

**SOFT POWER FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
THEORIES**Asst. Prof. Dilek CANYURT (Ph.D.)^{*} **ABSTRACT**

The concept of soft power is one of the most popular concepts in policy studies. Despite this, it has not been theoretically clear enough since it was set up. This is because the ambiguities in the concept do not allow generalizations to be made enough to form a theory. The aim of this article is to demonstrate that the concept of soft power can be evaluated within the scope of international relations theories, based on the main idea that the concept of soft power can only be a tool for theories, and thus to make a modest contribution to the theoretical basis of the concept by giving it a place within existing theories. While doing this, three main traditions were focused on since international relations theories cover a wide range. The fact that soft power can take place within realist, liberal, and constructivist paradigms is supported by short analytical examples, and the opinion that soft power resources that cause different results can take place in different paradigms has been formed. It is thought that such a perspective is an important study in terms of facilitating analytical studies on the concept of soft power and opening the door to a different classification.

Keywords: Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism, Soft power.

JEL Codes: F50, F52, F59.

**YUMUŐAK GÜCÜ ULUSLARARASI İLİŐKİLER TEORİLERİ KAPSAMINDA
DEĐERLENDİRMEK****ÖZET**

Yumuőak güç kavramı politika çalışmalarında çok sevilen kavramlardan bir tanesidir. Buna rağmen ortaya atıldığından günümüze, teorik olarak yeterince netlik kazanamamıştır. Bu durum kavramdaki var olan belirsizliklerin, bir teori oluşturabilecek kadar genelleme yapılabilmesine müsaade etmiyor olmasından kaynaklanmaktadır. Bu makalede amaç yumuőak güç kavramının sadece teoriler için bir araç olabileceđi ana fikrinden hareketle, yumuőak güç kavramının uluslararası ilişkiler teorileri kapsamında değerlendirilebileceđinin ortaya konması ve böylelikle yumuőak güç kavramına zaten var olan kuramlar içerisinde bir yer açarak, kavramın teorik zeminine mütevazi bir katkı sağlamaktır. Ancak uluslararası ilişkiler teorileri çok geniş bir yelpazede yer aldığı için bu çalışmada

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başlıca üç teorik gelenek üzerinde durulmuştur. Yumuşak gücün realist, liberal ve konstrüktivist paradigmlar içerisinde yer alabileceği kısa analitik örneklerle desteklenmiş ve farklı sonuçlara sebep olan yumuşak güç kaynaklarının farklı paradigmlar içerisinde yer alabileceği kanaati oluşmuştur. Böylesi bir bakış açısının yumuşak güç kavramıyla ilgili yapılan analitik çalışmalara kolaylık tanınması ve değişik bir sınıflandırmaya kapı açması açısından önemli bir çalışma olduğu düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Realizm, Liberalizm, Konstrüktivizm, Yumuşak güç.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of soft power was first used by Joseph Nye in his book "The Changing Nature of American Power" published in 1990. Nye developed this concept with his later works (Kearn, 2011: 67). There are many studies in the literature about the concept of soft power, some of which explain the concept of soft power with analytical examples, and some of which are on the advancement and management of soft power resources such as media and communication. There are some other studies on the theoretical foundations of the concept of soft power (Lai, 2019: 10-11), and there are also studies that approach the concept from a critical perspective (Brannagan and Giulianotti, 2018: 1141). Today, the role of soft power in international relations attracts more attention than ever before in both political life, and academic literature. Therefore, it has considerable literature within the scope of both foreign policy and international relations (Ohnesorge, 2020: 10-14).

Although it is such a popular approach, the theoretical infrastructure of the soft power concept has not been established sufficiently. Many of the criticisms arise from this deficiency (Özel, 2018). One of the main reasons for the criticism is uncertainty about how best to conceive and measure soft power. Perhaps for these reasons, there is a common opinion in the academy that soft power is incomprehensible (Ohnesorge, 2020: 243). Nonetheless, the concept of soft power remains a popular one among scholars interested in analyzing international relations at the national level (Brannagan and Giulianotti, 2018: 1157). At the same time, the soft power approach has been enthusiastically adopted and implemented by political leaders, policy practitioners, and media experts (Kearn, 2011: 65). This study aims to bring a different perspective to the theoretical weakness, which is one of the criticized aspects of the soft power concept. From this perspective, the study aims to make a modest contribution that will partially save the concept of soft power from theoretical confusion.

The central thesis of this research maintains that soft power represents a tool that can only be assessed within the realm of international relations (IR), given that it cannot form the basis of any generalizable theory. The fact that soft power is not a theory but only a tool since the same soft power resources can react differently, and the characteristics of hard power and soft power are uncertain and temporary. This prevents theoretical generalizations from being made. Conceptualization is challenging in the social sciences and frequently causes further fragmentation of the field (Winkler, 2020: 28).

Nevertheless, this study suggests that soft power could be assessed as a tool within the scope of IR theories, serving as a means to prevent subject fragmentation.

To attain the aims of the study, this paper presents a clear and concise discussion of power, soft power, and their ambiguities. Additionally, hard power is mentioned with the concept of soft power. The paper establishes that soft power is not a theory per se, but rather a tool within international relations theories. The initial discussion centered on whether the notion of soft power constitutes a theory. Since all theories of international relations are outside the scope of this study, the concept was examined through the lenses of the three fundamental paradigms: realism, liberalism, and constructivism. Through brief analytical examples, the article aims to clarify some of the paradoxes associated with soft power.

2. POWER, HARD POWER, AND SOFT POWER

In this section, the study will discuss the concept of soft power, which forms the main backbone, and the concept of power from which the concept of soft power derives. Firstly, the concept of hard power will be briefly explained, which will help to understand soft power. Finally, the distinctions, interactions, and intersections between both types of power will be touched upon.

Power is one of the basic indicators of human existence. For this reason, it has taken its place in the works of many social theorists from Plato to Aristotle, and from Machiavelli to Hobbes. Power is a concept explained in different terms such as influence, authority, and control (Dahl, 1957: 201). The concept of power, like some other basic concepts of social sciences, is a controversial issue, and therefore there is no universally accepted definition (Nye, 2021: 196). Max Weber explained the concept of power as the possibility of it's to fulfill his will despite all the obstacles that occur in the context of social relations (Weber, 1968: 63). According to Dahl, power is a type of relationship between actors such as people, states, groups, and governments, and it is the ability to persuade a person to do something that they are not inclined to do (Dahl, 1957: 202-203). Nye, while defining power with the simple dictionary definition of the capacity to do something, more specifically in social situations, he elaborated it as the ability to influence others to achieve one's desired outcomes (Nye, 2021: 197). In addition, Nye states that when the concept of power is analyzed in terms of resources; power also carries the meaning of a process in the form of the ability to achieve desired results through a transformation strategy. According to Nye, power has different faces: The first face of power is the ability of someone to force someone else to do what he or she wants against his or her will. The second face of power is the ability of someone to direct the preference strategies of others by setting an agenda -whether those being directed are aware of it or not-. The third face of power is the ability to influence the beliefs, preferences, and perspectives of others without them realizing it. The second and third aspects of power contribute to soft power, that is, the ability to achieve favored outcomes (Nye, 2011: 6-9).

Further elaboration on the power definition is possible. These are different concepts that can be used interchangeably, and the indistinct nature of the power concept makes it difficult to define.

However, as Dahl pointed out, the concept expressed by the English word "power" is a strange concept that is not as clear as concepts of influence and control. Nevertheless, acknowledging this lack of clarity can provide possibilities for alternative paths and methods in research and contribute to policy analyses (Dahl, 1957). Keohane and Nye introduced a classification of power in their concept that distinguishes between hard, and soft power (Keohane & Nye, 1998: 86). This section aims to explain the concept of soft power by comparing it to the concept of hard power for better comprehension. Additionally, the uncertainties and transitional points between the two concepts will be discussed.

Hard power refers to the ability to make the opposite party do things they wouldn't normally do using threats, and rewards (Keohane and Nye, 1998: 86). Generally, criteria such as population size, regional, and natural resources, economic, and military power, and social stability have been used to evaluate hard power (Hamre, 2007: 6). Soft power is the ability to achieve goals by persuading others to follow your lead through charisma without resorting to force. The source of soft power is directly proportional to its persuasiveness (Keohane and Nye, 1998:86). Soft power relies on the ability to influence the choices of others (Nye, 2004: 5). In the context of foreign policy, soft power refers to the ability to influence others towards one's own interests through abstract sources of power such as culture, ideology, and institutions. Nye coined the term "co-optive" to describe this process (Nye, 1990: 165-167). Soft power is the ability to shape the preferences of others. The foundational components of soft power can be expressed as attraction, persuasion, and agenda-setting (Nye, 2011:8). This skill can rely on the appeal of a culture, and ideology or the ability to manipulate it (Nye, 1990:182). In addition, the legitimacy of a soft power holder is of central importance. If an individual or nation believes in the legitimacy of soft power, they can follow that country without the need for threats or rewards. Such legitimacy will also reduce opposing views and the use of force (Hamre, 2007).

Soft power is a form of power derived from a nation's willingness to contribute to the development of multilateral solutions to international challenges, its respect for international laws, norms, regimes, and institutions, and its preference for cooperation rather than unilateral problem-solving. In addition, soft power refers to the appreciation by other nations of a country due to an advanced level of social solidarity in its domestic politics, and the quality of life, opportunities, tolerance, lifestyle, and cultural values in that country (Gallarotti, and Al Filali, 2014: 4). Furthermore, this can contribute to a positive image that enhances the country's influence in world politics (Gallarotti, 2011: 36). Politically, soft power refers to a state's ability to modify the choices of other states to be compatible with its own interests (Nye, 1990:168). However, incorporating soft power into state policies is more difficult than it may appear and achieving the desired results can take a long time. Furthermore, soft power tools are not entirely under state control. Companies, institutions, NGOs, and even individuals possess their own forms of soft power (Nye, 2011: 54-56).

Nye refers to soft power as a subtle way of achieving one's objectives or as the flip side of power (Nye, 2004: 5). The possession of extensive resources that contribute to soft power does not always lead

others to comply with their wishes. It is important that these power resources have the capacity to create a soft power effect. It is necessary to view soft power as a relational process requiring inter-subjective attraction (Brannagan & Giulianotti, 2018: 1157). If this process of interaction is successful for the holder of soft power, it may lead to more states adopting the soft power strategies of the soft power holder, resulting in more effective soft power (Kearn, 2011: 68). The ability of states to legitimize their power in the eyes of others is what makes soft power increasingly important. This reduces the level of resistance they encounter from opposing parties, making it easier to achieve their goals (Nye, 1990: 182).

Soft power sources are not only defined by culture, and values. For example economic resources can generate both hard and soft power. In real life, it is difficult to determine the boundary between the two (Nye, 2011: 56). It is mostly possible to measure the sources, and outcomes of hard power, which is focused on measurable resources. When a country relies on commercial incentives, economic sanctions, or the threat of military action to influence others, that falls under the purview of hard power. Therefore, soft power is a poor form of power that is challenging to measure its success. In contrast, initiatives such as cultural exchanges, and public diplomacy, which are difficult to measure, fall within the scope of soft power. Soft power also aims to target changes in attitudes that are difficult to quantify. Whilst hard power strategies yield similar measures, and responses across the globe, soft power methods target the intricacies of human nature. Furthermore, reactions to soft power initiatives vary markedly across different regions of the world. This dynamism requires a high level of expertise, as well as coordination between different institutions and disciplines (Seymour, 2020).

2.1. Hard Power-Soft Power and Paradoxes

Soft power concept has received criticism from a variety of fields, such as academics, politicians, and journalists. These criticisms can be grouped into four main categories: the focus of soft power studies on large nations, the lack of clarity of the concept, Nye's focus on the US, and the potential negative consequences of soft power actions that may lead to loss of attractiveness, and credibility of states (Brannagan, and Giulianotti, 2018). 1141). It is possible to state that some of the criticisms of soft power arise from the paradoxes inherent in the concept. These paradoxes can be classified into two main categories: areas of uncertainty between hard power, and soft power, and uncertainties in the outcomes resulting from the application of soft power.

2.2.1. Uncertainties Between Hard Power, and Soft Power

One of these paradoxes is the ambiguity between distinctions made between hard power, and soft power. Both types of power are defined as the ability to control the behavior of others, and to achieve desired outcomes (Nye, 1990: 181-182). While it cannot be said that soft power is independent of hard power, it is possible to argue that soft power feeds on elements of hard power (Özel, 2018: 5). The haziness of fluidity between the two types of power creates a challenge for researchers, especially those

seeking to perform political analyses and inhibit the establishment of a robust theoretical framework for the concept of soft power. It is possible to state that this is one of the fundamental obstacles to the development of a theoretical foundation. This relationship is so complex that sometimes the use of one type of power can diminish the effect of the other, and, in some cases, a source can produce both hard and soft power (Nye, 2011: 52). The relationship between hard and soft power can manifest in various ways. Soft power, which is defined as abstract elements, may sometimes be expressed through concrete tools like aid activities. On the other hand, hard power elements that are represented by material power may sometimes exhibit themselves in abstract or symbolic forms like threat and aggressive behavior. Furthermore, there may be moments when soft and hard powers attract each other. For example, a respected state possessing both hard and soft power can acquire more military bases in another country and gather military support against potential enemies. Sometimes, the complementary effect of both hard and soft power emerges, while in other cases, the two forces can work against each other. For instance, excessively directive policies adopted using soft power can trigger hostility among the target audience (Gallarotti and Al Filali, 2014: 5). Hard power actions can sometimes have a soft power impact. For instance, winning a war can also win the hearts and minds of others (Nye, 2011: 13). Additionally, some sources that cannot be considered soft power can also create co-optive effects, such as Hitler and Stalin indirectly influencing others (Nye, 2011: 8).

2.2.2. Uncertainties in the Consequences of Soft Power

Another paradox lies in the uncertainties of the consequences of soft power, which is employed to persuade others to do what one desires. As a reaction to a country's soft power, some countries may exhibit accommodating behaviors, while others may remain indifferent to its source and some may antagonize the soft power source by deeming it repellent (Ohnesorge, 2020: 89). Looking at the IMF as the source of imperialistic power generates a negative perception that goes against the purpose of soft power, making it a good example of this topic (Gallarotti, 2011: 33-34). While aid programs created by countries for human purposes can sometimes generate soft power, they can also have the opposite effect. Large-scale assistance can disrupt local political balances, potentially encouraging corruption and leading to conflict between local groups (Nye, 2011: 52). Additionally, actions that increase soft power can sometimes be costly for countries -such as in the case of America being limited economically by global warming agreements- (Gallarotti, 2011: 33-34). Excessive self-confidence in a powerful country can leave it vulnerable (Gallarotti, 2011: 42). In some cases, a country's soft power efforts can attract negative attention, such as attempts to undermine its reputation (Brannagan and Giulianotti, 2018: 1157). Soft power efforts can also create an effect that draws the third party's hard power. For example, Ukraine, seeking to align itself with the West through the influence of its soft power, has been attacked by Russia, who is uncomfortable with the move, illustrating the unintended consequences of soft power (Canyurt, 2022).

Nye suggests that behaviors involving power can have unintended consequences, but they are concerned with the ability to produce politically expected results (Nye, 2011: 4). Many power relationships depend on what the target thinks. Nye argues that power only has meaning depending on whether the results are determined beforehand ("ex-ante") or after the action ("ex-post") (Nye, 2021: 197; Nye, 2011: 4). This feature highlights an important aspect of soft power. At this point, it can be a paradox to evaluate power only in terms of resources. Even with abundant power resources, achieving desired outcomes may not always be possible. In soft power usage, it is important to focus on the outcomes expected to be achieved, rather than the resources. Therefore, when using soft power, it is important to focus on contexts and power transformation strategies, as indicated by Nye (2021: 198-199). According to this statement, only those who can channel others to want what they want are wielders of soft power. Such a skill will enable the desired outcomes to be achieved. Consequently, it is misleading to consider that soft power does not only mean the features that lead to soft power. However, this does not mean that soft power resources are insignificant (Nye, 2011: 4). The truth is that Nye himself has ranked a country's most important soft power resources as a democratic structure and egalitarian movements, cinema, television, and electronic communication, and has expressed domestic and foreign policies as other soft power resources (Nye, 2004: 14; Nye, 1998: 87). As can be deduced from this, it is inevitable to consider soft power resources within this concept. On the other hand, policymakers aim to make predictions that will guide their actions. Therefore, power is commonly defined in international relations as resources that can produce results, albeit sometimes misleadingly (Nye, 2021: 197).

Perhaps due to the unclear and highly complex and fluid boundaries and contexts between hard and soft power, Nye states in his later works that it is not possible to produce effective policies in foreign politics using only soft power resources. Instead, he suggests that combining both hard and soft power sources to create smart power would be more effective. In 2004, Nye introduced the concept of smart power (Nye, 2011: 12-14). Similarly, Gallarotti argues that nations can only achieve significant power in world politics by possessing smart power, which is the integration of both hard and soft power. He believes that the theoretical explanation of power optimization can be achieved through the integration of the three basic paradigms of international relations, namely realism, neoliberalism, and constructivism (Gallarotti, 2010). Instead of this suggestion put forward by Gallarotti to overcome the theoretical difficulties in soft power and smart power studies, this study claims that different soft power conceptualizations can be made in terms of these three basic international relations paradigms. In this context, the next section will attempt to illustrate the relationship between soft power and realism, liberalism, and/or neoliberalism.

3. SOFT POWER AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORIES

This part of the article will focus on how soft power can be evaluated as a tool within the context of international relations theories. Before delving into this topic, the concept of soft power as a theory will be discussed.

3.1. Soft Power as a Theory

To comprehend their daily data, scientists require theories (Walt, 1998: 29). Theories are systems that facilitate the explanation and definition of relationships among phenomena in a particular field. They enable the formation of predictions related to such phenomena. These generalizations gleaned from the relationships among these phenomena help guide researchers in phrasing the correct problem for their investigations. As such, theories can be defined as a system of dependent and independent variables among existing phenomena in social sciences (Ari, 2018: 22-23). This section will discuss the suitability of soft power concept in generalizations or whether the independent variable of soft power has an impact on possible outcomes of the dependent variable. This section discusses whether the concept of soft power is amenable to generalization, or whether the independent variable, soft power, has an impact on the dependent variable, possible outcomes, and/or if evaluated as a single theory, similar effects can be expected.

While the concept of soft power is becoming more widespread, there are still debates regarding the conceptualization of soft power, the measurability of soft power sources, and how it can be effectively used in real-world politics. Additionally, there are queries on the relationship between soft and hard power, the sources of soft power, and their practical application and effective use (Lee, 2011: 11-12). On the other hand, studies conducted within the framework of the concept of soft power have opened up new uncertainties. The fact that Nye himself has introduced different interpretations of the definition of soft power over the years has also emerged as one of the obstacles to the theoretical development of the soft power concept (Özel, 2018: 4).

According to Stefano Guzzini, power is not a primary theoretical indicator, but rather a specific "momentum". Therefore, it is more appropriate to give power a more modest position in the concept. This is because a concept is nothing more than what is contained in its theory (Guzzini, 1993: 478). Soft power, which is a type of power, is not a form of idealism or liberalism according to Nye. It is simply a way to achieve desired outcomes. Soft power is a descriptive concept rather than a normative one. Like all forms of power, it can be used for both good and bad purposes. Soft power is merely a truncated and impoverished form of power (Nye, 2011: 54).

The previous section illustrates that the presence of soft power does not always lead to the expected outcomes. This indicates that the use of soft power sources and how they can contribute to or cause certain outcomes is uncertain. Additionally, on occasion, hard power sources can produce similar results to soft power. Furthermore, soft power sources can sometimes fuel hostile sentiments.

Therefore, as Nye suggests, it would be easier to view soft power only as a means of explaining state behavior in international politics. However, while Nye acknowledges that soft power should be evaluated based on whether the desired results are achieved rather than the sources of soft power, he still sees soft power as a way of achieving desired results, which already points directly to sources of soft power. Therefore, it does not seem possible to have a concept that only focuses on the results. Furthermore, when soft power sources are excluded from the soft power concept, this concept also significantly diminishes. Perhaps for these reasons, both political scientists and policymakers have found it difficult to construct a theoretical model of soft power (Lee, 2011: 11-12). Possibly the way to deal with all these interconnectedness and uncertainties lies in evaluating this type of power from the perspective of IR theories. In this context, the next section will discuss soft power in the context of IR theories.

3.2. Soft Power as a Concept in International Relations Theories

Soft power, as a concept, is a well-established tool for explaining power in international politics from the perspective of international policy analysis and international relations theories (Özdemir, 2008: 114). As Baldwin mentions, most policies and international interactions already contain power (2016: 91). Therefore, it appears practical to approach the concept of soft power, which is a type of power, within the scope of IR theories in the political context where it already exists. On the other hand, despite power being one of the fundamental parameters of international relations, it is also necessary to point out the lack of development in alternative conceptualizations of power by scientists working in the field. This limits the ability to understand how global outcomes are produced and how actors are enabled and constrained in determining their own powers (Barnett and Duvall, 2005). While the realist paradigm is commonly associated with the concept of power in the field of International Relations, power and power relations are addressed from idealist approaches to Marxism, feminist paradigms, and critical theories (Özdemir, 2008: 114).

It is arguable that the concept of soft power, as a dimension of power, is groundbreaking in terms of pointing to various tools employed in state-to-state, state-to-individual, and state-to-non-state actors' relationships. Nye's concept of soft power not only brings new dimensions to international relations studies but also draws attention to the different methods and means used in relations between states. (Uste and Sanili Aydin, 2023: 199). This approach has received significant attention within the academic community. However, despite numerous analyses of soft power, its theoretical development has been limited (Gallarotti, 2011: 25; Huseynov, 2018: 15).

The paper proposes that soft power can be incorporated into the theories of international relations (IR) in order to overcome the difficulties of grounding the concept of soft power in a theoretical framework. Since it is difficult to examine all IR theories in one article, the subject will be discussed through the three most basic approaches of the discipline: realism, liberalism, and constructivism.

3.2.1. Soft Power and Realism

Realism, with its founders dating back to Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Hobbes, has a long theoretical tradition that gave rise to various approaches. The starting point of realism is the selfish and opportunistic nature of human beings (Korab-Karpowicz, 2018). It has notably stood out as the dominant theoretical tradition adopted in international politics during the Cold War. This approach depicts international relations as a power struggle between self-interested states (Walt, 1998: 31). Realism views power as the ability of states to make others do things they would not otherwise do, using their material resources (Barnett and Duvall, 2005). In the realist paradigm, the pursuit of power is the most urgent goal for states in international politics (Morgenthau, 1948: 13). According to this paradigm, state capacities are a crucial source for being able to influence the behaviors of other states (Ari, 2018: 159). According to Realists, in both domestic and foreign policy, policymakers have developed three main behavioral models: maintaining power, increasing power, and demonstrating power (Morgenthau, 1948: 21). Hans J. Morgenthau, one of the founders of the realist tradition, summarized the realist approach in six principles. In the first of these principles, he emphasized that realism should be a rational approach by emphasizing the relationship between human nature and politics. In the second principle, he stated that statesmen can only act in accordance with the state interest, which means power. In the third principle, he claimed that interest, which means power, expresses a universal value. In the fourth principle, he stated that the realist approach also recognizes the moral importance of political actions, but that moral principles can be filtered through the conditions of time and space and cannot be applied in inter-state actions. In his final principle, Morgenthau (1948: 1-15) expressed that politics is an autonomous field from ethical principles, but also noted that ethics still has functional significance in politics. Morgenthau's principles, while focused on power and interests, also address non-material elements such as ideology, ethics, and moral values. Therefore, it is possible to say that he attributed some importance, albeit secondary, to these abstract values that underlie soft power.

On the other hand, Özdemir has expressed that in the classical realism approach, the ability to deter power is viewed and that deterring attacks can be evaluated within the framework of national interest. He stated that Morgenthau's main goal was to be able to influence the thoughts and actions of others (2008, 127-128). When considering the power capacities put forth by countries to influence other nations under the realist paradigm, it can be argued that an impression is created for the sake of deterrence. This in turn leads to a blurring of the lines between hard power and soft power. In addition, countries' expansionist and hard power behaviors may have an ideological basis. These intellectual resources can also create the soft power of those countries. The frequently criticized US invasion of Iraq with the promise of democracy can serve as an example of this situation. In this context, it is possible to express that the realist paradigm is more explanatory for instances where soft power resources lead to outcomes that escalate into hard power.

Some argue that the concept of soft power contradicts the realist view of power, while its connections with constructivism and neoliberalism are particularly evident at the international level, as claimed by Gallarotti and Al Filali (2014: 49). Nye, on the other hand, contends that the soft power concept is close to classical liberalism, but not incompatible with realism (Nye, 2011: 82). In this context, some evaluate soft power from a realist perspective.¹ Although Neo-realists overlook the concept of soft power in favor of emphasizing material and military power balances, Nye, who introduced the concept of soft power, highlights that it is acknowledged by classical realists (Reus-Smit, 2013: 294; Nye, 2011: 54). Furthermore, while most international relations theories consider power as a relevant topic, none have placed power as centrally as realism (Baldwin, 2016). In line with the above section, finding a place for the concept of soft power within realism should not be difficult. These types of studies can be referred to as "realistic soft power". Therefore, researchers conducting soft power studies can consider evaluating soft power as a sub-branch of realism named "realistic soft power" in line with consistent examples of the realist paradigm. For example, Alexander Sergunin and Leonid Karabeshkin's study on Russia's soft power suggests that Russia's understanding of soft power policy is instrumental, pragmatic, and interest-driven, reflecting a different perspective from Nye's concept of soft power. They also refer to the theoretical inadequacy of the concept (Sergunin and Karabeshkin, 2015: 359-360). This study can be consistent with the theoretical proposition of realistic soft power. One further example is Vasif Huseynov's thesis, which examines Russian policies toward neighboring countries by highlighting the connection between neoclassical realism and soft power (Huseynov, 2018).

3.2.2. Liberalism and Soft Power

Despite their competitive and self-interested nature, liberal views consider collaboration as a positive trait of human nature. The soft power of the liberal perspective began with John Locke in the 17th century. Jeremy Bentham and Immanuel Kant are among the most significant liberal thinkers. The focal points of liberalism are freedom, cooperation, peace, and progress (Jackson et al., 2022: 104-105). Some researchers associate the concept of soft power theoretically with liberal theory and especially with the perspective of "neo-liberal institutionalism²" (Gomichon, 2013: 1). This connection is attributed to the emphasis on individual freedoms, values such as human rights and democracy, and cooperation between states in liberal approach, as well as the acceptance of the effectiveness of transnational actors by neoliberals (Burchill, 2014). It could be inferred that this correlation arises from the structure of the liberal approach, which values individual freedoms, human rights, and democracy, and prioritizes cooperation between states and effectiveness of transnational actors that are accepted by neo-liberals

¹ See, Huseynov, V. (2018). The Nexus of Neoclassical Realism and Soft Power: The Case of The West – Russia Geopolitical Rivalries in the “Common Neighbourhood”. Göttingen.

² Different forms have emerged within the scope of Liberal thought within the IR discipline (Burchill, 2014: 85). The neo-liberal approach is also a dimension of liberalism that has been molded differently according to changing world conditions (Jackson et al., 2022: 46).

(Burchill, 2014: 121; Arı, 2018: 355; Şahin, and Şen, 2014: 87-88). The liberal paradigm in international relations aims to find solutions to conflicts and wars. To achieve this goal, it is divided into three subcategories. The first is the democratic peace theory, based on the assumption that democratic countries are less likely to go to war. The second is the economic interdependence theory, which asserts that states that are economically dependent on one another are less likely to engage in conflict. Thirdly, attention is drawn to the development of institutional collaboration. Neo-liberalism focuses on the functions of international organizations (Gomichon, 2013: 1). The soft power approach is also based on the assumption of an increasingly complex and interdependent world, in line with the liberal and neo-liberal paradigm (Kearn, 2011: 66). Neo-liberals emphasize the advantages of multilateralism over unilateralism as a source of influence (Gallarotti and Al Filali, 2014: 49).

In this context, it is noteworthy that Nye, who conceptualized the concept of soft power, is one of the theorists of the neo-liberal complex interdependence approach. In previous sections, it has already been expressed that the liberal values that countries harbor are the source of soft power. Hamre states that although military power is a suitable tool for the defense of the country, it is generally weak to fight against ideas, and that the way to gain victory today is to help foreign societies build democratic states and attract them to your side, and that soft power is the basis of winning peace (2007: 6). In this context, soft power resources overlap with a liberal democratic peace approach. However, the question that needs to be asked is why, despite such a strong connection, the concept of soft power cannot be fully evaluated within the liberal framework. The answer to this problem is concealed within the paradoxes of the concept of soft power. The existence of circumstances where soft power sources lead to hard power, even threatening peace by causing negative perceptions between countries or casting a shadow over peace, negates this evaluation. However, it is also a fact that a liberal perspective enriches soft power sources and results in peaceful implications on international relations. In this context, like the concept of power taking on different positions within each paradigm, the concept of soft power can be considered a tool within liberalism or neoliberalism. Therefore, it can be seen that all power sources that ultimately create a soft power effect fall under the scope rather than just the sources of soft power. Such an understanding of soft power that has such an effect can be referred to as "liberalistic soft power" within the framework of the liberal paradigm. Numerous analytical examples can be found in the field of Liberal Studies, which adhere to the concept of soft power. Despite Russia's significant influence in the region, Georgia is a good example of a country that separated from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and established strong relations with the West by responding to Western soft power sources (Gahler, 2021; European Council, 2022). Similarly, Turkey's turn to the West following a major war with Western countries can be understood as being due to the attractiveness of the soft power derived from the West's liberal characteristics.

3.2.3. Constructivism and Soft Power

While the majority of international relations theories focus on material elements, the Constructivist approach claims that the important aspect of international relations is not material but social. Constructivists argue that the international system is a man-made formation consisting of ideas, not material forces (Jackson et al., 2022: 193). It is possible to associate the concept of soft power with the constructivist approach (Gallarotti and Al Filali, 2014: 49). One of the primary rationales for the association between the notion of soft power and the constructivist approach is that the constructivist approach asserts that normative and ideational frameworks are equally impactful as physical structures. According to them, non-material structures determine the identities of actors, and these identities determine interests and therefore interest-based actions. Understanding how actors' interests are determined seems to be important for explaining international political phenomena. Constructivists claim that actors and structures mutually construct each other (Reus-Smit, 2013: 294-295). Constructivists focus on the impact that adherence to norms and principles can have (Gallarotti and Al Filali, 2014: 49). Constructivist understanding focuses on identities and interests and claims that states are constructed through interactions that occur in historical processes and at this point, they describe identities and interests as dependent variables affected by mutual interactions (Wendt, 2013: 681). In constructivism, states view power in terms of the interests they determine from the perspective of their own perceptions, intentions, ideas, and opinions (Özdemir, 2008: 134). When this interaction is emphasized in the context of soft power, it is possible to say that countries can create new interests and identities by cooperating with countries that are attractive to them. Such a soft power can be labeled as "constructivist soft power" within the constructivist paradigm. Just as during the Cold War, almost all countries were divided into Eastern Bloc and Western Bloc and built new systems. Again, there are many studies in the literature that focus on the soft power of values, beliefs, and ideas. One of them is Voll, who explains the soft power of extremist religious movements in the context of beliefs. These movements have become important non-state actors by creating a unique audience for them (2008). Such soft power can be considered as constructivist soft power.

4. CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

One of the main reasons for the theoretical weakness of the concept of soft power is the paradoxes arising from the uncertainty, transitivity, and multidimensionality of its sources and consequences. As Nye says, sometimes hard power sources open the door to soft power, while extreme views, which are considered unacceptable in the world and cannot be a source of soft power, can reveal their own soft power potential. In addition, although there are plenty of soft power resources, some states can have the opposite effect on the other side and sometimes even cause a perception of threat to another country. This soft power form exhibits a very complex structure with examples such as being a source of war while aiming for peace. Making this complex concept more comprehensible by categorizing it may be one of the ways to cope with the theoretical difficulties. In the context of this study, it has been argued

that the evaluation of the subject in the context of one of the IR theories in the studies to be carried out within the concept of soft power can provide a more solid theoretical ground for the researchers. Categorization may optimize the comprehension of this complex concept, mitigating theoretical difficulties and granting researchers a more robust theoretical basis. Accordingly, one may evaluate this matter via one of the International Relations theories within the broader framework of soft power. Within this study, soft power is viewed as a tool, based on the three principal international relations theories discussed. Consequently, the proposed classification is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Classification of Soft Power in the Context of International Relations Theories

Realistic soft power	Liberalistic soft power	Constructivist soft power

Considering this classification: "realistic soft power" includes soft power uses that can be evaluated within the realist tradition, causing threat perception, and leading to hard power, while "liberalistic soft power" refers to soft power sources that can be evaluated within the scope of the liberal paradigm that contributes to democracy and cause interdependence. Likewise, "constructivist soft power" can be categorized as a type of soft power that is the source of the processes in which new intellectual and social relations are built. According to the above classification, it is acceptable that the parameters of different soft power forms evaluated within IR may be different. Such a conceptualization will help clarify the contradictions and fuzziness of the concept of soft power to some extent, even if it seems to narrow the concept and conceptually expand IR theories. The concept of soft power, like the concept of power, is complex and has a vast literature. The theories of IR are also very wide-ranging, and it is not possible to adequately address two such large-scale issues within the scope of one article. This issue constitutes the main challenge of this study. However, this study only aims to make a modest contribution to the subject. Although the above study has been carried out for this purpose, this conceptualization can be further developed by conducting studies supported by analytical examples within the scope of the proposed classifications. In addition, it is also possible to conduct studies in which the concept of soft power can be addressed within the scope of other IR theories, which could not be addressed here due to lack of space. At the same time, views that will criticize this view and claim the opposite will be able to emerge as a characteristic of science.

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