

The Social Identity Dynamics of Soft Power Narrative Influence: Great Power Diplomatic Bargaining Leverage Amidst Complex Interdependence

¹Benedict E. DeDominicis*

¹Prof., Department of International Studies, Catholic University of Korea
bendedominicis@gmail.com

Abstract

Vaccine diplomacy is a manifestation of competition for political influence among great powers amidst the Covid-19 pandemic's blatant illustration of ineluctable interdependency across the global community. The reinforcement of trends bolstering global polity construction intensify concomitantly with nationalist populist value and attitude expressions increasing political polarization. The interdependency graphically illustrated in the Cold War-era's mutual assured destruction incentivized competition into indirect competitive intervention in the internal politics of third actors. Indirect international influence contestations included extended, de facto challenge competitions to generate soft power on behalf of the victor, e.g., the space race. The Covid-19 pandemic has intensified this competition to offer alternative development models while intense domestic political polarization undermines the mobilizational capacities for achieving sustainable development. In contrast to multinational and multiethnic states, nation states have an inherent mobilizational advantage because of the enhanced control capabilities available to the authorities without emphasizing coercion. Control through Gramscian hegemonic mechanisms is more readily feasible in nation states through the greater feasibility of commodification of social relations by states authorities regulating and channeling social competition to encourage social mobility and creativity. The regulation of the so-called private sector serves to manage and contain social competition while channeling it to develop the institutional capacities for control and allocation of developing societal human resources. It enhances developed state control mechanisms and international influence capacities. The appeal of offers of aid and assistance to the so-called developing world becomes ever more urgent amidst Anthropocene crises including its most recent, current Covid-19 pandemic disaster.

Keywords: *Hegemony, Ideology, Nationalism, Power, Social Identity*

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this theory application paper is to offer a contextualized reformulation of so-called soft power utilizing a conceptualization of power which Cottam and Gallucci (1978) proffered [1]. The research hypothesis driving this application is that a necessary (if not sufficient) prerequisite for the efficacy of so-called soft power deployment by competing Great Powers is the provision of national self-determination.

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Corresponding Author: bendedominicis@gmail.com

Tel: +82-2-2164-4393

Professor, Dept. of International Studies, Catholic University of Korea

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Nationalism amidst complex interdependency in the postwar nuclear setting incentivizes indirect competition among Great Powers via influence over so-called developing countries, i.e., post-colonial states. The theoretical framework in Cottam and Cottam for conceptualizing nationalism highlights the behavioral pattern interactions of Great Power nation states with post-colonial multiethnic and postwar multinational states [2]. Nationalism is a political behavior pattern critically distinguishing regime control system policy behavior patterns of nation states. These patterns differentiate them from non-nation states, i.e., multiethnic, i.e., post-colonial states, and multinational states, e.g., the USSR. Great power nation state international influence competition occurs, e.g., via Covid-19 pandemic resilience aid, including vaccine and sustainable development assistance more broadly. It starkly highlights the salience of this typological differentiation. The political psychological model of nationalism in Cottam and Cottam conceptualizes the differential political systemic predisposition of target states/actors to respond collectively to these functional soft power influence attempts [2].

Surowiec references a popular textbook's definition of soft power: "Soft power" refers to the means of influence by "non-material capabilities such as reputation, culture, and value appeal that can aid attainment of a state's objectives" [3,6321-22, quoting 4,207]. This study's comparative analysis of political regimes utilizes the framework in Cottam and Cottam to conceptualize the substance of attempts to appeal to global public opinion [2]. Current examples include what reports label vaccine diplomacy amidst the Covid-19 pandemic [5].

Nationalism is broadly conceptualized here as a deep behavioral political motivational preoccupation with the power and influence of the particular nation's sovereign state [2]. In contrast with multiethnic and multinational states, a nation state is a territorial boundary-delimited community whose modal citizenry share the same primary, terminal self-identity community. This community is functionally, collectively perceived coterminous with the territorial boundaries of the state. In this Weberian ideal-typical model, their ethnic, racial, sectarian and racial ingroup self-identity component communities all correspond with the state's territorial boundaries [2]. In sum, it is a state that encompasses all of the self-identified individual members of one nation and only of that nation. National community sovereignty, defense, dignity and grandeur foreign policy motivations in the face of more readily perceived and stereotyped sources of external challenge are more salient and intense in nation states. The collective motivational predispositions, behavioral attitudinal tendencies, and perceptual stereotyped inclinations are more frequent and pronounced within the foreign policy making process of nation states, *ceteris paribus*. Shared intentionality is an affective moral behavioral predisposition among primate ingroups [5]. Greater collective attitudinal and affective shared loyalty characterizes the behavior of a nation state as a vast collective ingroup relative to multiethnic and multinational states [2]. Post-colonial states are typically multi-ethnic, with territorial borders more or less arbitrarily drawn by the former imperial power [6]. Yet, significant degrees of political polarization characterize the respective national public policy responses to the Covid-19 pandemic [7].

Social identity theory's foundational motivational principles are that 1) an innate drive of the individual is to maintain a positive self-image, 2) individuals form ingroups versus outgroups, 3) individuals comparatively evaluate the social status of their ingroups with salient outgroups, 4) individuals tend to equate the comparative status of their ingroup with their self-image [2]. Seminal social identity research by Turner, Tajfel and Brown (1979) highlighted that ingroup member identity formation and favoritism develop as dynamic social predispositions rather than as abnormal distortions [8]. Intense social conflict is not necessary for ingroup formation to emerge and evolve. "Interpersonal communication, interaction or similarity, for instance, tend to be greater within than between groups. This should lead to greater interpersonal attraction, understanding and trust within than between groups. Differential orientation to and affiliative relations with ingroup and outgroup

members should themselves be sufficient to generate ingroup favouritism in many circumstances” [sic] [8,189]. Social media facilitates communication to form these ingroups. This paper’s study of nationalism fits within the application of social identity theory to social movement analysis.

If and when individuals comparatively evaluate themselves negatively within their societal contexts, then they will respond psychologically and socially, individually and collectively. Individuals have varying intensities of self-identification with a multitude of ingroups, but self-identification with a national ingroup is prevalent among homo sapiens and social competition can escalate to violence. “War was decisive in certain critical junctures of our [*homo sapiens*] natural and institutional adaptation. We cannot understand how we got here without first understanding how violence influenced our organic formation and how it shaped human groups, the ‘societies’ we inhabit [...] Competition is the mother of all change” [sic] [9,732]. In this perspective, culture is a collective group self-expression amidst intergroup competition, and “human groups evolve by group selection” [10,100]. This study highlights critical dynamics of international competition in the nuclear setting of post-Cold War intensifying complex interdependency.

Upon comparing one’s ingroup with another and perceiving one’s own status as inferior and therefore one’s self-image as negative, the perceiver can respond with three psycho-behavioral strategies. One strategy is social mobility, i.e., attempt individually to join the perceived superior status group. A second strategy is social creativity, i.e., the perceiver compensates by changing the evaluation criteria, selecting those on which the perceiver views their ingroup as superior over the outgroup. A third strategy is open intergroup conflict, i.e., social competition, in which the ingroup perceiver views the relationship with the outgroup as zero-sum. Any gain by the outgroup is perceived as coming at the cost to the ingroup. National self-determination movements result from spiraling social competition and the salience of intensely hostile affect functionally aims towards formal recognition of equality, i.e., secession and sovereignty. In its most pathological outcomes, it can intensify to attempted elimination of the other through genocidal attacks [2].

Vaccine diplomacy represents national-level social competition within a regulated global political economy to achieve not only economic benefits, but also national prestige and international influence gains. The polity, i.e., the government and all of its non-governmental constituencies, race to save and protect humanity from the mounting costs of Covid-19 pandemic. Gaining reputational benefits as a global leader in this task will provide not only more profitable commercial trade and finance preference linkages. The perceived leaders in addressing this crisis within global interdependency gain greater transnational ideological appeal and the diplomatic leverage it provides. This framework relies on the conceptualization of power proposed by Cottam and Gallucci (1978) [1] (Please see below, Figure 1 and Table 1). “This ability is becoming more and more important, when not only individuals but mainly communities dominate subsequent technologies effectively and accept their unifying beliefs, visions of universal order and become subjected to new forms of social organization” [12,142].

Nationalism’s association with the competitive creation, production and distribution of Covid-19 vaccines implies that this motivation will be perceived by relevant target actors. Perceived national particularistic intentions will be a significant factor shaping the influence outcomes of the initiator actors. The Chinese and American government’s defense and promotion of the interests of their respective firms as a reflection of economic nationalism is the theoretical framework for analyzing vaccine diplomacy. This paper conceptualizes vaccine diplomacy as a manifestation of economic nationalism functionally serving to promote national influence by global public health advocacy. Economic nationalism refers to a government defending and expanding intensively the interests of the polity’s corporate business actors. The corporations manufacturing these vaccines are national champions. The nuclear milieu in which Russia, the United States and the People’s Republic of China are nation states competing for markets. This nuclear environment makes economic

nationalism on behalf of national corporate champions a critical area for competition, e.g., in emerging digital and pharmaceutical markets [13]. Covert cyberattacks on corporations, e.g., to steal their proprietary technology, come to be seen as well as attacks on sovereignty, specifically, on the capacity to defend it. The difficulty in attributing state responsibility for the source of the attack allows for plausible deniability and greater capacity for conflict escalation control [13].

2. THEORY

2.1 Nationalism and Ideology

Application of disruptive, coercive hard power cloaked in universalistic beneficent symbolism to increase a state's influence raises alarms regarding the ultimate intention of the initiator state as imperialistic. The response to such a case of sharp power's utilization would prospectively include greater resistance to influence. Ross (2013) highlights that the imperial experience of post-colonial states left a legacy of suspicion towards Cold War universalistic liberal claims. "Classical realists feared above all that world government would become a façade for the imperialist intentions of one or several powerful states. During the Cold War, both East and West were prone to universalizing their respective ideologies in such an imperialist manner. The liberalism of the Cold War represented, alongside National Socialism and Soviet communism, a form of what Morgenthau termed 'nationalistic universalism'" [14,287].

Nationalism is a pattern form of political behavior evincing a deep drive/motivation/preoccupation with the sovereignty and influence of the nation in this collective foreign policy thrust. Perceived obstacles, threats and opportunities for this sovereignty and influence are subjectively determined in the policy making process of the national community as a polity. Nationalism itself is not an ideology, but it can associate with different ideologies and can be part of a formal ideology. Ideology is here defined in terms of Karl Mannheim's conceptualization as a strategy for achieving a desired future, i.e., an "applied utopia" [15,65]. Ideologies aim towards a better future, and hence reflect contemporary power relations that should change. "A weighing of each of the factors existing in the present, and an insight into the tendencies latent in these forces, can be obtained only if the present is understood in the light of its concrete fulfillment in the future" [16,221]. Penna (2020) underscores that this applied utopia manifests itself in competition for influence over political trends as "a tool in the struggle for social transformation" [15,65].

Ideologies reflect the context in which ideologists create and develop them. Nationalism is a deep drive associated with liberal ideological values in late Cold War eastern Europe as different nations confronted imperial domination by an anti-liberal Communist totalitarian occupier. The latter's powerful Western adversary legitimized its influence in terms of liberal ideological values, to which east European national self-determination movements appealed for aid. In the different political milieu more than thirty years later, some of these same national self-determination social justice movement leaders have rejected significant elements of ideological liberalism [17]. Nationalism's predominant association with authoritarian values was most prominent in the interwar period amidst post First World War military defeat, national humiliation, economic crises and socialist radicalization [18]. It left a legacy of the doctrinal association of nationalism with authoritarianism. Far more often national sovereignty and influence expansion has associated with liberal values [2]. Vaccine diplomacy and Covid-19 international aid functionally seeks to associate the state provider with "liberal humanitarianism" [2,136]. This association became the substance of soft power in the form of "perceived transnational appeal of an ideology" [1,49].

3. APPLICATION

3.1 Beijing Consensus

China's totalitarian one-party model competes with the liberal political and economic model as a development paradigm for third actors by offering rapid development with comparatively less socio-economic class inequality. According to one US analyst quoted in a *New York Times* report, Chinese President "Xi sees doing something on income inequality and the wealth gap in China as vital in this struggle of global narratives with the U.S. and the West in general" [18,para.10]. Chinese establishment policy analysts asserted that "they want neither a European-style welfare state nor Mao-era egalitarianism. They say they want to create an "olive-shaped" society with a big middle class and few at the extremes of wealth or poverty" [19,para.30].

While emphasizing social and economic rights, the Beijing model remains totalitarian in strictly constraining the parameters of social creativity behavior in domestic societal ingroup formation and expression:

Weibo [a Chinese microblogging platform comparable to Twitter] repeatedly cited a National Radio and Television Administration notice issued on Thursday for the need to manage the "chaos of fan clubs." In the notice, the government regulator said it would ban broadcasts of "vulgar internet celebrities" and feminine-looking men. It stressed the importance of rectifying the "unlawful and immoral behavior" of celebrities and of upholding an industrywide standard of "loving the party and loving the country" in artistic creations [20,para.8].

Manfredi-Sanchez (2020) asserts, "[s]oft power [...] consists of the ability to organize the political agenda according to political preferences in a way that influences individuals, civil society, various levels of government, and international organizations. This interpretation of power is based on values, culture and intangibles that strengthen a position and foster the implementation of international projects" [21,9]. The framework utilized here views the extent of a country's soft power influence deriving from the extent to which the prevailing view in the target state perceives it as having this international organizational capacity. As noted, if the initiator state is perceived as having imperialist intentions, then its soft power capacity will be severely limited. "If soft power is perceived as cultural imperialism, then it will be relegated to the realm of propaganda, and will wither" [*sic*] [22,49].

3.2 Nationalistic Universalism

Realist comments note that an observer, disillusioned by the perceived behavior of their home state, may subscribe to the universalistic ideological claims of another state, i.e., "transferred nationalism" [23, paras.2124]. It describes a dynamic functionally similar to Morgenthau's concept of nationalist universalism. For example, Western European communists in 1939 submitted to the directives of the Comintern to support the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, essentially serving as agents expanding Russian national influence. Stalin's expansion of Soviet foreign influence under the pretense of accelerating the historical dialectic toward world socialism and universal liberation was functionally a Russian nationalist-imperialist policy: "The exploitation of the loyalty of foreign Communists made it easier for the Soviet Union to attain some of these [interwar, war and postwar foreign policy] objectives, but neither the choice of the objectives nor their attainment was determined by the fact that the Russian ruler who made the choices and proved capable of attaining much of what he had chosen, professed the political philosophy of communism and pretended to act in its name" [24,291].

This influence expansion is rhetorically justified by the ideologically appealing utopian cloak of advancing world socialism, not Russian imperialism. Herrmann (2019) highlights Morgenthau's identification of this pattern tendency of a state's leadership to cloak rhetorically the outcome of its foreign policy making process in broadly appealing ideological symbols [25]. The discrepancy between actual perceived national policy behavior and the rhetorically professed cosmopolitan motives generates cognitive dissonance. The now universal ethical condemnation of imperialism conflicts with the continuing common, apparent suspicion of egoistic influence expansion pursuing particularistic national aims. "A rich body of psychological research has demonstrated that individuals impose cognitive and behavioral constraints on themselves to act consistently with their feelings of obligation and refrain from actions they believe are undesirable" [26,S145]. One manifestation of the attempt to resolve this dissonance is to justify the expansion rhetorically through a claim to advance a "universal ethics." "In order to overcome that conflict [between the reality of imperialism and the ideal of national self-determination, the imperialist] identifies the morality of a particular nation with the commands of supranational ethics. It pours, as it were, the contents of a particular national morality into the now almost empty bottle of universal ethics. So each nation comes to know again a universal morality -that is its own national morality—which is taken to be the one that all the other nations ought to accept as their own" [27,96]. Herrmann (2019) notes that Morgenthau called this policy behavioral pattern tendency "nationalistic universalism" [25,6, referencing 28].

Effective persuasion of individual and group actors in the target polity to obey the initiator state's nationalistic universalism constitutes the dynamics of transferred nationalism. These actors functionally equate the interests of their home national state with the perceived policy aims of the initiator state as rhetorically articulated by the latter. They lobby and pressure their home state government accordingly. Note that according to this framework, these actors, individually or collectively, do not have to adopt an ideological doctrine of nationalism to act and function as nationalists on behalf of the initiator state [2]. They may even vociferously deny and condemn nationalism, e.g., as a bourgeois delusion foisted upon the masses to divide and weaken the international proletariat. As Skilling (1960), commenting on the phenomenon of national communism, noted during the height of the Cold War: "communism, as an outgrowth of Marxism, still assumes nationalism and communism are opposites and that in a world of communist rule, nationalism and national identities, and therefore war would disappear" [29,37].

The aspirational claims within nationalistic universalism promise a future supranational ethical community encompassing and liberating all by overcoming the identified parochial, primitive and cruel features of the present. The Comintern was the nascent foundation of supranational institutional representation for a supranational world socialist community. The axis powers formed the Anti-Comintern Pact claiming to represent and defend the universal right to ethno-racial national self-determination against the alleged Soviet Communist totalitarian threat. Targets of nationalistic universal appeals can see through the cloak and are unconvinced, and resist. Circumventing this tendency towards suspicion in the target state is an imperative confronting the initiator state in the contemporary era of mass nationalism and political mobilization. The current epoch of near total adult world political awareness and participation has congruently witnessed the rise of nationalist mobilization against perceived intolerable levels of external imperial intervention. National self-determination movements collapsed European empires and defeated the so-called superpowers in poverty-stricken and technologically primitive areas, e.g., in so-called French Indo-China and Afghanistan. In addition to the nuclear setting, it underlines the constraints on great power national influence expansion towards indirect competitive patterns, including competitive interference in the internal politics of third states [30].

Nationalistic universalism is a source of diplomatic bargaining leverage to the extent to which the target polity perceives the universalistic claims of the initiator polity having transnational appeal. Polities perceived

internationally as most successful in meeting the Covid-19 pandemic challenge, of which vaccine production and distribution is a vital part, enhance the transnational appeal of their national development model. The next section disaggregates the amorphous, general concept of soft power and places transnational appeal of ideology within the analytic context in relation to other forms of diplomatic bargaining leverage.

3.3 Hegemony and Interdependence

Nationalism, in the form of national self-determination movements, historically often associated doctrinally with liberalism among all citizens of a territorially defined national community. This benign form of “civic” nationalism was portrayed as exemplified by the US [31,14]. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, national self-determination and European modernization associated with liberalism, i.e., the formal ideology of the purported US winner of the Cold War. “A major part of the rule-of-law structures in contemporary CEE [Central and Eastern Europe] was built during the age of the Washington consensus (WC). The term Washington consensus usually refers to a set of policies advocating economic liberalization, privatization and fiscal austerity ... [A] similar set of policies was applied to the former communist countries in CEE. ... At the heart of the WC and the expanded reform agenda is a universal approach to development based on imitation of ‘international best practices’ [*sic*] [32,178]. American hegemony supported the typically non-partisan nature of European modernization through integration until the 1992 signing of the Maastricht Treaty. Additional research indicates that among national citizenries a significant correlation exists between proactive participation in global networks and the salience of a global identity component within individual self-identity [33]. It inaugurated the creation of the European Union, which subsequently witnessed intensifying incipient conservative populist-nationalist reactions against the consequences of the European variant of globalization [34].

The focus of this paper is international, upon the salience of competing national development models. The competition for national great power international influence is indirect, focusing on influence over weaker third parties. Self-declared liberal economic and political national polity models pit themselves against self-declared anti-colonial authoritarian corporatist polities as competing Anthropocene crisis recovery and development genres. To extend the appeal and influence of a national development model internationally, a prerequisite is persuasively to portray the model as a vehicle of national self-determination. Respective soft power appeals, e.g., sustainable development and Covid-19 aid initiatives, must avoid being perceived, intentionally or unintentionally, as stalking horses for respective greater power hidden imperialist agendas. Despite ideological-rhetorical claims to serve this liberating strategic aim, actual state behavior may instead reflect imperialistic drives clad in non-imperialistic ideological-symbolic garb: nationalistic universalism. American exceptionalism includes a self-idealized commitment to democratic popular sovereignty [35]. Targets of American regime enforcement or change have nevertheless perceived US policies as in effect imperialistic and intolerable and have ultimately successfully rejected these policies as in Vietnam and Afghanistan.

“Hegemony [...] refers to the ability of a ruling group to sustain its legitimacy by disseminating the beliefs that justify its practices” [36,80]. The perceived provision of public goods is closely tied to the concept of hegemony in the literature. Gramscian hegemony exists in effect when the politically prevailing view within society displays consent to obey the authorities as morally obligatory; the authorities represent and provide for the collective welfare. A hegemon provides public goods [11]. This hegemonic power domestically, in the Weberian ideal-typical case, is the sovereign state [37]. Internationally the regional or global hegemon is portrayed as providing public goods. International hegemony is subjectively defined as benign if it is perceived as associating with the affirmation of national self-determination to contribute to a supranational liberal

political and economic community, e.g., the European Union. The EU's supranational institutions constitute its political representation, with the EU not being perceived by the modal EU citizenry as a cloak for German imperialist, expansionary neo-colonialism. International hegemony is benign if the public goods it is functionally viewed as providing allow for social creativity strategies among the nation state member components. Exploitation of these social creativity opportunities permit individual social mobility into the supranational European identity community of liberal and economic values.

Research has shown a negative correlation between domestic salience of national identity and the extent of the provision of public goods [38]. Public health is a public good and the Covid-19 pandemic illuminates the necessity of global institutional infrastructure to provide it, which requires appealing to a global public. The existing national and global institutional infrastructure around which confronting the public health crises coalesces provide utilitarian economic and participation opportunities. Progressive social movements demanded change amidst the HIV/AIDS crisis. Act Up! further energized LGBTQ activism that empowered the gay rights movement and its subsequent policy achievements [39]. Act Up! Also utilized the social capital developed by previous social movements [40]. These so-called private and civil society actors utilize state obligations and capacities that these civil society actors perceive the state authorities as providing for the so-called public welfare, i.e., public goods. In highlighting the challenges in effectively providing public health as a public good, Torres (2019) highlights vaccine development [41]. State authorities utilize provision of utilitarian, material economic rewards to guide private sector research against global threats to national public health, e.g., the Ebola virus ravaging poorer world regions. State policy intervention harnesses market forces to serve this public health as public good provision aim. Due to the relative poverty of the least developed national economies, autonomous market forces alone would not generate a sufficiently effective, globally coordinated vaccine provision response. State authorities may promote congruent utilitarian, social mobility opportunity structures emerging around the coordination of national and global policies to generate public goods that confront Anthropocene climate change.

If the prevailing view within a nation state functionally perceives itself as a benign hegemon providing international public goods, then it is likely to promote this self-image as a form of nationalistic universalism. For the national groups seeking alliance with the purported benign hegemon against the formers' perceived adversaries, their policies may be perceived as a form of social creativity. The purported benign hegemon views its client as striving for social justice in the form of their own national self-determination. Positive ally stereotypes allow for social creativity to justify internal and external strategies and behaviors against the shared common enemy [2]. For example, the Montenegrin authorities' propensity to allow cigarette smuggling from their ports to the EU in the 1990s was evaluated as benign behavior. It provided economic capabilities to resist Slobodan Milosevic's pro-Russian Belgrade government [42]. The continuing perceived challenge from allied Moscow and Beijing in the Balkans results in a thrust to expand NATO and the EU membership amidst rising Euroscepticism within the EU. The resulting reconciliation of these political imperatives manifests in an intensified interest in fighting corruption in the area. Montenegro joined NATO in 2017 over intense Russian opposition. Montenegrin smuggling is no longer rhetorically justifiable to internal and external establishment authority constituencies utilizing a national social creativity strategy. It rather mutates into national social deviance congruently with the changing tactical formula of the US-led alliance in the region. The case highlights the instability of international hegemony which makes institutionalization of a supranational community identity less likely. Overcoming the gap between rhetorical commitment to universal human rights ethical obligations, and actual behavior, requires conceptualization of the substance and process of ethical change. This "theory of moral change" aims to illustrate key features of reform of society's political and social institutions [43,918]. Without a focus on actual institutional reform, such a theory would be "pointless" [44,375].

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Diplomatic Bargaining Leverage

The power potential base of an initiator state as perceived within the prevailing view of the target state determines the bargaining leverage available to the initiator state. If the polity of the initiator state is perceived as immobilized by internal political polarization, then the overall diplomatic bargaining leverage of the initiator state declines. Politics confront intensifying developmental crises in the midst of global interdependency crises that the Covid-19 pandemic both epitomizes and foreshadows. They will tend to devalue constitutional policies of liberal multiculturalism if the latter are perceived as contributing to this immobilizing polarization. Nationalist values are then prone to shift towards association with authoritarian political values as historically displayed in interwar continental Europe.

Cottam and Gallucci (1978) provide a comprehensive framework checklist for disaggregating and analyzing bargaining leverage in dyadic diplomatic bargaining interaction (figure 1 below) [1]. It is useful in conceptualizing so-called smart power, i.e., the strategic application of power in diplomacy. As a theoretical conceptualization of power, it places soft power in context through disaggregating power more generally into its diplomatic bargaining leverage instruments.

Based on the theory of soft power, new terms have been created, such as "smart power", which means learning to better combine hard and soft power [45,32]. Another term is "sharp power", which was used in 2017 by the National Endowment for Democracy, a Washington-based foundation and think tank. Unlike soft power, which uses the pull of culture and values to increase a country's strength, sharp power is a tool for authoritarian regimes to exert coercion and manipulate opinion abroad, often used to describe the practice of China and Russia [46] [quoted from 47,778].

Conceptualizing power in terms of diplomatic bargaining leverage illustrates the analytical benefits from disaggregating power into its explicit hard and soft components. As noted above, the prevailing view regarding the ultimate intentions of the attempted exercise of soft power by the initiator state as perceived by the target is critically important in determining its strategic results [22]. Chang (2021) critiques Beijing's vaccine diplomacy soft power narrative as part of China's rise placing it within the context of a discussion of the "soft," "hard," "smart" and "sharp power" [48,54]. He notes "whether a narrator's strategic goal can be achieved depends on the reception and perception of their narrative" [48,54].

This study argues that critical state-level factors characterizing the polity of the receiver/perceiver/target determine the receptivity to these respective great power narratives. They include the prevailing aims and interests of the target's foreign policy in responding to the initiator. These target state's aims and interests both interact with and derive significantly from historical legacies. They can include the case specific extent, intensity and salience of external initiator state perceived imperialism in interfering in and shaping the target actor. That collective historical experience shapes interpretation of intention and openness to reception of the respective soft power narratives of competing great powers. "The prestige of a nation is its reputation for power. That reputation, the reflection of the reality of power in the mind of foreign observers, can be as important as the reality of power itself. What others think about us is as important as what we actually are" [47,para.2]. From this perspective, the notion of "sharp power," adopted by Alagoz (2019) conceptualized as relying on 'subversion, bullying and pressure, which combine to promote self-censorship' would seem to be paradoxical [50,965, referencing 49]. The belligerency of "subversion, bullying and pressure" are a form of coercive hard power application that undercuts "the soft power of China's narrative" [50,965, referencing 5].

Figure 1 highlights the role of the general interactive setting (in italics) in a dyadic foreign policy interaction in terms of the perceived ultimate foreign policy motivations that are driving the state that is the target of foreign policy.

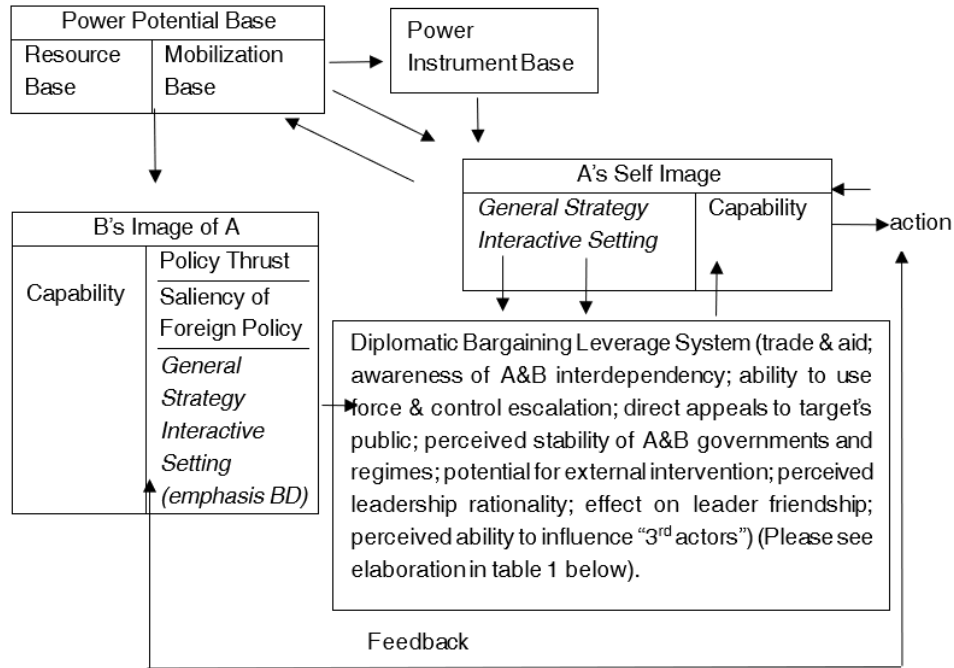


Figure 1. Schematic Representation of Actor Power and Foreign Policy Influence [1,9]

Figure 1 emphasizes the role of the respective prevailing views within the government of A regarding B's ultimate foreign policy drivers and B regarding A's foreign policy motivations. They significantly determine the response to each state's response to the other's utilization of diplomatic bargaining leverage. These inferred motivations of the target state may be oversimplified due to stereotypical image formation regarding the target. Monocausal inferences of target state foreign policy motivation constitute determinism [62]. This collective tendency is for the prevailing view to tend towards stereotyping the policy target so-called other in simplified, image terms is comparatively pronounced in nation states [2]. Deteriorating collective capacity to perceive political complexity in the foreign policy making process of the target state characterizes intensifying stereotyping and affect in an international political crisis environment [62]. This intensifying conflict can lead to decreases in ability to perceive available foreign policy options due to intensifying social competition.

The core of this model is A's self-image, in relation to B. Capability is one determinant shaping the behavior of A insofar it is a determinant of the policy option range that A perceives as available to itself. General interactive setting refers to A's inference of the foreign policy motivations of B, i.e., its strategic intent, and therefore of A's own strategic intent. Should A view B as motivated by opportunistic national influence expansion drives, then A's understanding of the appropriate application and effectiveness of its diplomatic bargaining leverage will also be shaped accordingly. As noted above, in seeking to expand its own influence, A would be more effective insofar as it persuades B that A does not have imperialist intentions, for example, in offering aid and assistance such as Covid-19 vaccines and production capabilities. If A views B as imperialistic, then A, e.g., Washington, may attempt to persuade C, e.g., a developing state, that the aid and assistance of B (e.g., Beijing) comes with terms that risk subordinating C to B should C prove unable to repay its debts.

A's capability self-image derives from what is typically a largely implicit estimate of its bargaining base that is rarely more than partially explicated. Nevertheless, the picture of one's own capability is an estimate that a great power often holds with substantial collective confidence [53]. The disruption of great power decline typically stems from a crisis shock that starkly illustrates to the international community the great power's factual relative decline. A domestic political crisis often is congruent with this event. The collection of political vested interests that had incrementally driven the strategic intent and policy thrust of the state then fails to generate the foreign policy outcomes that it had previously manifested. Table 1 focuses on the dynamic diplomatic bargaining leverage system created by the dyadic influence relationship between two states in international relations presented in figure 1.

Table 1. An all-inclusive list of diplomatic bargaining levers dynamically utilized by representative negotiators vis-à-vis each other in dyadic international negotiations in bargaining with each other over a particular issue or crisis. Those levers italicized below constitute the disaggregated substance of so-called soft power influence generation capability

BARGAINING BASE	
"Passive" (tacit bargaining) levers (i.e., levers whose magnitude may be considered constant for purposes of a diplomatic negotiation case analysis)	"Active" levers (i.e., levers whose magnitude can be actively manipulated in the midst of negotiations)
<i>1. Perceived public attitudes</i>	<i>1. Perceived ability to give or withhold aid.</i>
2. Perceived possible great power involvement.	<i>2. Perceived ability to influence the actions of a third country.</i>
3. Awareness of interdependence.	3. Perceived ability to use force.
4. Perceived long-term power alterations.	4. Perceived trade opportunities.
<i>5. Perceived economic/and/or political stability.</i>	<i>5. Perceived ability to deal with domestic political dissatisfaction.</i>
6. Perceived irrationality of leaders.	<i>6. Perceived transnational appeal of ideology (emphasis BD).</i>
7. Perceived adverse effect on friendship.	7. Perceived willingness to alter relationship type.
8. Perceived likelihood of accidental war.	

Source: [1,48-49]

Table 1 conceptualizes so-called soft power within the international power framework presented in figure 1 from Cottam and Gallucci (1978) [1]. It disaggregates soft power within this analytical framework to illustrate its component elements in terms of diplomatic bargaining leverage, highlighted in italics in Table 1. Soft power derives from the perceived benign political and economic development model of the Great Power initiator state within the prevailing view of the lesser power or post-colonial target state. The perception of contextually benign foreign policy motivations of the Great Power initiator state facilitates the generation of the desired influence over the foreign policy behavior of the lesser power target state [71]. Motivations by the initiator state perceived as comparatively benign are by definition not perceived as threateningly imperialistic by the target state. The post-Cold War international political environment increased the diplomatic bargaining leverage of the US as the global expansion of the so-called neoliberal Washington consensus illustrated [32].

In diplomatic bargaining, various levers operate simultaneously and affect, negatively and positively, each other's effectiveness: a leverage system. In actual application, the attempted utilization of one or more levers has impacts on the relative efficacy of others. For example, threat and use of deadly force by the initiator state

may strengthen domestic public opinion support for the target state government in the immediate term (active lever) and regime in the longer term (passive lever). It is a manifestation of the so-called rally round the flag phenomenon, which is more salient and intense in nation states [2]. The diplomatic bargaining leverage system is disaggregated here for the purpose of analysis.

The Chinese authorities predicted that their effectiveness in containing SARS-Cov-2 Omicron variant transmission while successfully hosting the 2022 Winter Olympics would lead to a soft power increase. Beijing aims to increase its diplomatic bargaining leverage in target polities, developing and otherwise [54]. Alternatively, instigating domestic polarization over Covid-19 vaccination can be understood as a form of hybrid warfare. Disseminating covertly disinformation to promote target polity public polarization aims to undermine the target state's mobilization base. It lessens its power potential base to reduce its comparative diplomatic bargaining leverage. "The aim of various Russian groups continues to be to exacerbate tensions in Western societies, a key foreign policy goal of Moscow, according to American officials briefed on the disinformation efforts" [55,para.7].

This theoretical framework conceptualizes the effectiveness of the soft power appeal of the polity of the initiator state as the summation of its power potential base as perceived by the target state. It necessitates a consideration of the perceiver's inference of the ultimate foreign policy motivation of the polity. If the perceiver views the target as motivated by an aggressive intense, imperialist motivation, then the internal complexities of the policy making process in that perceived polity are more likely to be overlooked and stereotyped. Even if the initiator state perceives the threatening target polity as culturally superior, the initiator state is unlikely to view the characteristics of the target polity as appropriate and transferrable to the perceiver's polity. Aid from the aspiring hegemon proffering Covid-19 vaccines and assistance in sustainable development and climate resilience is less likely to be welcomed if this aid is perceived as a cloak for what is ultimately neo-colonial forms of imperialism.

The predisposition to perceive threats and opportunities and to stereotype them is greater among nation states as opposed to multinational and multiethnic, post-colonial states [2]. Post-colonial multiethnic states in Africa and Asia are more likely to be more politically forbearing, collectively, of external actor intervention in their internal affairs. This tolerance level within their respective polities is generally higher if this aid reinforces the post-colonial regime and authorities. Those multiethnic states engaged in systematic violations of human rights are comparatively more likely to be amenable to cooperation with totalitarian one-party China. Multiethnic, post-colonial states are more tolerant of external influence in their internal politics, *ceteris paribus* [2]. For example, Beijing rhetorically has opposed external human rights interventions in postcolonial states. It has directed its own infrastructure investments there to collaborate with regime authorities in "Bureaucratic, Authoritarian Industrializing Regimes (BAIRs)" [55,469], i.e., in so-called developing countries.

The European Union accommodates nationalism and functionally aims to incentivize its association with liberal values to build cosmopolitanism while harnessing nationalism. The EU may or may not dissociate itself with the nationalism of any particular nation. It remains vulnerable to being perceived as overall boosting the diplomatic bargaining leverage of Washington towards Moscow and Beijing in terms of Washington's perceived influence over third parties. "[S]uccessive US administrations, from 1990, wanted to retain strategic leadership over the future of Europe after the Cold War. Papers and proposals flowed from Washington, promoting NATO enlargement, as well as that of the EU, launching NATO dialogues with Russia, Ukraine and the North African states alongside—and in some ways in competition with—the EU. [...] Yet major European governments did not challenge US strategic leadership, nor actively spell out alternative visions of European 'architecture' or order" [57,85]. Individual EU member states on specific policy issues resist US pressure to limit cooperation with Moscow. The German government had been resistant to Washington's demands to suspend the nearly completed Nord Stream 2 seabed natural gas pipeline to transport Russian

supplies. Moscow's dependence on Soviet-era Ukrainian pipelines to transport Russian fossil fuels to European customers was a focus of diplomatic bargaining leverage for Kyiv [58]. Whether or not European policies succeed in shaping the prevailing view in Moscow to see the EU as not ultimately a high-level tactical tool for expanding US influence is another question [59]. EU member states tend to support US national security policy significantly because east Europeans see US leadership of NATO as critical for European integration [60].

4.2 Competitive Interference and Economic Nationalism

These Chinese Communist Party's leadership is committed to engaging in intensive but regulated social competition in the form of neo-mercantilist development strategies within the global capitalist system [61]. These policies are corporatist in utilizing economic markets including price signaling to integrate its corporatist political economy within the global economy. Regulated social competition parameters, i.e., market competition by firms, is a tactical formula for national economic development.

The focus on polity vulnerability to perceived intolerable levels of external political influence, looming if not actual, is the essence of national security defense motivations. These threat perception-based motivations include perceived dangers to state integrity, regime maintenance and government stability as reflected in economic nationalism [62]. The expansion of influence abroad because of perceived opportunity reflects economic bureaucratic and economic vested interests. Other scenarios include national prestige and even grandeur motivations in the postwar nuclear setting through indirect supersession of the political economic hegemony of a status quo power. In sum, great power purposeful choice of direct military confrontation to challenge the status quo hegemon is potentially a suicidal option in the nuclear environment. Yet intense national unity, irredentist, prestige and grandeur foreign policy drives remain, while contextually dependent on their political saliency. Estimating the intensity and salience of the Chinese polity's ultimate foreign policy drives is critical. Agreement on an accurate estimation of Beijing's prevailing view is further complicated by the fluidity of the dynamic reconciliation of these competing pressures within the Chinese foreign policy making process. Different Chinese constituencies are carriers or different definitions of the external situation confronting Beijing. Some perceive threat from Washington of varying degrees of dynamic intensity, some perceive opportunity, driving their intervention in third country political economies while competing with Washington over policy.

To further complicate the task, as the intensity of conflict between Beijing and Washington intensify, a concomitant tendency emerges of their intensified competitive interest in the internal politics of third actors. As during the US-Soviet Cold War, Beijing and Washington may both perceive derivative intensifying opportunity in lesser power third states as they perceive intensifying challenge from each other. This intensifying perceived challenge may be perceptual, i.e., threat based, or a value-based conflict because one or both sides see marvelous opportunity to expand their hegemony at the expense of the perceived decaying other [62]. Again, different constituencies within Beijing may perceive threat or opportunity, respectively, towards the US. Both definitions of the situation may produce similar patterns of behavior towards third actors based upon perceived opportunity for expansion. The perceived opportunity would be greatest towards comparatively weak, multi-ethnic post-colonial states.

This competitive interactive dynamic was evident in the postwar nuclear setting of US-Soviet competition. The Cold War antagonists conducted their conflict within the domestic political processes of other states, at times lethally within the so-called Third World states. They engaged in "competitive interference" [30], i.e., 1) they used the domestic politics of third states as the typical arena of engagement, and 2) they struggled for influence preeminence in states which they regarded as having strategic significance. They were vital potential or real allies in attempted containment of each other. External powers ally with local minorities seeking

patronage to achieve self-determination, e.g., Catholic Croats, Kosovar Albanians and Russophile Ukrainians. They may also competitively respond to solicitations from protagonists in intensely class-polarized societies seeking political aid against despised domestic opponents thus intensifying this polarization [63]. The competitive interference of the US-Soviet blocks to leading to the election, destabilization and overthrow of the Allende administration in Chile is a Cold War case [64]. Hybrid warfare is not new; it characterized the Cold War. Intense conflict between nuclear powers functionally consists of competitive interference in the internal politics of states [63].

Nationalistic communities that are part of multinational states will collectively display a drive for a sovereign national state. Coercion will constitute an essential component of these political regimes to suppress these national self-determination movements to maintain state cohesion [2]. The political disintegration of the central coercive control apparatus as occurred in the old Soviet Union or the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, will lead to the dissolution of the state. 30 years after Yugoslav Soviet disintegration, Serbia and Russia foreign policy behavior more closely approximates the nation state Weberian ideal-typical model for behavior outlined in Cottam and Cottam (2001), including irredentism: “3. There will be a greater tendency among the publics of nation states to become preoccupied with the objective of an ingathering of communities existing outside the borders of the state whom they regard as a part of their community” [2,3-4].

In contrast, multiethnic states typically as post-colonial states in Africa and Asia that inherited state borders arbitrarily delineated according to imperial metropole imperatives [65,66]. A legacy of their colonial foundation includes citizenry demonstrating relatively intense political polarization between ethno-sectarian communities within these borders. Cottam and Cottam (2001) characterize them as comparatively intensely polarized with their respective, modal members self-identify with these ethnic community ingroups at a primary intensity level [2]. These ethnic ingroups lack a prevailing view that they have the relative power capability forcefully to gain and defend a sovereign state. Their respective prevailing views indicates belief that they lack the requisite resources to provide for defense of a sovereign state with a satisfactory level of economic well-being for its citizenry. They may be encouraged to believe that this intensely desired option is within their capability through acquisition of greater resources via alliance with an external state patron. The post-colonial state authorities will tend to vest their self-identity, bureaucratic and economic interests in the national community defined by the territorial boundaries inherited from the colonial power. Vested economic interests will emerge around the established market, whether formally or informally affiliated with the state coercive apparatus, i.e., the police, the military, informal militias and the judiciary.

Competition for influence will be concentrated in the so-called developing world. The Covid-19 pandemic represents the anthropogenic impact of critically interdependent development requiring global coordination, cooperation and collaboration to be sustainable. Much of the developing world lacks the resource capability for autarkic economic development with the additional demands of resilience amidst global climate change adaptation and mitigation. The vulnerability of liberal democratic nation states to intensified political polarization risks immobilizing sufficient resources to allocate towards developing world needs. One investigation into Spanish public political attitude changes in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and countermeasures “points to a polarization as a consequence of the Covid-19 crisis” [7,17]. According to Arcila Calderón, Blanco-Herrero and Oller-Alonso (2021), the relatively most negative response to central government pandemic policies was registered in the Basque region centered around Navarre [67]. Overall, as in other large EU member states, the responses to central government Covid-19 pandemic control mandates was most negatively pronounced among Spanish voters supporting right wing parties. Appearing to confirm findings that experiences can update beliefs “in opposite directions,” a polarization focus appears to be upon “transcendental,” i.e., religious versus secular, and “social,” i.e., out-group vs. in-group, beliefs [7,2]. Research on multi-ethnic, post-Soviet Tajikistan highlights that legacies of polarizing civil violence include decreased

societal trust. This lack of social capital undermines the emergence of statewide institutions that state territorial community economic development: “the kind of social capital that gets enhanced in the aftermath of a civil war might not be the inclusive type which is capable of supporting market development, but the kin-,network-based one that may actually hinder the emergence of efficient, impersonal markets” [*sic*] [68,314].

China’s one-party authoritarian capitalist model will be appealing to multi-ethnic post-colonial states embodied in the vested, interrelated security bureaucracy and economic interests, e.g., Myanmar. The Beijing one-party authoritarian model will continue to offer incentives for cooperation that Western actors will have difficulty matching amidst condemnation of collaboration with systematic human rights abuses. Post-Cold War Washington’s willingness to collaborate with regime authorities that are systematically abusive towards marginalized groups is exposed to domestic public opinion critique for this support. The Beijing authorities are comparatively insulated from such domestic criticism. “The risk for the American strategy is that dealing with a patchwork of separate programs—and a Western insistence on good environmental and human rights practices — may seem less appealing to developing nations than Beijing’s all-in-one package of financing and new technology” [69]. Beijing’s authoritarian system would allow for a focused insulation and stabilization of economic interests from disruption due to public opinion human rights abuse protest in the midst of the intensifying global climate change emergency. “China is marketing mass surveillance technology to its trading partners in Africa, Asia and South America [...] pitching it as a way to minimize crime and promote public order in major metropolitan areas” [70,para.44].

Vaccine diplomacy manifests itself within this global milieu. The European Commission’s refusal to support waiving intellectual property rights for Covid-19 vaccines is because commodification is the foundation for mobilizing pharmaceutical resources effectively. Liberal politicians appealing for cosmopolitan domestic electorate support may rhetorically appeal for these patent waivers to manipulate archetypical cosmopolitan symbols to appeal to voters espousing them as well. The European Union is not a nation state, but a multinational quasi-federal entity in economic and monetary union. Its Covid-19 strategy is multinational and Europeanized. National decisional latitude to manufacture outside its integrated production chain is absent and political pressure to waive patent rights less salient and intense.

5. CONCLUSION

A state will have a soft power advantage in terms of transnational appeal of ideology to the extent in part it is seen as a development model for other developing states. Being a high-tech state that can produce, manufacture and distribute effective Covid-19 vaccines will be part of this appeal. In the nuclear setting amidst awareness of ineluctable interdependency, destabilizing of this regime political control system through exacerbating polarization within the target state becomes the new form of war. The Chinese totalitarian capitalist consumption model will justify itself as preventing the mass political polarization evident in the US.

The state authorities functionally regulate social competition in order to develop the power capabilities of the polity, focusing on its human resources. Social competition among societal actors that a neo-corporatist strategy regulates and guides drives the achievement collectively. It is regulated so that winners and losers do not escalate to violence, in accordance with Weber’s definition of the state. Actors therefore must acquiesce to the loss of status or they may engage in social creativity.

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