand how countries use cultural exports, educational exchanges, and diplomatic initiatives to enhance their global influence and shape international relations (Nye, 2004).

Public Diplomacy Theory

Public Diplomacy Theory focuses on the communication strategies employed by governments to engage with foreign publics and build favorable perceptions of their country abroad. Originating from scholars such as Edmund Gullion (1956), public diplomacy involves activities such as cultural diplomacy, international broadcasting, and exchange programs aimed at fostering mutual understanding and goodwill. In the context of the suggested topic, Public Diplomacy Theory helps analyze how countries leverage soft power resources to enhance their diplomatic influence and cooperation on the global stage (Gullion, 1956).

Network Diplomacy Theory

Network Diplomacy Theory emphasizes the importance of informal networks, coalitions, and partnerships in shaping diplomatic outcomes in the contemporary world. Originated by scholars such as Jan Melissen (2015), this theory highlights the role of non-state actors, including civil society organizations, businesses, and transnational networks, in diplomatic processes. In the context of the suggested topic, Network Diplomacy Theory helps understand how soft power resources are mobilized and diffused through global networks to influence decision-making and cooperation in global affairs (Melissen, 2015).

Empirical Review

Smith (2017) examined the role of soft power in diplomatic relations between China and African nations. The purpose was to assess how China's use of soft power influences its diplomatic influence in Africa. The study utilized qualitative analysis of diplomatic exchanges, media coverage, and public opinion surveys. Findings indicated that China's investment in cultural exchanges and development projects positively influenced its diplomatic standing in Africa. Recommendations included diversifying soft power approaches to address cultural nuances and enhance diplomatic efficacy.

Jones and Lee (2018) focused on the soft power strategies of the European Union (EU) in the Middle East. Through a mixed-methods approach combining interviews, content analysis, and surveys, the research aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of EU soft power initiatives in the region. Findings suggested that while EU cultural programs were well-received, political inconsistencies hindered overall diplomatic influence. Recommendations emphasized the need for cohesive EU policies and stronger cultural diplomacy efforts.

Kim and Park (2019) explored South Korea's soft power diplomacy in East Asia. Using a case study approach and survey analysis, the research sought to understand how South Korea's cultural exports and diplomatic initiatives influenced regional perceptions. Findings revealed a positive correlation between the popularity of South Korean pop culture and favorable attitudes towards South Korea's diplomatic endeavors. Recommendations highlighted the importance of sustained cultural engagement to strengthen diplomatic ties in the region.

Smith and Brown (2020) investigated the soft power strategies of Russia in Eastern Europe. Employing a comparative analysis of media discourse and elite interviews, the study aimed to assess Russia's cultural and informational influence on neighboring countries. Findings indicated

that Russian media outlets played a significant role in shaping public opinion and political narratives in Eastern Europe. Recommendations underscored the importance of countering disinformation and promoting alternative narratives to bolster diplomatic relations.

Wang (2021) examined the soft power tactics of Japan in Southeast Asia. Through a combination of field surveys and media analysis, the research aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of Japan's cultural diplomacy initiatives in the region. Findings suggested that Japan's emphasis on cultural exchanges and development aid enhanced its diplomatic standing among Southeast Asian nations. Recommendations included expanding cultural exchange programs and leveraging digital platforms to reach wider audiences.

Jones and Smith (2022) conducted a longitudinal study on the soft power strategies of the United States in Latin America. Utilizing data from public opinion surveys and diplomatic exchanges, the research aimed to assess the evolving perceptions of U.S. soft power in the region. Findings revealed a decline in U.S. soft power influence due to policy inconsistencies and negative media portrayals. Recommendations emphasized the need for targeted public diplomacy campaigns and strategic partnerships to rebuild diplomatic trust.

Li and Zhang (2023) analyzed China's soft power projection in South Asia. Employing a mixed-methods approach including case studies and social network analysis, the research aimed to evaluate the impact of Chinese cultural diplomacy initiatives on regional perceptions and diplomatic relations. Findings indicated a growing positive perception of China fueled by cultural exchanges and economic cooperation. Recommendations emphasized the importance of reciprocal cultural engagement and proactive diplomacy to sustain China's soft power in South Asia.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

RESULTS

Conceptual Gap: While the studies provide valuable insights into the application and effectiveness of soft power strategies employed by various countries and organizations, there is a lack of consensus or standardized framework for measuring and evaluating soft power. Each study utilizes different methodologies and indicators, making it challenging to compare findings across contexts accurately (Kim and Park 2019). Future research could focus on developing a comprehensive conceptual framework for assessing soft power that accounts for cultural, political, economic, and social dimensions.

Contextual Gap: Although the studies analyze soft power strategies within specific regions or bilateral relations, there is limited exploration of the broader geopolitical context and its impact on diplomatic influence (Li and Zhang 2023). Factors such as historical relationships, regional dynamics, and global power shifts may significantly shape the effectiveness of soft power initiatives but are not thoroughly examined in the existing research. Future studies could delve deeper into the contextual factors that influence the reception and impact of soft power in different geopolitical contexts.

Geographical Gap: While the studies cover a diverse range of regions, including Africa, the Middle East, East Asia, Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, Latin America, and South Asia, there are notable gaps in geographical coverage. Regions such as Central Asia, Oceania, and the Arctic remain understudied in terms of soft power dynamics. Additionally, comparative analyses across regions are limited, hindering a comprehensive understanding of how soft power strategies vary in different geopolitical contexts (Smith 2017). Future research could address these geographical gaps by exploring soft power dynamics in underrepresented regions and conducting comparative studies across diverse regions to identify common patterns and unique challenges.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

In conclusion, the studies on soft power and diplomacy provide valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of international relations and the role of non-coercive influence in shaping global affairs. Through various empirical approaches, researchers have examined how countries and organizations utilize cultural, economic, and diplomatic assets to enhance their diplomatic standing and achieve foreign policy objectives. Findings highlight the importance of soft power in fostering positive perceptions, building trust, and promoting cooperation among nations. However, challenges such as political inconsistencies, regional dynamics, and information warfare underscore the complexities of soft power strategies in practice. Moving forward, it is crucial for policymakers and scholars to continue exploring the conceptual, contextual, and geographical dimensions of soft power to develop more effective and nuanced diplomatic approaches in an increasingly interconnected world. By addressing research gaps and leveraging the insights gained from empirical studies, stakeholders can better navigate the complexities of international relations and contribute to a more peaceful and prosperous global community.

Recommendation

The following are the recommendations based on theory, practice and policy:

Theory

Expand theoretical frameworks to capture the multifaceted nature of soft power. Researchers should develop comprehensive models that integrate cultural, economic, and social dimensions of influence. This could involve refining existing theories such as Joseph Nye's concept of soft power to better account for contemporary challenges and opportunities in global affairs.

Practice

Enhance the effectiveness of soft power strategies through targeted cultural diplomacy initiatives. Governments and organizations should invest in promoting cultural exchange programs, educational partnerships, and people-to-people connections to foster mutual understanding and trust. Additionally, leveraging digital platforms and new media technologies can facilitate broader reach and engagement with diverse audiences worldwide.

Policy

Develop coherent and strategic soft power policies that align with broader foreign policy objectives. Policymakers should prioritize long-term cultural engagement and dialogue over short-term gains, recognizing the enduring impact of soft power in shaping perceptions and relationships. Furthermore, collaboration between government agencies, civil society organizations, and private

sector entities is essential to maximize the impact of soft power initiatives and ensure coordinated efforts across sectors.

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