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Research Article

Diaspora Civil Society: The Nexus of Civil Society, Soft Power and Foreign Policy

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Abstract

Introduction: This article analyzes the connection between Civil Society, Soft Power and Foreign Policy in the rubrics of international politics. The link between the concepts hinges on the fact that while civil societies are being used as foreign policy tools, the latter is considered a significant beneficiary of the former. Moreover, as foreign policy becomes a component of soft power, the latter posits a persuasive approach to the former.

Method: This research adopts concept mapping methods to explain the mutual relationships among the three concepts. By extracting pertinent articles from the Web of Science database and creating a map, we examine and provide the foundation of our article that there are relationships among the three notions.

Results or Findings: The research found out that the trio concepts have symbiotic relations, which work in unison to promote a nation's interest. Within these relations we concludes that Civil Society is increasingly becoming relevant as a tool in foreign affairs.

Discussion or Conclusion: In the post-COVID-19 era, civil societies have emerged as influential actors not only in domestic governance but also in advancing foreign policy objectives through soft power. Their growing involvement demonstrates the interconnection between civil society, soft power, and foreign policy. By complementing state diplomacy with cultural, humanitarian, and developmental initiatives, civil societies reinforce national influence abroad. This synergy illustrates how these three dimensions collectively enhance a nation's global image and strategic interests in contemporary international relations.

Keywords: civil society, soft power, foreign policy, concept mapping, relations

JEL Codes: F50, F51, F53, F59

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Araştırma Makalesi

Diaspora Sivil Toplumu: Sivil Toplum, Yumuşak Güç ve Dış Politikanın Bağlantı Noktası

Yusuf Abubakar Wara^a & MD. Nazmul Islam^b

Öz

Giriş: Bu makale, uluslararası politikanın çerçevesi içinde sivil toplum, yumuşak güç ve dış politika arasındaki bağlantıyı analiz etmektedir. Bu kavramlar arasındaki ilişki, sivil toplumların dış politika aracı olarak kullanılmasına dayanırken, dış politikanın da sivil toplumdan önemli ölçüde fayda sağlaması gerçeğine dayanmaktadır. Ayrıca, dış politikanın yumuşak gücün bir bileşeni haline gelmesiyle, yumuşak güç dış politikaya yönelik ikna edici bir yaklaşım ortaya koymaktadır.

Yöntem: Bu araştırma, üç kavram arasındaki karşılıklı ilişkileri açıklamak için kavram haritalama yöntemlerini benimsemektedir. Web of Science veri tabanından ilgili makaleleri çıkararak, üç kavram arasında ilişkiler olduğunu inceleyip makalemizin temelini oluşturmaktayız. Varsayımımızı desteklemek için, üç kavram arasındaki ilişkileri açıkça gösteren bir harita oluşturduk.

Sonuçlar ya da Bulgular: Araştırma, üçlü kavramların, bir ulusun çıkarlarını desteklemek için uyum içinde çalışan simbiyotik ilişkilere sahip olduğunu ortaya koydu. Bu ilişkiler içinde, Sivil Toplumun dış ilişkilerde giderek daha önemli bir araç haline geldiği sonucuna varmaktayız.

Tartışma ya da Yapılan Çıkarımlar: COVID-19 sonrası dönemde, sivil toplumlar yalnızca iç yönetimde değil, aynı zamanda yumuşak güç yoluyla dış politika hedeflerinin ilerletilmesinde de etkili aktörler olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Sivil toplumun artan katılımı, sivil toplum, yumuşak güç ve dış politika arasındaki karşılıklı bağlantıyı göstermektedir. Kültürel, insani ve kalkınma girişimleriyle devlet diplomasisini tamamlayan sivil toplumlar, ülkenin dış etkisini güçlendirmektedir. Bu etkileşim, bu üç boyutun birlikte bir ulusun küresel imajını ve stratejik çıkarlarını nasıl geliştirdiğini açıkça ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: sivil toplum, yumuşak güç, dış politika, kavram haritalama, ilişkiler

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Introduction

The trio (civil society, soft power, and foreign policy) are undoubtedly intertwined, interwoven, and interconnected in the rubrics of international politics. They have a symbiotic relationship, as each tends to benefit from the offspring of the other. Civil society, which is generally classified as a 'third sector' behind state and public enterprises (Gidron, 2010) has been serving as a medium for presenting the voice of the voiceless, addressing climate change issues, tackling refugee crises, and other international issues under the auspice of global civil society, which this article ventures to termed *Diaspora Civil Society*. The aim is to examine how civil societies are used as a soft power tool to promote foreign policy in the global village.

In the contemporary global village that has a robust and dynamic network of non-state and non-commercial organizations working rigorously to supplement the government efforts in economic, social, political, diplomatic, and education, thereby serving as the informal agents of education and modernization (Öztürk, 2024), civil society is a shining example of virtue that is acting as a solid foundation for leveraging soft power and foreign policy. Civil societies have a crucial role in contemporary international politics since states have relatively less power compared to the increasing influence of non-state actors. This has resulted in a diverse international system where non-state players have taken on more significant roles in areas formerly the exclusive domain of states (Ogunnubi & Tella, 2017).

Civil societies are now important domestic and international political players, acting as diplomatic representatives of their home countries abroad and as philanthropic or developmental organizations. This is feasible due to the increasing globalization of civil societies, which enables them to combine descriptive and normative elements, as well as politics and ethics, history and rhetoric, in nearly equal proportions to promote a favorable global community (Kumar, 2008). In rendering series of services in the international arena civil societies intentionally or unintentionally promotes the foreign policies of their home countries, a function which this article intends to evaluate.

As this article defines, Global civil societies or diaspora civil societies are non-state actors serving humanitarians outside their home states in different parts of the world. They so serve either directly or indirectly to forward the foreign policies of their countries. The growing worldwide relevance of civil society generates cross-over effect. This impact shape public opinion by enabling legislators in one nation to influence those of another. This dynamic is called the International Relations of Civil Society (Inoguchi, 2012). The concept of the relevancy of civil societies in international affairs gives room to the idea of projecting state actors' foreign policies or diplomatic aims via these non-state actors in the contemporary global village.

Civil societies are considered non-coercive entities that states utilize as soft power tools to exert influence over other actors in the international arena and manipulate their actions according to the state's desires. This non-military strategy aims to enhance the state's significance globally through appeal and attraction, such as development aid by civil societies in development areas (Tiwarý & Roy, 2022). Using civil society to further foreign policy through a global appeal by nations provided the foundation of the connection between the trio. This study examines the connection between civil society, soft power, and foreign policy, which has received limited attention in contemporary literature. Moreover, the research sought to highlight the crucial importance of civil society in attaining diplomatic goals to capture the attention of national governments.

Literature Review

The content review utilized the Clarivate Web of Science Database, widely recognized as a reliable source for scientific research. The terms "Civil Society," "Global Civil Society," "Soft Power," and "Foreign Policy" were employed as keywords to search for the relevant articles for the review.

Civil Society

Otherwise known as the "third force or sector," it is a nongovernmental and non-commercial organization offering humanitarian functions in different sections that include but are not limited to advocacy, relief assistance, first aid, and developmental roles in and outside its home state. Even though there are numerous interpretations associated with civil society, its anthropology can be traced to Cicero's notion of *societas civilis* and Aristotle's concept of *koinonia politika*, which are the earliest terminologies that made civil societies to become synonymous with political institutions and organizations (Ogawa, 2009). The connection between civil society and political institutions stems from the fact that civil society is inherently inclined towards civility. This is the primary reason why the concept could only have gained much popularity and became a widely disputed topic, particularly after the collapse of communist or totalitarian nations in the 1980s (Ossewaarde, 2006). After first becoming somewhat popular in literature, the idea of civil society began to provide ongoing difficulties in terms of description. Many efforts have been directed toward giving the concept a clear definition. Still, most of these initiatives have had either little or no success in precisely identifying the core of civil society.

In the Tocquevillian tradition, the notion is commonly seen as a reliable means to achieve democracy and effective governance. Civil society is perceived as a network of advocacy groups that operate independently from other sectors to safeguard against government tyranny. It is also seen as a voluntary association where citizens develop their ability to make practical demands on the government (Atibil, 2012). This coincides with the argument of Manners (2002) on the ability to use civilian instrument rather than military, and Galtung's (1973) view of the remulative power as tools for foreign policy. Both have identified the essence of civilian power in international relation which we interpret as being the basis of normative power under the auspices of civil society. Critiques of realist theory find fault in the state-centrism and the use of military might in international politics for being historically incomplete. For instance, Rosenberg (1994) argues that realism detaches nations from the social and economic frameworks that influence their actions, therefore neglecting the historical social organizations that give rise to international relations. He proposes an alternative theory that contextualizes international politics within the extensive concept of civil society, contending that global dominance is perpetuated through economic and social institutions rather than solely through military or strategic rivalry.

Today civil society has become a vital instrument in global politics playing a significant role on a broad range of issues and have significantly impacted environmental policy, international development plans, debt alleviation for developing nations, and human rights legislation (Pallas & Uhlin, 2014). This argument is in line with the view of (Keck & Sikkink, 1998), who assert that Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs) composed of CSOs have become central actors in the contemporary international politics. Through dissemination of credible information politics, they are able to reshape governance and norms at national and international level. A noteworthy aspect of civil society global advocacy role is alignment with discursive and interactive international functions (Rashid & Simpson, 2019.) who argues that

the activism role of civil society in international public policy debate has uplifted it from mere humanitarian agency to a more robust diplomatic tool.

On a different note, civil society is frequently linked to democracy and is often referred to as a breeding ground for democracy (Ramasamy, 2024). This suggests that the emergence of modern democracy can be attributed to the efforts of many social groups within civil society. This is often accurate, given the substantial support that civil society provides to democracy and the recognized influence it exerts on political structures (Van Dijk, 2017). Currently, civil societies are experiencing unprecedented growth in their influence as they establish strong connections with the governing bodies or systems of power. This link that civil society established with the corridor of power made it a vibrant element for achieving diplomatic goals internationally.

The influence of civil society in the diplomatic processes of states gave birth to its new nomenclature, which is universally termed global civil society or, better still, civil society in international relations. David Chandler supports the idea that civil society becomes vital in global affairs because of the constructivist framework, which suggests that power is limited and state interests are changed by international normative structures formed by the interactions of state and non-state actors, including global civil society (Chandler, 2004). With civil society playing a major part, the idea questions the use of armed action in handling world affairs and supports adherence to normative frameworks to forward foreign policy.

Several developed countries' civil societies are being used to protect their home countries' foreign policy objectives, mainly in the developing world, pinpointing the magnificence of civil society in international relations. For instance, Canadian civil societies have emerged as a voluntary means of strengthening Canadian influences, often known as soft power, and advancing the implementation of Canadian foreign policy globally (April, 2009).

Soft Power

The concept of soft power is highly regarded by regions, organizations, and countries that appreciate peaceful and diplomatic procedures for reaching goals or enticing influence in the international environment. The concept is neither military nor economic might but normative attitudes via cultural values, sports, music, films, and media. Joseph Nye is credited with coining the term "soft power" and defining it as the capacity to achieve desired results by attraction rather than force or financial incentives (Kulkova, 2021: 106). Throughout history, various forms of power have been employed to acquire influence and manipulate other parties into behaving in ways they would not have otherwise. Kingdoms and empires have historically exerted various forms of power, including hard, soft, and bright. However, it was during the end of the Cold War period that Joseph Nye, in his influential book "Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power" published in 1990, introduced the concept of "soft power" for the first time, giving it a conceptual significance (Yavuzaslan & Cetin, 2016).

Power is no longer limited to military strength alone. Concepts such as economic, political, human, and technological power have received significant attention in literature. Regardless of the category or perspective from which power is considered, its purpose and objective for use remain constant. As Morgenthau (1949), a prominent figure in the realist school, astutely noted, power entails having authority over the thoughts and behaviors of others. Regardless of the type of power employed, the fundamental objective is to achieve the intended outcome of influencing and directing the thoughts and behaviors of others by the intentions of those in positions of authority. Many nations are choosing to adopt universal principles and use soft power instead of hard power to reach their intended outcomes in the modern world today

due to the inefficiencies and great cost of conventional power sources and the bad effects usually connected with them. This change also resulted from the ambiguity and complexity of conflicts like the Russian-Ukraine War.

Regarding the origins and means of power, hard power relies on coercive diplomacy, economic sanctions, military intervention, and the establishment of military alliances. On the other hand, soft power draws upon cultural, moral, and political values cultivated through training activities and various forms of artistic expression such as sports, theater, and leadership. Therefore, since civil societies have no troops and are not-for-profit motives, they cannot supplement the state's complex power maneuvers; they can only perfectly fit in promoting diplomatic procedures under the auspices of soft power. Soft power entails culture, sports, and numerous humanitarian activities that civil societies are established to perform and promote. In order to strengthen the connection between civil society, soft power, and public diplomacy or foreign policy, Çiçek provides a precise analysis that suggests politics should be conducted by society, so transforming diplomacy into a civilian endeavor. For this reason, in the contemporary global society, civil actors and the public have become essential participants in diplomacy (Çiçek, 2022).

Civil society plays a crucial role in developing and implementing soft power, as Nye (2005) correctly suggested. Soft power encompasses a country's historical, geographical, and cultural diversity, as well as its economic strength, social structure, democratic progress, prevalence and influence of civil society organizations, scientific and technological infrastructure, and values such as art and sports that contribute to intellectual and social life.

The inquiry pertains to the correlation between civil society and soft power and the relationship between soft power and foreign policy. In order to address this topic, we must examine one of Nye's interpretations of soft power that established the connection between the three elements. He believes that governments with the power to enforce their preferences, cultural values, and institutional structures through their domestic and foreign policies can cultivate an appealing image, with soft power being the key determinant (Nye, 2005). In order to be appealing, governments may only do this by implementing institutional frameworks that involve both governmental and nongovernmental entities, including civil society.

Foreign Policy

A country's foreign policy is its diplomatic design and foreign architectural methodology applied in the global environment to achieve the desired foreign policy goals. Foreign policy is the whole strategy and method used by a sovereign state interacting with other governments worldwide. Under government direction and backing, several diplomatic procedures and institutions carry out this policy. Like civil society, these kinds of groups could be either governmental or nonprofit. Foreign policy, as defined by Watson (1982) and reported by Wasike et al. (2015), refers to the specific goals and objectives that a country seeks to achieve in its interactions with other nations and international governmental organizations (Wasike, Kimokoti & Wekesa, 2015).

In its broadest sense, foreign policy refers to a state's strategic approach to cultivating relationships with other countries to advance its national interests and goals on the global stage. The field of foreign policy analysis aims to comprehend the dynamics of state-to-state and state-to-non-state actor interactions within the global system (Canyurt, 2025). This diplomatic contact is facilitated by collaborating with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and interactive technologies like the Internet. These platforms contribute to the formation of a global civil society and give rise to pressure groups, such as Amnesty International or Greenpeace,

which play a significant role in shaping the foreign policies of governments (Bélanger, 1999). In the modern world, non-state actors, such as civil societies, are becoming more popular in global affairs due to the massive rise of soft power attitudes and the chronic failures of challenging, complex power behaviors, which are costly, complicated, and contain complete uncertainty whenever applied.

By helping to create a complete knowledge of foreign policy that transcends realism, power, and security, non-state actors significantly help nations' foreign policy to be advanced. This covers diplomatic frameworks including humanitarian help, worldwide integration, and international collaboration with civil societies.

The essential tenets of foreign policy are power, realism, security, and diplomacy. Power, defined as the strength and ability to control the actions of others and force them to behave in ways they would not have otherwise, plays a crucial role in implementing foreign policy. States that prioritize using power to achieve domestic and foreign goals often strategically position themselves in a superior asymmetric status in their relationships with other states during international relations (Wilson & Kwon, 2018). Just as the realists opine, states inherently utilize power to maneuver into and defend their comfortable positions in the global arena. Realists give state use of power enormous weight in order to accomplish both domestic and foreign objectives. Unlike realism, diplomacy has become quite important in foreign policy since it depends on soft power instead than more aggressive strategies.

When power is exerted using more forceful means such as threats, coercion, rewards, or incentives, it rarely produces significant desired outcomes and leads to multiple dire consequences. Wilson and Kwon (2018) further argue that when power is mainly employed, it becomes challenging to foster constructive international relations; however, when the influence and authority in foreign policy and conflicts are perceived with a more lenient perspective, as opposed to an essentially pragmatic view of international relations and a focus on military strength, a completely new range of opportunities arises, allowing for the flourishing of a vibrant global civil society. One must realize that foreign policy is shaped not only by internal and external elements. Domestic affairs of a country directly affect its foreign policy. This is seen in many foreign policy assessments by intellectuals and analysts from abroad. Still, a nation's internal power directly affects its power on the world scene.

The domestic strength of a country, which determines its power to influence others in the global arena, is determined by internal factors such as elections, public opinion, and economic interests such as trade and investment (Gimba & Ibrahim, 2018). So, even with a clear distinction between internal and external factors that affect a country's foreign policy, the two depend on each other and have a mutual relationship. Pimparkar (2023) divided the determinants of foreign policy into two significant categories: internal/domestic and external foreign. For him, domestic determinants of foreign policy encompass historical factors, such as national identity, culture, political structure, leadership, economic size and nature, and domestic public opinion. On the other hand, external determinants include the international power structure, military strength, alliances and coalitions, geopolitical location, and global public opinion (Pimparkar, 2023).

Civil society is a critical component of public opinion in determining foreign policy. According to Yeriemieiev (2024), W. L. M. King states that public opinion is a crucial political power mechanism, domestic or global. It informs both the government and civil society about social issues. It can effectively influence decision-making through pressure and persuasion (Yeriemieiev, 2024, p. 33). The crucial aspect of persuasion about the characteristics of public

opinion is the essential elements that position civil society within the realm of public opinion in advocating for domestic and systemic policies by states. Civil civilizations exemplify collaboration, coordination, moral persuasion, flattery, and inducement. They constantly win the respect and backing of the people they help. By virtue of their excellent behavior while in a foreign nation, their home countries benefit and they are therefore essential in advancing foreign policy.

Because of their complex character influenced by various factors including domestic politics, economic interests, international frameworks, and geographic concerns, civil society organizations can engage in the wide field of foreign policy. Among the components of international structures are the civil societies and regional/international organizations that substantially influence a state's foreign policy formation.

Methodology

This research adopts concept mapping to determine the connections and relationships between civil society, soft power, and foreign policy. Concept mapping, which is used to determine the relationship and linking of certain words or phrases (Pinandito, et al., 2021), is no more than qualitative analysis that indicates similarity value in the conceptual comparison presented on a map (Chang, et al., 2005). In other words, it is a network of concepts learned through comprehensive research that are used with specific linking phrases to portray logical relationships (Javonillo & Martin-Dunlop, 2019). In order to ascertain this relationship, we read relevant articles and website materials from relevant organizations and then present our argument in three significant stages.

Firstly, we elucidate the trio concepts (civil society, soft power, and foreign policy) through a literature review using relevant articles from the Clarivate Web of Science Database. This is to give us room for brainstorming on the meanings and features of the concepts as they are applied in international relations.

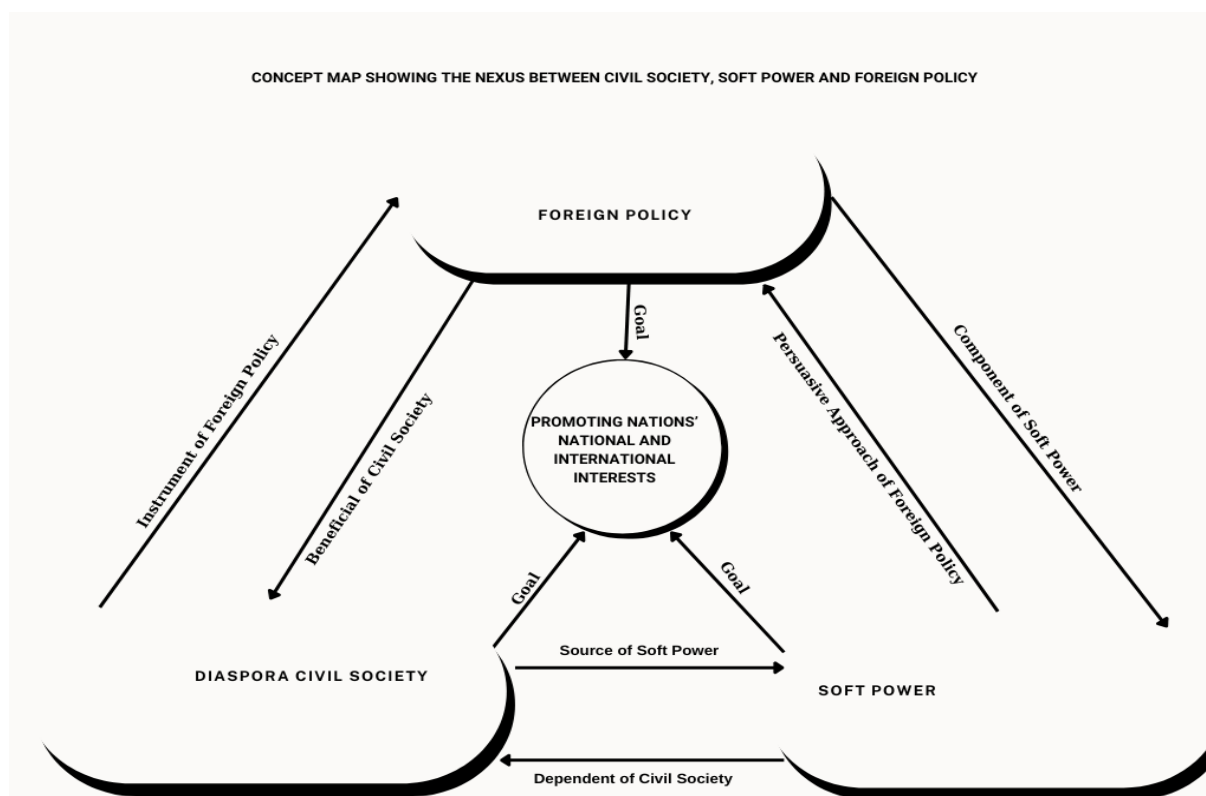
Secondly, through literature review, we pinpoint some specific significant ideas, functions, and actions that justify that civil societies are instruments of soft power and thereby connected to the foreign policy rubrics of a country.

Thirdly, we drew the concept map using some linking phrases to justify the logical relationships between the three variables in our discussion.

While this method offers a systematic visual depiction of the correlations among the adopted factors in our research, it falls short in capturing the nuanced, contextual details that alternative methodologies, like case studies might produce (Yin, 2018). To facilitate a profound, contextual comprehension of events, we shall integrate case studies with concept map to reduce oversimplified abstractions.

Figure 1

Concept Map Showing the Nexus Between Civil Society, Soft Power and Foreign Policy



Note. Created by the author using Canva software.

This concept map shows connections between civil society, soft power, and foreign policy. It highlights the symbiotic relationship and connections between the three interdependent variables.

Discussion

As discussed in our first stage, where we review the literature and, in the map, above, the three variables are directly similar in the focus question of projecting a nation's national and international interests. In other words, it is indicated that there are intricate relationships and connections among civil society, soft power, and foreign policy, considering the numerous real-world examples in several countries.

In the contemporary world, civil society is increasingly becoming relevant in most countries' foreign policy promoters through the magnificent roles they play under the auspices of soft power in which they indirectly promote their country's cultural values and foster diplomatic relations between their home country and the country they serve. Moreover, civil societies are also seen as a bridge that allows international networks between several actors in the international arena. Civil societies originating from advanced countries and serving in developing countries through advocacy and mobilization influence public opinion, thereby generating support for foreign policy initiatives. By drawing attention to violations of human rights, they can gather momentum and help to improve the diplomatic leverage of their native country. Civil society shapes public opinion by campaign lobbying and research, so it is intimately linked with soft power and foreign policy. For instance, Amnesty International mobilizes the government to curtail human rights violations worldwide. Some pro-environment

civil societies also campaign against environmental pollution to protect our climate (Mittag, 2012).

Countries adopt soft power strategies through civil societies, such as cultural diplomacy, educational assistance, and international assistance. Advanced countries fund cultural initiatives supporting their language, art, and customs through civil society. These strategies and participation in global concerns like humanitarian relief and climate change may help a country's image even more, thereby attracting it as a partner for foreign affairs.

A significant connection between civil societies, soft power, and foreign policy lies in the fact that in addition to cultural and political values, foreign policy becomes a vital component of soft power when prioritizing diplomacy and collaboration over military intervention. Moreover, soft power adopted to utilize cultural diplomacy, communication, and building partnerships is a giant foreign policy approach alongside hard power and multi-stakeholder engagement.

The interconnection of the trio can be further buttressed by the fact that advocacy efforts of civil societies in a particular country can promote the country's soft power by showcasing its commitment to democracy, cultural exchanges, and human rights protection. Civil societies can also be instrumental in shaping a country's foreign policy through lobbying, representing citizens' interests, and providing relevant feedback to help redesign foreign policies to meet and satisfy national and international interests. In most countries today, civil societies are considered an indispensable connotation of the soft power strategy because they help shape countries' democracy, justice system, national image, and public diplomacy (Sun & Li, 2011).

The striking nexus between civil society, soft power, and foreign policy lies in the notion that as civil society serves as an instrument of foreign policy, so does foreign policy posit as a beneficiary of civil society. Moreover, as foreign policy stands as a component of soft power, so does soft power become a persuasive approach to foreign policy. In the same vein, soft power sits as dependent on civil society, and so does civil society's position as a source of soft power.

Civil society is perceived as a tool of foreign policy in the sense that it appears to be one of the vital avenues of addressing global issues as well as an institution of promoting cultural diplomacy, thereby winning the hearts and minds of the citizens of the country it serves for its home country (Helmys & Irawan, 2024). For instance, several global civil societies function as agents of peace in pockets of global conflicts such as the Israel-Palestine conflicts or as agents of humanitarian gestures in conflicts that include but are not limited to the Russian-Ukraine war as well as crises in the Central African Republic, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. A typical example of a civil society that functions as an initiator of peace is the Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP), which is an umbrella organization of more than 160 civil societies working in peacebuilding between Israelis and Palestinians (Lyndon, et al., 2024). In the same vein CSOs in diaspora can support their country in times of crisis through raising donations and creating awareness in the global village. The Ukrainian diaspora NGOs mobilized support and donation from the global community to support its army confronting Russian forces while promoting its countries interest in international environment (Kuts, 2023).

Foreign policy is regarded as a beneficiary of civil society, considering that global civil society services in host countries supplement the roles of foreign policy architectures in that they contribute to achieving their home country's international interests. Several countries deliver their foreign aid, which helps to promote their interest through civil societies. Countries/donors such as the European Union, the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Sweden channel more than \$1 billion in assistance to other countries via their

civil societies. These donors that formed more than 47.6 percent of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) protect their foreign policies abroad by assisting third-world countries through their civil societies working in the diaspora (Tomlinson, 2013). For this reason, we can extrapolate that foreign policy benefits from civil society by making them an avenue to reach its goal in the global village.

Foreign policy is considered a component of soft power on the hinges that soft power is the inner room that utilizes culture and political values as well as foreign policy to enact a change in the international system. For instance, the action of some transnational civil societies in collaboration with some governments to ban landmines supports the notion that foreign policy is a component of soft power (Carothers, 2000).

Soft power is tagged as a persuasive approach to foreign policy because it uses positive attraction and persuasion rather than force to achieve foreign policy goals. The principle of soft power lies in the rubrics of public diplomacy, which entails the adoption of ideas, culture, sports, education, and cuisines to lure others into doing what they want, to manipulate their motives through tactical maneuvers to achieve the desired foreign policy objectives (Ali, 2022). This approach that contradicts the use of force is one of the pillars of foreign policy besides military and economic strategies. Today, considering the failures of challenging power applications, several countries opt for soft power techniques to advance their foreign policy.

Soft power is viewed as a dependent of civil society based on the fact that it is primarily located in civil society as it begins at home, more to society, then domestic and to international (Nisbett, 2015). The bases of soft power been a dependent on civil society can be traced to the assumption of Gramsci that sees political society and civil society as significant in determining the outcome of public diplomacy. The fact that hegemony is necessary in exacting influence through society, culture, class, economy, and ideology that generally emanate from civil societies makes it necessary to regard soft power as dependent on civil society (Yukaruç, 2017). The basis of every soft power is to exact influence to make target groups react to the whims and comprises of a particular institution or state; however, the influence must not be tricky like that of military or economic strength, but it has to be soft that includes motivational strategies and humanitarian approaches that are part of the functions of civil societies.

Civil society functions as a strategic conduit of soft power based on the justification that in the contemporary world, most of the country's soft power emanates from its civil society (Nye, 2017). In other words, the persuasion strategies needed to promote the objective of foreign policy is naturally embedded with the civil societies. Civil societies serve different countries in the modern world, especially in humanitarian and developmental perspectives. By so doing, they become a source of foreign policy in their home countries because most developed countries soften part of their foreign policy development through their civil societies. Global civil societies nowadays collaborate with their home country to foster foreign relations by promoting their countries' cultural values in the countries where they function. For instance, Canadian non-governmental organizations have been actively engaged in forms of long-distance nationalism, contributing meaningfully to political transformations in Southeast Asia. Additionally, the Canadian Asia Pacific Working Group (APWG), operating under the Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC), brings together NGOs, faith-based organizations, unions, and solidarity networks from across Canada, all of which share a strong commitment to development, social justice, and human rights in Asia (Kusno, 2023). The APWG has consistently advocated for the inclusion of Asian perspectives and experiences in policy dialogue and development initiatives, thereby exemplifying the notion of “diaspora civil society” examined in this article.

Conclusion

The connection between civil society, soft power, and foreign policy is strongly justified by the notion of Nye (2004), who suggested that civil society is a strategic source of a country's soft power alongside culture, history, and domestic political arrangement. The concept, which is generally defined as the ability of a country to promote its foreign policy objectives through persuasions rather than military might or economic sanctions, is supported by civil society (Shah, et al., 2017). The support rendered by civil society to soft power strategies that foster a more assertive foreign policy of a country justifies the nexus between the three concepts in international relations.

In this article, we drew a concept map after reviewing relevant literature to justify the links between civil society, soft power, and foreign policy in international affairs. As shown on the map, we find out that while civil society can be an instrument of foreign policy, foreign policy can benefit from civil society. This is particularly true in achieving foreign policy goals; countries use civil society as an agent of persuasion to make citizens of other countries appreciate their efforts in that country, thereby promoting their image and fostering their global foreign policy objectives. Similarly, civil society helps foreign policy prosper; by mobilizing public opinion and increasing awareness, civil societies not only affect the formulation but also help to promote the foreign policy of their native country abroad.

Another reason for pinpointing the link of the trio variables is that while foreign policy is an element of soft power, soft power is a non-coercive method of foreign policy. Unlike military and economic might that opt for the hard way to achieve foreign policy aims, soft power chooses the more skillful way through inducement and convincing, which are carried out by civil society and other institutions of soft power to ensure a successful foreign policy plan. Through knowledge sharing, education strategies, cultural richness, historical trace, and diplomatic skills, soft power projects its home countries' foreign policy worldwide (Erdil, 2022). A country's historical traces, art, and innovation are disseminated most by civil societies' efforts, which make them an inseparable part of foreign policy.

The link between the three concepts can be further buttressed because while soft power depends on civil society, the latter is regarded as a source of the former. Countries worldwide adopt innovative power, combining soft and hard power to achieve their goals. While hard power comprises military and economic strength, whose sources are soldiers and sanctions, soft power uses humanitarian and cultural institutions, including nongovernmental organizations such as civil societies. These organizations complement their government efforts in promoting both domestic and foreign policies. They assist in external issues in a variety of areas including advocacy, democratic uplifting, human rights projection, reconciliation, encouragement of women equality, poverty reduction, and corruption prevention in a particular country. Civil societies increase their home countries' acceptability through these services abroad, allowing for resilient foreign policy processes.

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