Soft Warfare Theory

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Abstract: The upheavals resulting from soft warfare are calm, mental, gradual and soft warfare. This war is along with calmness and without physical methods and is imposed using lobbying and persuasion under accepted laws without agitating and producing sensitivity. Propaganda, media, parties, NGOs, cultural, artistic and educational centers and … are tools of imposing this kind of war. The designers of soft war are acting in three social, cultural and political fields. Utilizing its indirect pattern and geopolitical environments which is more in regions of the Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Middle East and Central Europe is considered as the signs of soft warfare in strategic behavior. Civil disobediences and color revolutions are the most important approaches of soft warfare. The quiddity and quality of soft warfare and the investigation of its feature, approaches and indices are the most important objectives of the present study.

Key words: Soft Warfare · the Soft Power · Color Revolutions · Civil Disturbances · Public Diplomacy

INTRODUCTION

Technological upheavals in the field of communication have influenced the issue of impenetrability of countries in the domain of international politics. This issue indicates that new patterns are shaping in the relations of countries. The issue of soft warfare is among the concepts which was shaped along with the growth and expansion of mass communication tools, particularly the third wave of the technological revolution. The first applied domain of the soft warfare in Eastern Europe was tested in 80's. US could pave the path for shaping democratic movements using media, social institutions, NGOs and civil organizations. This issue indicate that the Cold War and the World War II had cultural, discursive and ideological natures more than strategic ones [1]. Nowadays, soft warfare is the most efficient, effective, having the least cost, the most dangerous and complicate kind of threatening national values and security of a country. It is the most effective kind of wars because with the least cost and by removing military expedition and eliminating physical resistances, one can obtain his objectives; and it is the most dangerous one because of its relation with the values, beliefs, feelings and emotions of a nation.

The present study tries to know the mechanism of soft warfare; in fact, the hypothesis of the study is that in the process of soft warfare, it is tried that the beliefs and values of a society are targeted using soft and non-violent methods and measures.

The better knowing of soft warfare can contribute to the conceptualization and more knowledge of this phenomenon and developing the management of national security of countries in soft threats against their own natural securities. Undoubtedly, the increase in knowledge and awareness of strategic institutions will result in the increase in coordination, unity and convergence in encountering soft warfare.

The Quiddity of Soft Warfare: War is considered as a part of the nature of human being which is as old as the human being himself and has many ups and downs while dividing into different approaches. The most known kind of this classification is based on the severity of wars which are divided into low-severity conflicts, severe and thoroughgoing ones. In the second classification, it is divided based on applying arms into Hot and Cold wars. Furthermore, in terms of obviousness and hiddenness of wars, it can be divided into overt, semi-covert and covert wars. The next classification is related to the

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spectroscopy of war in terms of its subject which is divided into political, economic, cultural and military wars. The next classification is the spectroscopy of war based on "tools and methods of imposing will". According to this index, war includes soft and hard wars. This division of power into soft and hard power has been done by Joseph Nye and then in the recent decade, different scholars developed it. The concept of soft warfare is used versus hard warfare, it has not a unitary definition accepted by all and individuals' and states' interpretations of soft warfare are different. In addition, in some definitions, the boundary between soft warfare, psychological conflict, soft power and soft threat is not clear-cut. some of the answers to this question is as follows:

- Some groups consider soft warfare as designed use of propaganda and tools related to it for penetration in intellectual characteristics of the enemy by resorting to methods which results in the development of the aims of executive national security [2].
- Some others consider it as planned effort to use propaganda, media, political and psychological tools and methods to influence governments, groups and people of foreign countries for the changes in their beliefs, values and behaviors [3].
- Again others take soft warfare as the use of a country from soft power for manipulation of public beliefs of the targeted country and changes in political beliefs, proprieties, views and behaviors [4].
- Some scholars, again believe that soft warfare is a conflicting status and severe war which is established among countries and political maneuvers, diplomatic conflicts, psychological wars, ideological conflicts, economic wars and competition for gaining power are among its characteristics. The objectives of this invasion can be demoralization, weakening national unity, creating gaps between people and governments, civil disturbances, increase in governments' inefficiencies and weakening resistance will in people.
- Soft warfare refers to any non-violent measure which invades the values and norms of societies and at last results in changes in available behavioral patterns and creation of new patterns which are contradictory to behavioral patterns desired by governing systems [5].

- Soft warfare is a kind of cold war which finally results in cultural transformation of societies [6].
- Soft warfare is a set of pre-thought and pre-established political, cultural and social strategies and measures of counties which influence the beliefs, values, motivations and views of the people of the target society (including governments, states, groups and people of foreign countries) and in long term, it causes changes in their personal and social beliefs, behaviors and actions [7].
- Soft warfare means intelligent application and guided planning of non-military measures which at last result in changes in views and behaviors of target groups in line with plans and interests of the designer of the soft warfare [8].
- Soft warfare includes any psychological, propaganda, media and cultural measure which targets society and group and without military conflict and imposing violence, defeat the opponent. Soft warfare is to undermine the thought and intellect of target societies to weaken their intellectual and thought bases and by news and propaganda bombardment, injects weakness and instability in the social and political governing systems. Accordingly, a vast range of measures, ranging from computer warfare and internet activities to establishing radio and TV networks and networking in virtual spaces and other cases are in the framework of the concept of soft warfare [9].

Soft warfare can be known like any other phenomenon in three dimensions:

- The internal nature and logic of soft power which refers to any effort to influence "fundamental beliefs and values" accepted by the target country.
- The intention and application of this influencing, "transformation of cultural identity" and" destruction of political pattern".
- Tools of imposing will and advancing objectives in the war of "soft power" of the opponent and hostile country.

From this brief discussion, it can be concluded that soft warfare covers phenomena such as "cultural invasion", psychological operations", civil disturbances", "globalization of culture" and so on. From these definitions it can be obtained that

- Soft warfare is a deliberate and pre-established action.
- It includes different territories such as cultural, political, economic and social ones.
- The main intention of the actors of soft warfare is "changes in cultural identity" and "destruction of present political patterns", which is fulfilled by influencing basic beliefs and vies in the long term.
- The range of soft warfare does not limit only to people but it target statesmen and elites.
- Finally, soft warfare depends on the resources of "soft power", "non-violent methods" and "persuasive and accompanying power" [10].

Characteristics of Soft Warfare: To understand any phenomenon, it is better to count its distinctive characteristics. The following characteristics which refer to the distinctive points of soft and hard warfare can contribute in knowing soft warfare:

Being Mental and Intangible: Soft warfare, contrary to hard warfare enjoys abstract and mental (subjective) nature; therefore, finding out it in the right time seems difficult, but hard warfare is tangible and with reaction and motivation. In soft warfare, exploring players and the number and discipline of the enemy is more difficult and it less causes motivation and reaction.

Being Gradual: Soft warfare is a gradual, procedural and clam process to be imposed.

Being Ambiguous: The actors of soft warfare organize their measures in the form of being friend of the target people and pretending to help them. Therefore, not only the ill-educated masses but also elites are incapable in finding out their intentions and objectives.

Being Comprehensive: Hard warfare often invade a limited group of the people of a society-particularly militaries, while soft one influences all groups of a society.

The Domination of Cultural Dimension of Soft Warfare over Other Dimensions: However soft dimension influences all dimensions of a system particularly political, cultural and social ones, its cultural dimension is more highlighted than other ones and by transforming cultural dimension, the present political system becomes inefficient and its path to be destructed will be paved [11].

Having Deep Influences: Hard warfare, except in limited cases, has short-term effects on a society, while soft warfare, particularly in cultural dimension, can be permanent because it may result in changes in values and norms of the society and individuals' personality.

Being Complicated: Soft warfare is complicated, multi-layered and multi-dimensional, this warfare invades cognitive, emotional, social, spiritual, psychological and even physical layers of the target people. Therefore, its understanding is a difficult issue. Soft warfare is the result of the mental processing of elites and its measuring is difficult, while hard warfare is objective, real and tangible and can be measured by presenting some criteria.

Being Interdisciplinary: In imposing soft warfare, the findings of different fields such as psychology, sociology, communications sciences, cultural anthropology and political sciences and so on are used. Therefore, fighting with it can only be possible by understanding the processes and findings of these sciences.

Being Intentional: Soft warfare is organized by pre-established plans and designs and with hostility and enmity. Hence, the examples of an enemy's soft warfare resulted from inefficiency or weakness of a system should be distinguished from internal damages.

The Covering Range of the Players: soft warfare has different players each of which threats some political, cultural and social dimensions of the target society.

Emphasis on Non-violent Methods: In hard warfare, by destructing and physically removing the opponents and seizing and occupying their lands, the objectives are fulfilled and the wills are imposed, while in soft one, b influencing selections, the process of decision makings and behavioral patterns and finally by "non-violent methods" and the opponents' identities, the wills are imposed on them.

The Signs of Soft Warfare in Strategic Behaviors: The theory of soft warfare was adopted for the first time in 80's. George Schultz, US Secretary of State and the members of a group called Santafe who had the responsibility of security planning for fighting against radical and revolutionary governments proposed such a

term and entered it into the strategic, security and international relations literature. They believed that the relationship of a society with a government in the age of communications had been encountered with vast changes and upheavals. This issue is due to the environment of virtual communications between social forces and institutions which produced new awareness for the society, social institutions and political structures.

When soft warfare takes place, the ground for increasing the inter-structural discrepancies will occur. In other words, the main axis of soft warfare is to guide political and social forces who have intellectual, analytical and ideological differences with each other. These forces transform their conflicting components to the political structure of the society in contradictory conditions.

Utilizing Indirect Action Pattern: The main index of soft warfare is its nature and semiotic characteristics. Soft warfare indicates a process by which soft power uses political units for supplying national objectives. In general, those countries who enjoy required instruments for producing soft power, have capabilities to change this power into threat for their opponents and use it as a conflicting instrument. Utilizing any power provides the ground of the same kind of conflict. Indirect action I soft warfare provides the grounds of political illusion and structural surprise. In other words, in such a situation, the field of fighting and competeing is transforming from regional and international felids into internal fields of countries. This issue results in the fact that foreign policies of political units become defensive and on the other hand, foreclose the possibility of movement for providing interests in the trans-national environment form the countries. If political units get placed in defensive situation, they lose their structural situations and get palced in the process of wearing out [12].

Geopolitical Indices of Soft Warfare: Another basic signs and indices of soft warfare can be considered based on the environment of its geopolitical advent. The geographical domain of soft warfare is often placed in regions such as Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Middle East and Central Europe. In other words, political and security processes which occurred in the form of color revolutions in countries such as Georgia, Ukraine and Kirgizstan indicate that geopolitical environment of the "periphery" are more prone to be influenced by color revolutions. This issue is the reflection of the geographical relationship with political structures of units which are in the process of political changes and replacements.

Evidences indicate that in peripheral environments, on the one hand, there are growing more social discrepancies and on the other hand, the ground for intervention and influence of great powers are provided.

Geopolitical indices of soft warfare are interpreters of political signs of governing governments in the geographical regions and the environment of political competition. Soft warfare can occur in mentioned regions in which power structure has not been shaped yet, or in practice, they suffer from executive weakness; or the states which are in the environment of inter-structural competitions and the possibility of political-functional influences of great power are possible in them. In these regions, there often are failed states which are not capable to control the roles of international players.

Records and Approaches: What power or record does soft warfare enjoy? A few researchers and scholars have tried to answer this question appropriately. In this regard, different approaches and views have been shaped whose most important are mentioned as follows:

Soft Warfare, a Powerful Phenomenon: Some scholars take soft warfare as a powerful phenomenon. These people believe that the advent of soft phenomenon is the twin of shaping social life and governments. Melton and et.al are among the members of this group. According to Melton *et al.*, the heads of governments have been pursued since the ancient times, to limit their enemies by utilizing non-military and non-hard mechanisms and impose their wills on them. These authors propose different evidences from Sun Tzu's the Art of War, the Chinese strategist [13].

Sun Tzu advises the governors and commanders of his own country that by utilizing non-military methods, impose their own wills on the enemy and by this, increase their own military power.

Civil Disturbances and Soft Warfare: When is "disturbances" considered as "soft warfare"? Some authors and researchers are to answer this question; in their opinions, civil disturbances against the governor's oppression is a kind of threat and war. They, to confirm their claim, emphasize some particular points. First that, any kind of disturbance results in the violation of governing norms and discipline. Second, people, by

participating in complaining gatherings because of factors such as "losing personal identity", responsibility", anonymousness" and stimulating impulses" are not capable to control damaging actions and irritating behaviors. Hence, they violate laws obviously, destruct public properties, fight with state officials and invade the basic values of the society. The third is that many of parties and groups involved in the process of civil disturbances are opponents of the system governing on their society and are to accompany people with them and make the government retreat step by step. The fourth is that there are evidences that indicate that many of the actions are managed. Therefore, the consideration of civil disturbance as civil warfare seems a true one; but this consideration can be considered as a method of soft warfare for overthrowing a political system. In other words, this consideration of soft warfare is limited to political dimension and does not cover other dimensions of soft warfare [10].

Color Revolutions' Pattern and Soft Warfare: Some researchers consider the functions of color revolutions the same as soft warfare. Undoubtedly, velvet revolution is one of the methods of overthrowing and soft warfare which causes a kind of transformation or replacement along with negative fight and civil disturbance. The central part of time in any color revolution is elections, in such a way that by claiming election fraud from the opponents, two main objectives of revocation of election and repeating it are pursued by the international supervisors. The consideration of color revolutions as a kind of soft warfare, like the theory of civil disturbance which decreases the range of power, efficacy, legitimacy and validity of the government and challenges the present political pattern and governing system, is considered as the right one as a pattern for soft overthrowing, but in this consideration, soft warfare will be limited to political soft warfare through organizing opposing movements and this consideration does not the appropriate comprehensiveness and does not cover all dimensions of soft warfare.

Public Diplomacy and the Process of Soft Warfare: Public diplomacy is an organized process for satisfaction and execution of soft warfare. Soft warfare requires characteristics of social environment and geopolitical shaping and without conducting the organized and planned action based on the signs of cultural and normal environment is not possible. Therefore, public diplomacy can be considered as a representation of an organized action for influencing normal forms. In other words, public diplomacy is considered as an alternative pattern for

official diplomacy. This process should be produced through the fields of social communications, media and virtual spaces and finally, provides the required conditions for motivating the public for fighting against the public policies of countries and official institutions. This issue is connected to plans such as color revolutions and civil disturbance; therefore, this strategy of color revolutions can be considered as activating "civil disturbance". A process which has produced the main waves of fighting with official policies of governments and through expanding social oppositions, decreased the legitimacy of political systems. In color revolutions, using political participation is created and the ground for weakening governmental structures is made possible. This issue can be known as the "democratic tactic for changing regimes" and upheavals in political structures of target countries [14]. Therefore, public diplomacy can be considered as a political tactic used through unofficial instruments of countries. These tactics are created for political understanding, social groups' subjectivity and upheavals in behavioral tactics for attaining security objectives. In other words, public diplomacy can be a representation of modern diplomacy in the age of new international competitions.

CONCLUSION

The objective of soft warfare is to overthrow a political system, but the soft one; by soft overthrowing we mean a collection of measures in the framework of law, without violence and by intervention of foreigners. In soft overthrowing, violence is committed by soft methods and this issue is emphasized that peaceful movement, media management and other effective social factors (such as family and education), producing any gap in public knowledge and awareness in analyzing social issues and also mobilizing social opinion with the final objective of social and political changes. In addition, in this kind of overthrowing, it is tried that in a ground of lawful framework and social relationships, first the amount of acceptability of the invaders in the society is improved and then through so-called democratic ways and by being supported by social power, upheavals in political system or executive elites can be fulfilled. In this framework, the threatening dimensions are forsaken. Therefore, soft warfare can be considered as any soft, psychological and media measure which targets the target society without military involvement and using forces, it defeats the society. Psychological warfare, white warfare, media warfare, psychological operations, soft overthrowing, soft revolution, velvet revolution and color revolution are different forms of soft warfare.

Some methods of standing against soft warfare are proposed as follows:

- Society's cultural vaccination
- Mutual psychological operations
- Expanding the range and coverage of cultural activities and increasing attractive cultural products
- Using active diplomacy
- Transforming enemies' soft power into an opportunity for increasing our own soft power.

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