

The Formation and Mechanism of Soft Power

LI Xiangwen^{[a],*}; WANG Xingmim^[a]; ZHAO Qianru^[a]

^[a]Transportation Engineering, Dalian Maritime University, Dalian, China.

*Corresponding author.

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Abstract

As we know soft power has got more and more attention in this world, yet how is it formed and functioning? This article attempts to illustrate the formation and mechanism of soft power, through the research upon a wide range of various subjects and fields, such as physics, law of principle, humanism, culture, philosophy, the methodology of natural science and social science, the Oriental wisdom and western technology, finally pointing to human nature and the heart.

Key words: Soft power, Formation mechanism, Mechanism

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INTRODUCTION

We believe that the culture is the soul of a nation, as well as the soul of the soft power. Although our traditional Chinese culture may not contain the concept of “Soft Power”, it contains very rich philosophy of “Soft Power”. Our glorious, ancient Chinese culture is the source and soul of our national soft power. Although it was not so long time ago that the modern concept of “Soft Power” was being brought up in China, its origin and philosophy could be traced from our traditional culture and wisdom.

China is endowed with the gene of soft power, and the wisdom to apply it rightfully in practice. There are

essential teachings from *I Ching*, *Tao Te Ching*, and Buddhism, revealing the ultimate truth which could only be realized by the wisdom of the heart. Nowadays we as human beings have lost our sense of direction, temporarily; we’ve abandoned the soft power because of the temptation of desires.

1. THE ULTIMATE MECHANISM OF FORMATION OF SOFT POWER

Soft power’s formation and mechanism are very complex, however in history “*I Ching*”, “*Tao Te Ching*”, “*Sutra*” have already shown us the great wisdom, so that nowadays we could trace it back from these scriptures. Quote from *Tao Te Ching*:

Out of Tao, One is born; Out of One, Two; Out of Two, Three; Out of Three, the created universe. The created universe carries the yin at its back, and the yang in front; through the union of the pervading principles it reaches harmony. To be ‘orphaned’ ‘lonely’ and ‘unworth’ is what men hate most. Yet the princes and dukes call themselves by such names. For sometimes things are benefited by being taken away from, And suffer by being added to.

Similarly, the hard is born from the soft, and the soft is sourced from the hard. “Tao” is soft power; Nothingness is the consciousness that the creation is born from; Thingness is the power of the creation. The true “Tao De” is the biggest soft power, and “Tao” is the origin and the source of soft power, whereas “De” is the essence and the carrier of the soft power.

We will be able to understand the miracle and mystery with the Chinese characters “道德(Tao De)” when we take an in-depth study in them, moreover, we’ll also be able to know the ultimate mechanism of the formation of soft power.

Research on character “道 (Tao)”, has shown us that, the universe, nature, and society is functioning according to certain laws, that is “Tao”, that is universal

consciousness, and the essence of the soft power. But in our modern society, it is commonly seen that, we are thinking and acting according to our mind, in this case, there might be a bigger chance to gain opportunity and desired results, however, if there's problems with the beliefs and values, or disobeying the Tao and universal law, it will go into an opposite direction, or wrong way, which may lead to destruction.

Research on the character “德(Te)” showed us its original meaning: The complete complying with the laws of space and time, the society, the universal law, is what we call “Te”. “Te” is the basis for all Buddhist Dharma and worldly law, the embodiment of the Tao.

What is being commonly talked about, taught, advertised about in this world, so called morality (Tao De), is often an illusion. Without surrendering and complying with the great Tao and universal laws, the individuals and nation will be far away from the real Tao De (morality).

There is an ancient Chinese motto saying that, the highest kindness is being like water, and the great virtue carries everything in this world. “De” (virtue) and kindness are the soft power, matter is hard power, so “De” is the carrying and acting force generated from the soft power for the hard power. So from the great Eastern wisdom above, we could understand the germination mode of soft power, or we could also call that formation mechanism.

Often Tao Te could make up the deficiencies for the wisdom, but not the other way around. If we consider wisdom as soft power, then Tao De is the soft strength of the soft power.

2. TWO GERMINAL MODES OF THE FORMATION MECHANISM OF SOFT POWER

The basic formation mechanism of Soft power is based upon the fact that, the soft produces the hard, and the hard generates the soft. From the internal to the external, then from the outside back into the inside, the application of the hard and the soft at the same time requires the practice both internally and externally. The formation mechanism of soft power has two basic germinal modes, the endogenous mode and the exogenous mode. What needs special emphasis here is that, the soft power in its common sense, actually refers to exogenous soft power, whereas the endogenous soft power is more in line with the conception of soft power we have argued above. We often see that soft power is not soft while hard power is not hard. The root cause often lies in problems with endogenous soft power. More importantly, the relationship among endogenous soft power, hard power and exogenous soft power, gives better proof that there has been a pitfall in epistemology since long time ago: it is not that the

physical world determines consciousness; it's the other way around.

2.1 The Endogenous Mode

Endogenous soft power refers to the reflection of culture, virtue and values, in this case, the virtue and the power of water are the best examples. In our highly developing and competitive modern society, the endogenous soft power of nations and various industries lies in the national culture, quality of citizens, values identification, organization's own development concept, management system, operation mechanism, innovation ability, policies and regulations, market environment, and propulsion mode, etc. And from the perspective of an enterprise's development and competition, the corporate culture, values, market targeting, innovation on management, institutional innovation, technological innovation ability, that are generated by its market competition and development strategy, are the endogenous soft power of the enterprise. From the perspective of an individual, human is a mini universe, is composed of the Essence, Qi and Divine, and the unity of body, mind, spirit. It's been proved in Chinese traditional medicine that the energy of humanity is the power generated by the intersection of the heart and the kidney of our physical body. The individual soft power is a reflection of his/her biological field, and what we call personal charm is our endogenous soft power, coming from the spirit, virtue and love within, and being determined by our values on the universal, worldly levels.

2.2 The Exogenous Mode

Exogenous soft power is the power of attraction, influence and charisma, which are generated and formed by the hard power. From the perspective of social development and competition, the hard power and its developing speed and level will form the comprehensive power of a nation or an industry. And when this power grows to a certain extent, the exogenous soft power such as the power of influence, charisma and right of discourse will be formed. On the enterprise level, its development and competition determine the hard power of the enterprise and its developing speed and level. The power and the ability of resource integration of the enterprise form its competitiveness, such as enterprise scale, market share, output profit, etc., then these competitiveness will again form the exogenous soft power of the enterprise such as reputation, brand effect and market position. From the level of an individual, his/her hard power such as career, fame and contribution, form the exogenous soft power as power of influence and attraction.

2.3 The Relationship Among the Endogenous Soft Power, Hard Power and Soft Power

From the meaning of the two Chinese characters “Tao De”, we could see that the formation of soft power is a natural, dynamic, organic process, which moves from endogenesis to exogenesis, from qualitative change to

quantitative change, and then from quantitative change back to qualitative change. On the other hand, the endogenous soft power, hard power and soft power are also an interactive and complementary dynamic process; it's an ecological system. When there's harmony between hard power and soft power, endogenous soft power and exogenous soft power, there'll be a sustainable and constructive circulation between them.

The soft power of a nation or an industry is formed through the development of social politics, economy, military power and competition with others over a very long period of time. On the surface level, its soft power is the reflection of the nation/industry's productivity and economic foundation, however, the root lies in the national history and cultural traditions. The hard power which is generated from soft power, such as goodness and love, will be enduring and everlasting; whereas the one which is generated from badness and hatred will eventually go into downfall and perdition, even though it can be flourishing temporarily. If a nation has not developed any endogenous soft power, or, there's crucial problem with its general guideline, direction or mode in development, it will become very arrogant, dominant, or lack real inner power, even may end up in destruction and failure. In the end, not only will be its soft power not be properly formed and generated, also will its hard power be gradually badly influenced even destroyed.

If an enterprise does not have endogenous soft power or there's problem in its values and developing mode and strategy, this enterprise may expand blindly, lose its integrity to the clients etc., which may result in influencing or even destroying its competitiveness instead of forming a reliable one. Instead, if the exogenous soft power has the essential competitiveness, not only will it establish the hard power, also will it strengthen the endogenous soft power.

If there's a crucial problem with an individual's mind, spirit, psyche or consciousness, various physical illnesses and symptoms may occur to him/her. We believe that, if someone has gained his/her fame and reputation based upon something other than the fundamental morality such as integrity and kindness, no matter how "glorious" they seem to be, there's no true value in it. No matter how so called successful a person is, if he/she only thinks and does for his/her own benefit, doesn't care about bringing harm to others, nature and society, this person is very harmful and destructive.

Anything in this world which is alive is full of vitality, and constantly flowing. When we are born in this world, our bodies are flexible; our 12 meridians are flowing without any block. Any physical hardness is actually the block of the energy channels. Unresolved emotions will cause energy blocks, which then in turn will be reflected as hardness and stiffness of the physical body. Heal from our emotional

wounds, re-establish the connection with ourselves, unstuck the life energy, then we'll return to the flexibility and balance as a baby, in this way we are going to find back the real, natural happiness that we originally are.

In terms of the research and enhancement on soft power, if we only focus on the exogenous soft power which is based on the hard power, rather than also giving our attention to the endogenous soft power, or, if we lack of profound comprehension on the relationship among these three, I'm afraid that we are not going the right way. Any hard power or so called soft power, which is generated without inner essence, virtue, and surrendering to Tao of the universe, or, goes against the basic principle of nature and society, is actually a force of dissipation and destruction. They are not supposed to be continued. Just as Lao Tzi taught us in *Tao De Ching*:

Fame or one's own self, which does one love more? One's own self or material goods, which has more worth? Loss (of self) or possession (of goods), which is the greater evil? Therefore: He who loves most spends most, He who hoards much loses much. The contented man meets no disgrace; who know when to stop runs into no danger - He can long endure.

3. THE VIRTUE OF WATER AND THE MECHANISM OF SOFT POWER

Lao Tzi said: The highest kindness is being like water, which is benefiting everything in this world but never competing with anyone. Many Chinese and foreign masters from ancient and modern time, consider water is something extraordinary. Thales used to say: water is the source of all things, and all things return back to water.

Water has a few essential qualities. First of all, water can be infinitely subdivided. It means that, water can flow through a slot no matter how wide or narrow it is. No other matter in this world has this quality other than gas. In this case we see that Bill Gates has given his company a wonderful name: Microsoft (micro-soft). Think about it, isn't it about water? The extreme quality of the micro soft is water. Secondly, water has the carrying quality. In water, fish can swim, seaweed can grow, ship can move. Thirdly, water has the quality of penetration. Water has got this great power that being able to penetrate through the sponge, gold and silver, air etc.; it can even penetrate the stone or the wall. Overall, we say that the "Microsoft" quality of water enables it to be able to be in peace and harmony with all that is in this world.

In the realm of Buddhism Dharma, the wisdom of water is considered to be transcendent and divine. That is why, it is said that "the quality of water is the heart of Buddha".

Water can also reflect other things, and actually it can be used as a mirror. This is also considered to be the wisdom of water: enlightenment. Only enlightenment can reflect all that is.

But there is a premise for water to be able to reflect other things: being pure and calm. The contaminated water cannot reflect, neither can the raging water. Only the pure, still water can reflect the other and generate wisdom. One of the practices from Buddhism Dharma is “the wisdom is born from stillness”. Being pure and calm is stillness, and the reflecting capacity is wisdom. Water is originally formless; because of its formlessness, it can reflect other things. This is the same meaning as being taught is Buddhism Dharma: “No Dharma can be spoken; whereas Dharma is infinite.”

Only the extremely clear and clean water can be absolutely calm. The surface of water used to be considered as a standard to refer to for another plane. And when the water mirrors, all that is can be reflected, without priority or minority. This is considered as equality. Since water is simply mirroring all that is, showing their own reality, without decoration, distortion, correction or pretention. It is honestly showing the truth, and we could call this sincerity. No matter joy or sorrow, water always feels with all that is, this is what they call “love without reason, since we are all connected”, which is compassion.

To conclude, water has five qualities: sincerity, tranquility, equality, awareness and compassion. These are exactly what the Buddha’s heart is about, as well as the source of soft power. Although soft power is formless, its power is unbelievable.

4. THE LAWS FOR SOFT POWER’S GERMINATION AND FUNCTION

Morality (Tao De) is the greatest soft power as well as the source, basis of soft power. What we call Tao is, the universe, nature, society are functioning according to their own rules; while De is that we obey the great Tao of universe, the rules of the time-space, the principle of a society. What are these rules and principles from the perspective of the germination and function of soft power then? How do we understand it? How do we apply it? And how to avoid harming the soft power?

The cause and effect principle of soft power: Everything in this world, comes from Tao, they are the results of boundless karma. The virtue and values are the causes for the endogenous soft power, hard power, and finally the exogenous soft power.

Yin-Yang principle of soft power (Neutralization and balance principle): endogenous soft power, hard power and exogenous soft power are always interconnected and dynamically balanced; otherwise, there will be imbalance and dissipation.

The holographic principle of soft power: it is said that anything in this world is a microcosm of the universe; a human, an organization, or a society are all considered as a small universe, since their genes contain

the consciousness and information of the holographic universe. Similarly, from one element of the soft power, we could glimpse the overall view of it and the essence of the hard power.

The inductive principle of soft power (the law of attraction): the consciousness and energy that one is resonating with, will determine what kind of soft power one has, in turn will attract corresponding consciousness and energy and the soft power from other and in the world.

Mindfulness principle of soft power: it is considered that the power of the mind is infinite, in this way, where there is positive knowledge, positive sense, and a positive mind, there’s positive energy, and then real soft power will be germinated.

The endogenous principle of soft power (internal law): it is believed that soft power can’t be obtained from outside you. On one hand, it is there in our heart, on the other hand, stillness, inner practice, and living in the now would help to gain soft power.

The oneness principle of soft power: endogenous soft power, hard power, soft power are originally one, it is our world of duality and the concept in our mind that have separated them. Only when we have the right understanding of the relationship among the three, we could become one with the soft power. Oneness of the soft and the hard is the right path, only oneness could return to the soft power of its renewal.

Now let’s take a look at most common used word in our daily life conversations, which is “I”, and the power in thought, and the soft power of our desires.

The real cracking of the character “I (我)” actually happened at the beginning of the 20th century, when the oracle was discovered. At that time, in order to crack these characters from the oracle, the experts used the bronze inscriptions from the Shang and Zhou Age as reference, and finally they found that the character “I(我)” is a pictographic one, and originally it means very lethal weapon. From then on, the real meaning of “I” started to be understood by people.

Let’s see the composition and illustration of the modern Chinese character “我 (I)”: the first part is a “丿”, the same from the first half from the character human “人”; then underneath “丿” there is a “扌”, which is often related to the hand of man; on the right part, there’s a “戈”, meaning a cleaver, which symbolizes the desire of a man, is competing, killing the human nature. We could see that this “I” which full of desires, is half human half beast nature. The ancient Chinese saying “a butcher becomes a Buddha the moment he drops his cleaver”, isn’t talking about butchers, criminals or murderers, it’s actually telling us to let go our ego, then we’ll become a real human. Because ego is not our real self, is not the essential self, it’s only a concept, an illusion, which is negative energy. There’s another ancient Chinese, which is commonly misunderstood, the real

meaning is actually is, if a man does not practice himself/herself good, the heaven and earth will be destroyed.

We could see that from different source and energy, very different soft power could be generated. No matter for an individual, or organization, the right source of kindness and virtue is the foundation for the soft power to be implemented successfully, while egoism is the biggest obstacle.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the soft real power is the endogenous soft power, rather than a concept in the logical mind, or can it be artificially constructed. It is something from within, sourced in kindness and love, it is the rightful awareness, mind, action and behavior. It lies in the heart of people, it is the universal consciousness, and knowing of the Tao.

Lao Tzi has taught us a long time ago: “Leaders are

supposed to take the heart of people to his own; governing a great state is like cooking small fish, using the right thing”.

Our new leaders in China have already been understood and realized: to apply the universal Tao, to treat the people well, and to benefit everyone.

To conclude, the formation mechanism and germination of the soft power is: “*Man models himself after the Earth; The Earth models itself after Heaven; The Heaven models itself after Tao; Tao models itself after nature.*”

The external models itself after the hard; the hard models itself after the soft; the soft models itself after the internal; the internal models itself after heart.

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