

Soft and Normative Power: The Importance and Power of Attraction in International Politics and Economics

***“Global Citizens”* As a Cultural Diplomacy Tool**

Merve Hande Akmehmet

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Synopsis

Governments that leverage the “*global citizens*” within their nation as a cultural diplomacy tool will transform this workforce into a synchronized group of “*cultural citizens*”, who can systematically promote the norms and ideals of their nation or normative power to increase its’ power of attraction within the international community. This transformation increases the normative power’s ability to provide leadership in the growing global political economy, contributes to its’ political stability, enables it to achieve economic welfare indirectly without applying economic sanctions, as well as allowing it to respond effectively to cultural and political events ranging from human rights programs and civic initiatives, to evolving security threats, and environmental degradation.

Previous Rhetoric

The discussion of normative power within the context of cultural diplomacy is a very deep and multidimensional topic. Throughout the 20th century, there was the rise of the civil rights organizations or the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with different levels of cooperation including national, international, city-wide and community-oriented NGOs. Later on, the world has seen the emergence of the governmental organizations (GOs) where the governments openly used culture as an instrument of state policy to infuse norms within a system. Civil organizations with or without the direct involvement of governments proved to be useful tools, and thus always stayed close to the core of the forces shaping cultural diplomacy.

All the rhetoric towards the concepts around hard power (military) vs. soft power¹, as well as normative actors has provided a solid base in reflecting the political order and cultural diplomacy with great depth. The concept of “normative power” has emerged, as states continuously looked for additional ways to infuse norms within a system. Normative power refers to the power of governing the creation, deletion, or modification of norms within a system² or society, and thus entails a strong power of attraction. European leaders describe the desire by other countries to accede to the European Union as a sign of Europe’s soft power.³ Soft power is the ability to obtain an objective through co-option and attraction, whereas smart power is the ability to combine soft power with hard power or military resources, and turn them into effective strategies.⁴ Culture, values, economic resources, policies, public opinion and military resources all play a part in the intensity of a nation’s diplomatic power.

The global information age today, calls for the definition of an additional player that any nation aiming to become a normative power has to bring on board with a collaborative approach. It is the concept of “*global citizens*”. Mobilizing an organized “*global citizens*” workforce to obtain preferred outcomes within or outside of the social networking space will be a crucial strategy in increasing a nation’s credibility and power of attraction.

¹ Joseph S. Nye Jr.; “*Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*”, April 2005

² Nir Oren, Michael Luck, Simon Miles; “*A Model of Normative Power*”, March 2010

³ Joseph S. Nye Jr.; “*The Future of Power*”, February 2011

⁴ Joseph S. Nye Jr.; “*The Future of Power*”, February 2011

Defining the “Global Citizens”

As a result of the global information age, the citizens of world nations are increasingly leading global lives where they conduct their work in different countries, while contributing to the societies of many different nations culturally and monetarily. Their rate of information exchange per day is much higher than regular localized citizens that most models out there expect nations to have. These “*global citizens*” can be defined -but not restricted to-, as workforces with access to manage social network profiles personally or professionally, and/ or who have the ability to harness real-time information influence on masses. They drive a high rate of participation within their own expertise areas, whether be it through micro-blogging about the environment, social networking, publishing news stories about independent court systems, sharing market trends on their own websites, circulating national poems on blogs, chat rooms, or through their involvement in strategic communications channels, foreign assistance programs, civic action or economic reconstruction. These culturally hyper-active citizens can be found in every country in the world, as they also constitute the workforce in multinational institutions, corporations and governments. *Global citizens* hold careers in Zurich, Berlin or Washington, with future goals of learning Mandarin while living in China.

Richard T. Arndt argues that “cultural relations occur naturally between people in different nations as a result of trade, tourism, student exchanges, entertainment, communications, migration, or intermarriage. But cultural diplomacy only happens when a government decides to channel and to support cultural exchange through planned programs to promote broad national interests.”⁵ The same notion holds true for the “*global citizens*” workforce. They have emerged to become the new face of cultural relations in nations, conducting all the activities that Arndt defines, in addition to being the utmost users of social media tools and worldwide information platforms. Nevertheless, cultural diplomacy will only happen when a government decides to channel and support this information exchange through planned programs and initiatives.

Leveraging the “*global citizens*” workforce towards promoting its national interests, is a very crucial soft power strategy for any nation aiming to increase its’ power of attraction and political-appeal in international politics and economics. Now, let’s examine this concept with two examples.

Two Examples: US & EU

One example for the emerging workforce of the “*global citizens*” can be found in the U.S. economy in spite of the continually aging workforce that the American economy is characterized with. The number of workers aged 40 or older in the United States constituted approximately 54% of the total U.S. workforce in 2010.⁶ In spite of this trend, the global information age has become an “equalizing” factor in respect to age in the United States. By October 2010, more than 71% of U.S. households were using high-speed broadband access or dial-up services.⁷ The statistics are even higher on job-related internet usage statistics. Despite the continually aging workforce, the usage of internet and social media in the U.S. has shown significant increases. Figure 1 below provides a macro overview of consumer adoption of social media in sixteen countries, and contributes greatly in explaining the increasing trend of the “*global citizen*” workforce in the U.S.

According to the Global State of Social Media Report published by the Global Web Index⁸ in September 2010, more than 70% of Americans have been engaging in social media platforms every month. As seen

⁵ Richard T. Arndt; “*The First Resort of Kings: American Cultural Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century*”, February 2007

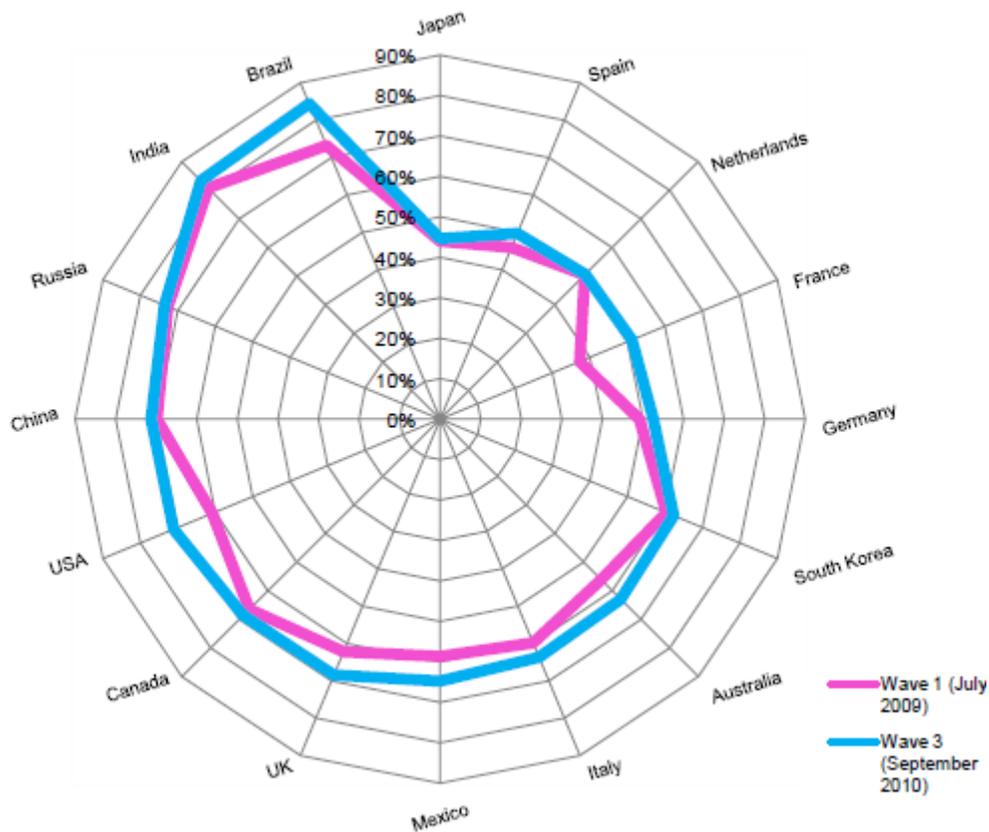
⁶ Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Household Data Annual Averages 2010*, <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat3.pdf>

⁷ U.S. Dept. of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA); “*Digital Nation, Expanding Internet Usage*”, February 2011

⁸ Global Web Index, Tom Smith; “*Global State of Social Media in 2011 Report*”, *Social Media Week*, February 2011

from Figure 1 below, for the U.S., the monthly percentage of social media involvement was actually in the 60% range in July 2009 (as presented in Wave 1), with increasing to 70% by September 2010 (as presented in Wave 3). This was a very impressive jump of 10%, which contributes greatly towards explaining the increasing trend towards the rise of the “*global citizen*” workforce in the U.S., who actively conducts business on the internet, leveraging social media tools and social commerce. Whether or not these citizens, defined under the “*global citizen*” workforce, conduct travel physically through the borders, or virtually via the internet, their increased participation in data streams in real time, and cultural exposure to peoples of different nations, provides a readily-equipped platform for the U.S. government to weigh-in.

Figure 1. Percentage (%) of monthly involvement in social media by country. (Social network users, micro-blog users, video uploaders, news writers and blog writers) Wave 1 represents July 2009 results. Wave 3 represents September 2010 results.



Source: Global Web Index, Tom Smith; “Global State of Social Media in 2011 Report”, Social Media Week, February 2011

There have been many discussions about the U.S. government’s involvement in social media, using social media tools such as YouTube, Facebook, Wikipedia, Twitter, and SecondLife. This has raised a myriad of legal, contractual, and policy questions. The involvement that is described with leveraging the “*global citizen*” workforce is more than just participating in such tools. Currently, social media is not consistently applied across government, and the government has only recently started to show signs in beginning to form a government-wide strategy aligned with national interests. Up until recently, many government employees couldn’t even have access to social media tools at work, as they have been blocked because of certain security measures.

As this paranoia slowly comes to an end, the government will start to fully embrace the level of cultural exchange that can be conducted via social media tools. Governments can set up special servers, intranets and software designed to bring together different clusters of the “*global citizens*” workforce, and

enhance their collaboration under cyber platforms. This collaboration could range anywhere from engaging them in overseas human rights programs and civic initiatives supported by the U.S. government, to their involvement in cultural information exchange programs, providing real-time sensitive data that is collected from the countries that they reside in. Specially-constructed online social media programs can enable military personnel to coordinate and exchange information on test drills and even respond to security threats collectively. The opportunities to utilize the “*global citizens*” workforce are endless, ranging anywhere between diffusing norms affecting international politics to causing shifts in global economic activity. Especially in a resource-hungry world, promoting a controlled-environment of data exchange via the “*global citizens*” workforce will prove to be a great tool of cultural diplomacy not just for the U.S., but for any nation.

The second example for how the “*global citizens*” workforce can be leveraged as a tool of cultural diplomacy can be found in the European Union (E.U.). What constitutes the E.U. as a “normative power” has long been its power to attract and influence, based on its own experience with interstate reconciliation, its response to Fascism and Communism, and commitment to human and minority rights and the rule of law.⁹ As Roy H. Ginsberg argues, “the E.U. has powers of attraction that are empirical (for what the E.U. is), normative (for what the E.U. represents), and putative (for what the E.U. is becoming).”¹⁰ In addition, throughout time, the European Union had an enduring power, while other forms of unity in Europe were all collapsing. This has been a result of the ‘voluntary’ nature of the Union, as opposed to an involuntary/forceful association, as well as a defined figure of common enemy or an external security threat that member nations were unified against. However, E.U.’s enduring system of integration, known as the *acquis communautaire*, does not itself guarantee growth in cooperation in the future. Nor does it guarantee leadership in the growing global political economy or political stability. The E.U. continually looks for means to promote its norms and ideals and means to attract high monetary demand. Targeting the “*global citizens*” workforce among its member nations could thus provide a platform to diffuse its norms, and culture as well as an opportunity to increase its’ power of attraction.

The emerging workforce of the “*global citizens*” can be seen in the E.U. countries, with slightly different characteristics. As mentioned before, Figure 1 above, provides a macro overview of consumer adoption of social media in sixteen countries, and contributes greatly in explaining the increasing trend of the “*global citizens*” workforce throughout the world. According to the Global State of Social Media Report, social networking and social media has already reached a mass maturity in some countries, with almost reaching 90% of usage in markets such as Brazil and India by September 2010 (as presented in Wave 3 in Figure 1). This is followed by countries like Russia, China, United States, Canada and the United Kingdom where 70% of the population has been engaging in social media platforms every month. Six out of the sixteen countries that are shown in Figure 1, are members of the European Union, where the social media usage has not yet reached a full maturity. In these countries, approximately 50% of the population has been engaging in social networks by September 2010, which translates to the fact that in the E.U countries, there is still an untapped opportunity of social engagement that the emerging “*global citizens*” of Europe will capture in the near future. Like the U.S. example, the governments of E.U. countries can also set up shared servers and intranets designed to bring together the “*global citizens*” in member nations. For example, this workforce can work together in promoting interstate reconciliation between the ten new countries that joined the Union in 2004 and the rest of the member nations. They can be leveraged in overseas cultural information exchange programs supported by the E.U., or engaged in minority rights initiatives over social media platforms. This coordinated involvement of the “*global citizens*” workforce can contribute greatly to E.U.’s power of attraction and political stability both in the region and international platform.

⁹ Roy H. Ginsberg; “*Demystifying the European Union: The Enduring Logic of Regional Integration*”, April 2010

¹⁰ Roy H. Ginsberg; “*Demystifying the European Union: The Enduring Logic of Regional Integration*”, April 2010

Conclusion

Governments have already established a protectionist and constrained system of censorship policies within the cyberspace, including restrictive filters and firewalls to prevent the discussion of certain materials and propaganda within their nations. More than forty countries now apply some sort of barrier on the web according to the Open Net Initiative (ONI). Nineteen countries have engaged in political censorship, which the ONI describes as “pervasive” in China, Iran, Vietnam, Syria, Burma and Tunisia and “substantial” in Libya, Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia. More than thirty states filter for social reasons, blocking content related to topics such as gambling and drugs. Even the United States and many European states do this “selectively”.¹¹

In a world where one angry “tweet” can fuel a rebellion in a nation, governments need to systematically build a strategy around empowering the “*global citizens*” of their nation to work on their behalf in obtaining preferred outcomes. As discussed above with providing examples from the United States and the European Union, this strategy will have a torpedo effect in turning these “*global citizens*” into “*cultural citizens*”, who will be actively promoting the norms and ideals of their nations via social media, networking events and political platforms in real-time. This is the kind of soft power, and diplomacy weapon that will gain traction in the upcoming years, and governments that engage in such activities will be the leaders of the cultural diplomacy by 2020s.

Lastly, a government or any normative power can face barriers to change in this process. Bureaucracy and entrenched special interests could make the transition difficult. Different “*global citizens*” from different nations can have conflicting interests and may not provide the level of collaboration that is expected at the beginning. Incentives presented by governments will make the transition smoother and ensure the full participation of all parties involved, which is the topic to be enlarged at another discussion.

¹¹ Joseph S. Nye Jr.; “*The Future of Power*”, February 2011

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