

Smart Power*

Lieutenant General HS Liddar, PVSM, UYSM, YSM, VSM (Retd)**

Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen. It is a great privilege to be speaking at RUSI, in front of such an erudite group of professionals who are committed to understand and define the use of power.

Force has always been applied in the affairs of mankind. It also has been the arbitrator between nation states. Employment of force has been well documented and the world has witnessed great power struggle between states and also between communities within states. Geographical boundaries too have been continuously drawn and redrawn through the ages as a consequence of power struggles.

The last century itself has witnessed two world wars, maturing of revolutionary war and the validation of the principles of revolutionary war. The humbling of two super powers through this route connotes a victory of a combination of hard and soft power which is, military means plus ideology over pure hard power.

The world witnessed huge remorse at the end of each war and made attempts to redeem the wrongs perpetuated on humanity by the creation of the League of Nations after the First World War then the UNO after the Second World War. Additionally, Geneva Conventions were also drawn up in order to insulate the unarmed civilians from the tussle between the armed forces of warring nations. Nuremburg Trials indicated the desire of the global powers to recognise the blind application of hard power as a crime against humanity.

Establishing political control and subjugating the will of the adversary have always been the end state sought in the application of force. The two world wars and the march of technology has made wars very costly in terms of men and materials. Application of hard power for settling disputes between nations/communities is increasingly becoming prohibitively costly. This has relegated Hard Power to being an instrument of last resort.

The emergence of Soft Power as the means of influencing inter and intra state issues is a natural outcome of the prohibitive cost of the application of hard power. Soft Power has grown, to include other instruments of influence i.e. diplomatic, economic, political, legal and cultural aspects. Application of force had by and large remained a sequential one in which the escalation took place from Soft Power to Hard power. This gave birth to concepts of dissuasion and deterrence, where escalation and de-escalation were clearly discernible and necessary space for negotiations was created for reaching an understanding well before the decision to apply Hard Power was taken.

There are countries of various sizes with diverse geographical, cultural and industrial attributes. Their interests and aspirations differ widely and they are all carrying out their affairs in a paradigm of Action and Reaction. Historical evidence and its analyses indicates that primacy of Hard Power or Soft Power by itself has failed to produce a sustainable impact. India learnt this lesson the hard way. In 1962, India's soft power was shown to be ineffective during the Indo-Sino Border Conflict. Therefore in my opinion, the nation requires "Balanced Power" i.e. a combination of both Hard and Soft Power. The Soft Power connoting its indirect appeal and the Hard Power lurking in the background to send a subtle message: "to let the playing field of contention remain within the jurisdiction of soft power unless one wants to mess with hard power of the nation". Simply put as our American friends often state that there can be no McDonald without a MacDougall.

Each nation has a unique signature of its hard and soft power. This signature is reflective of its core values, its vision, historical and cultural construct, so to say - the way of life. While the manifestation of hard power is well understood the soft power of the nation manifests itself in various activities which may take any form. These are difficult to be legislated and regulated by a nation state. As regards India, I would like to quote a very practical example. In Afghanistan where some of the most popular television shows are being telecast, I would like to make a particular mention of an Indian Daily Soap "Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi". I am given to understand that during the telecast of, this serial, life in Afghanistan comes to a virtual standstill. Now, the government of India would have never even imagined using this telecast in this manner. This supports my argument that the elements of Soft Power may or may not be regulated by a nation state. Other forms of Indian soft power which have evolved are - the Bollywood, Indian Cuisine, Yoga, Transcendental Meditation, Satyagraha, spirit of accommodation, democracy and other activities which appeal directly to the well being of the population where Soft Power is being applied.

So much for the Indian context. Now, looking at most effective yet most innocuous way of how soft power is employed for achieving exponential results is the export of English language to the colonies of erstwhile British Empire. Adoption of English as official language over German in the USA, eventually shaped the alliances and linkages, which have so dramatically impacted the global events in the last century. Another example of Soft power projection is the use of English as part of the operating system of the computers. It has forced many a nation to refocus on English.

The world today is technologically advanced. Most of the technologies are widespread and its ownership is diffused. The world is a global village in the true sense and its economic inter-dependence causes even small ripples to have large cascading effects. The world has also shrunk in size and is intimately linked with a flood of information. Therefore, shifting of information from need to know basis to information overload; where strategic, operational, tactical transparency is a fact and accurate analyses and deductions are the sole arbitrators of knowledge. In such a world the military field which spanned the NBC, conventional and low intensity conflicts is more intertwined and responses multifaceted. This has given birth to "unrestricted warfare" which has brought other facets of national existence into the ambit of war fighting in order to achieve asymmetric advantage. Aspects which now feature in war fighting include cyber space, communications, space, electricity grids, water supply schemes, food chains, climate, economic sanctions, etc to quote a few. Increasingly, more and more organisations both formal and informal, have adopted the nuances of "Revolutionary Warfare", the success formula of the century. This form of warfare has active components of both Hard power and Soft power and is being used to challenge the supremacy of Hard power. To

compound the problem further, the lines between combatants and non combatants, so diligently drawn after the Second World War, have been deliberately blurred. Armed attacks are now being made on uniformed personnel from the civil population mass, laying put to the rules of engagement drawn up in order to protect the civil population after the war. In short the spectrum of conflict has been broadened beyond recognition. Newer facets are being added to warfare and every facet of national existence is fair game for application of force. The issue has been compounded by drawing in of the criminal networks and non government organisation seeking extra constitutional power, money and influence.

It is in such a world that we seek to apply power as nation states. The choices are no longer simple ones i.e. Hard or Soft power, governed by a clearly discernable escalatory ladder. Multifaceted challenges desire a plethora of responses, with a large number of agencies falling beyond the ambit of "Ministries of Defence". There is now an urgent need to coordinate these inter agency responses. This demands creation of joint networks, supportive data bases to act as impartial monitors and also nominate the coordinating head whose arbitration is final in that sphere. This would tantamount to using power intelligently or smartly, as everyone calls it these days. A good example of intraoperability of Hard and Soft Power is the use of Hard Power instruments for Soft Power purposes in our response to Tsunami.

Let me now discuss how this would apply to the profession of arms. Firstly, the military responses would continue to span the entire spectrum of conflict. To this would be added the nuanced diplomacy, economic sanctions, enforcing blockades, protecting essential services, ensuring continued use of cyber space and accessibility of the spectrum for communication as well as non-interference in space. Freedom to use air, land and space would still be the desired end state for ensuring successful outcome in a conflict. It is for this "Expanded Spectrum", that the militaries all over the world need to prepare for and co-opt it in their organisational and doctrinal percepts.

In the sphere of NBC, till the world achieves total disarmament, there is a need to ensure survivability of networks, essential services and the cohesion of force to carry out second strike and battle thereafter. On the conventional front there would be a need to engage and prevail over the enemy at all costs. In the Low Intensity conflict spectrum there is a need to treat the conflict as a "Fight for the Allegiance of the People" and not any military prize. Military force when applied in this spectrum has the sole purpose of bringing home to the antagonists, the futility of following the armed route and driving them to seek a political solution. This is the smart application of power in conflict resolution in the Low Intensity Conflict Spectrum. Civil administration, Para Military Forces and Police forces have integrated fully in any response that is generated in this spectrum. Low intensity conflicts epitomise the synergy between Hard and Soft power. Joint command structures and a close coordination between governmental structures and military force is the principle means adopted to influence the contested area. In my opinion, "Winning Without Fighting Is The Epitome Of Application Of Smart Power"

Let me now conclude by making some recommendations about employment of Smart Power. These recommendations are descriptive in nature than being prescriptive; also their application would require adaptations merited by the operational environment.

- (a) Firstly, for the application of smart power the local populace and the armed forces fraternity must be treated as a singular whole - one entity. This would ensure synergised responses.
- (b) Secondly, the application of smart power has to be accompanied by perception management. This would ensure occupation and retention of moral high ground, which is a prerequisite for any power projection.
- (c) Thirdly, there is a need to energise the smart power application through a synergistic application of multifaceted and multi tiered power output.
- (d) Fourthly, there is a need to create organisations to orchestrate, in real time the myriad facets of power. The organisation must enable the flow of elements of power in the desired levels. Vertical lines of command and control need to be demolished and replaced by horizontal linkages reflecting necessity and not the control paths.
- (e) Fifthly, there is a need to impart broad band education to the rank and file of all participating so that they understand the power and usage of each component. This will increase intraoperability at the macro level. Also there is a need to empower the executing Commanders both legally and financially. This would ensure that they do not get tied up in procedural knots while executing smart power.
- (f) Sixthly, there is a need to redefine the rules of engagement, drawn up after accounting for the "Expanded Spectrum Of Conflict". The responses to the smart power component of the adversary should make an important component of the response spectrum.

I would like to conclude by saying that application of smart power has opened up new vistas of challenges, opportunities and deliberations. I am glad to be part of this pioneering effort which is examining the application of Smart Power. From my experience, I would like to state that any application of Smart Power needs to tie the population to your efforts with an invisible bond of hope which should be free of any political overtones and must project secularity of credentials. Those applying smart power need to be seen as honest brokers with a just cause. As such, each participant should be an ambassador and their officers be statesman.

We will have to prepare for this new era. I will close my brief presentation here and attempt to cover the gaps during the interactive session.

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****Lieutenant General HS Lidder, PVSM, UYSM, YSM, VSM (Retd)** was commissioned in the Parachute Regiment

on 16 December 1967. He retired as Chief of Integrated Defence Staff to Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee (CISC) on 30 September 2008.

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