

Soft power and Internationalization of Higher Education in the Light of Promoting the Status of Public Diplomacy and Foreign Policy

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ABSTRACT

Power has a multi-faceted, multi-level, complex and, of course, changing concept, and its semantic structure has changed from "hard" to "soft". With the trend of the international system towards a more multipolar world in the current decade (of course, with a fragile nature and with the relative superiority of the United States), soft power gained a greater share in the equations of the international system. The main goal of this research is to investigate the international position of higher education in foreign policy and its role in the soft power of countries in the present era. In this regard, considering the new theoretical foundations of soft power in foreign policy and descriptive-explanatory method, this question and multi-level and complementary objectives have been evaluated by examining the meaning of the soft power of the higher education system and its two-way relationship with public diplomacy, What is the position and importance of the higher education system (university) as national capability and capacity in foreign policy? In response to this hypothesis, it is detailed that, higher education system is a cultural, value and social manifestation of soft power and with diversification in foreign policy, internationalization of higher education with the aim of inclining public opinion in the target countries to the goals and national interests of the implementing country in the framework of public diplomacy, it puts the capacities and abilities of the country's higher education at the disposal of the foreign policy apparatus and the realization of national interests. The findings of the research show that, there is a deep connection between soft power, public diplomacy and foreign policy and actors have succeeded in diversifying in the field of foreign policy. The official and unofficial actors of soft power are different and the most common of them include the higher education system, actors in the field of culture and sports, the media and activists in the field of economy. The higher education system, as one of the agents of soft power, has a mainly socio-cultural nature and it is the manifestation of the will of nations in foreign policy and different and similar experiences of countries indicate a tight and complex competition. On the other hand, the internationalization of higher education has made its capacities and abilities available to the foreign policy apparatus and the realization of national interests which has been neglected in Iran's foreign policy.

Keywords: soft power, public diplomacy, foreign policy, higher education, internationalization.



Introduction

The nature of the international system and the quality and degree of development of the countries, along with the role of leaders and elites, they define and institutionalize what power is. In the 21st century, with the change in the types of friendship and enmity patterns, with maintaining some realistic assumptions of power, it should be said that the "soft" and "gelatin" form of power is gradually transitioning to new forms and components. Although, depending on the nature of the international system and the capabilities and restrictions of each country, the amount and quality of power is also different. Paying attention to the software aspects of the power and application of social diplomacy alongside traditional diplomacy, entry of new subject areas and a wide range of non-governmental actors apart from the official actors has caused the field of diplomatic relations. Therefore, countries try to use their advantages, abilities and capabilities in various fields to produce soft power and use it to maximize national interests by using social diplomacy. In this regard, the current three decades have been the beginning of a tough competition between all actors of the world system to realize national goals and a deep connection has been formed between public diplomacy, foreign policy and soft power actors, especially the higher education system. Therefore, the foreign policy implementers of each of the actors are trying to create a persuasive and acceptable image for other societies with the activism of the higher education system. Some of the general policies and strategies include accepting and attracting students from other countries and wealthy families, commercialization of education and research, competition and increasing prestige and international status, attracting elites and immigration of human capital, and education marketing and research.

Methodology

The current research is organized with the aim of investigating and analyzing the importance and position of the soft power of the higher education system (university) as one of the national capabilities of the countries and its manifestation in foreign policy. According to the purpose, the descriptive-explanatory approach is placed in the form of the theoretical framework of soft power, foreign policy and public diplomacy, in other words, the analysis of the issue has been done through the three conceptual frameworks mentioned. The method of collecting materials and data is reliable library and internet (articles and books) in this field.

Findings

Actors use guidelines and strategies based on norms and mental dimensions of power in order to create roles and realize their micro and macro goals. This level of power, known as "soft power", has attracted the attention of small, medium and large actors through the channels of activists such as the higher education system. On the other hand, the public and foreign diplomacy apparatus of countries are no longer the implementers of traditional power factors and they should put some form of power at the service of independent and important social and cultural actors, otherwise they will lose their legitimacy and efficiency. The nature of the issue has led to a pluralist and democratic competition between the actors and each one tries to achieve three goals in this strategy: creating a positive and persuasive image of "self" and developing cultural and normative values in accordance with national goals, gradual and slow penetration into the lower intellectual layers of the incoming actors and creating intellectual capital in the target countries and finally, aligning these two goals with other interests, including economic, social and strategic prestige.

The type of understanding of leaders and ruling elites is very important in foreign policy, and the perception of "inside" and "outsider" societies plays an important role in evaluating their performance. Various theoretical and experimental data among countries indicate four major issues in the discussion of research findings. First, the level of quality and deepening of interests in the new level of power, especially in the level of higher education, requires more continuity, intelligence of leaders and a long-term view, and the actors act with logical justification and based on the target actors, and this accepted form of power minimizes the type of resistance and negative response. Second, powers redefine their traditional power based on their

soft power, in other words, the soft surface of power has become the bottom layer and forms the intellectual foundation of foreign policy and the driving force of this action is the higher education system. Third, unlike parts of hard power, the experiences of the higher education system are important for each of the actors and based on their national interests, they have adopted and implemented educational policies based on some rational mechanisms. A review of the policies of countries such as Poland, Canada, Great Britain, China, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and beyond all of them in Germany, Australia, Japan and the United States in recent years, shows that competition such as control Weapons have emerged among the universities of these countries and a new face of competition is developing. Based on this, actors have diversified in the field of domestic and foreign policy, and the capacity of universities and higher education in leading countries is increasing significantly. Fourth, the internationalization of higher education in the framework of public diplomacy is a new direction for the foreign policy of countries. Without using this tool, it is not possible to play a role with hard power (in all modern and traditional forms); because the target actors are not only leaders and ruling elites, and academic activists and students have an important role in influencing the public opinion of their communities and the future of the country.

Conclusion

The research results show that, firstly, official and unofficial actors with the international order's departure from bipolarity and unilateralism and the trend towards a more multifaceted world and with the emergence of regional powers, they have greater behavioral independence and small regional powers can also advance part of their national hopes and interests. Second, diversification of foreign policy is an accepted principle in foreign policy and the internationalization of higher education with the aim of inclining the public opinion in the target countries to the goals and national interests of the implementing country in the framework of public diplomacy, the capacities and abilities of the country's higher education are provided to the foreign policy apparatus and the realization of national interests. Therefore, agents in this field mainly include a range of universities, media and other new agents. Third, in recent decades, the independent role of these actors in the field of soft power, especially through higher education and universities, is very significant and they serve their national interests more than anything else. Studies in different universities show a unique form of intersection of soft power, public diplomacy and foreign policy, which manifest their strategic and macro interests with a quality organizational structure. Finally, it has been suggested that, achievements of most different countries are a guide and a warning for foreign policy and higher education system in Iran. The role of Iran's higher education system is not observed in other countries, and it should be fair to say that the foreign policy apparatus does not pay much attention to the power of the higher education system.

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