

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF U. S. SOFT POWER IN MIDDLE EAST AFTER 2011-AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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Introduction:

The concept of "soft power"* gained prominence after the end of the Cold War, although its essence existed before and during it. This essence manifests itself in the use of persuasion and attraction, rather than pressure and coercion, in managing international relations. Examples include public diplomacy, leveraging cultural, educational, and creative dimensions, and utilizing economic aid and scholarships in foreign relations. Former US President Barack Obama's speech at Cairo University in June 2009, shortly after assuming the presidency, focused on this approach to developing relations with the Islamic world, emphasizing "the ability to attract and persuade." While "hard power" relies on the ability to compel and coerce, stemming from a state's military strength or superior economic capabilities, "soft power" derives from its cultural, political, or media appeal.

From this experience, the United States realized, after waging several wars, that military force alone is insufficient to achieve its objectives, protect its interests, or change the behavior of other nations. Despite the importance of military power, we now live in a world where technology and a nation's economic capabilities are the true forces influencing the foreign policy of other countries. This is especially true given the exorbitant costs and heavy human losses resulting from the use of military force, which has become undesirable. Therefore, the United States recognized this reality and began to focus on the effective use of "soft power," particularly after former US President Barack Obama assumed office in 2009. The emphasis on soft power strategy became the dominant feature of American foreign policy.

Research Objectives:

This study aims to:

1. Provide a theoretical framework addressing the topic of soft power in terms of its concept, tools, methods, and characteristics that distinguish it from hard power.
2. Examine how soft power tools enabled the United States to achieve its strategy of bringing about structural changes in certain aspects of the Arab system.
3. Analysis and evaluation of the implications of soft power within the framework of organized strategic action to achieve US foreign policy objectives in the Middle East.

Importance of the Research:

The importance of this research lies in its being one of the recent Arabic studies addressing this highly significant topic. Understanding the United States' application of soft power strategy to achieve its foreign policy objectives through the use of media, cultural, and economic tools to advance its interests within new frameworks is crucial. Furthermore, its importance stems from being one of the few scholarly studies on soft power.

The significance of this research also lies in its examination of another facet of conflict and an instrument of influence that has become a focus of attention for states and influential powers. Moreover, considering the reality of the Middle East, the proliferation of conflicts within it, and the multiplicity of regional and international instruments of influence further underscores the importance of studying the reality of soft power. Study Hypothesis:

The hypothesis that this research seeks to prove is that there has been a shift in American foreign policy towards soft power, while maintaining the role and effectiveness of hard power when necessary. The research also aims to demonstrate that American policy towards the Middle East has changed, which is considered one of the most prominent and important reasons that led to change in some Arab Middle Eastern countries. To verify the validity of this hypothesis, the research seeks to answer the following questions: What is the nature of soft power? Does the United States possess the components of soft power and the necessary tools to utilize it? What role did American soft power play in bringing about the changes witnessed in some Arab Spring countries?

Section One: The Concept of Soft Power in American Strategic Thought.

Although Joseph Nye coined the term "soft power" in the early 1990s, the origins of this concept can be traced back to the second term of Franklin Roosevelt (1937-1941). Roosevelt realized that the United States could only feel truly secure by gaining the support and engaging with the people of foreign countries. This led to the establishment of the United States Information Agency (USIA) and the Voice of America, and later, the Peace Foundation under John F. Kennedy (1962). Thus, in its early stages, American soft power presented itself in the form of goods and services such as Coca-Cola, Cadillac Hoovers, and Hollywood films. These goods and services skillfully and effectively highlighted the virtues of American corporations and culture. In more recent crises, American soft power has manifested itself in other forms, such as rock music, McDonald's fast food, Levi's jeans, Starbucks coffee shops, and CNN, all carrying a similar message to the world beyond the borders of the United States. Wien Brenner defined soft power as the tool used by liberals to achieve their policies, while hard power is the tool of realists, or as Fukuyama calls them, neoconservatives, which they use to impose their policies.

Joseph Nye, on the other hand, defined soft power in essence as "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion; the ability to influence the behavior of others to achieve desired results and objectives without resorting to excessive use of military and hard power." This is what happened with the Soviet Union, which was undermined from within, because power is only effective in the context in which it operates. A tank is not suitable for swamps, and a missile is not effective for attracting others to us. (Joseph S. Nye, U.S. Power and Strategy after Iraq, 2003, p. 1)

As for the actual potential of American soft power, it possesses enormous and influential capabilities, able to better shape the future of international relations. This is because soft power achieves its influence through its ability to subtly contain and gently attract others, including its adversaries, without the need to use forms of hard power. It presents the attractiveness of the model and its ability to influence and entice both elites and the public. (Rafiq Abdel-Saq, *The United States Between Hard Power and Soft Power*, 1st ed., Arab Diffusion, Beirut, 2011)

Soft power can also utilize all civil, social, cultural, intellectual, and diplomatic capabilities, thus enabling American values to spread around the world. For example, the United States is the world's most attractive destination for

immigration, in addition to being the largest producer and exporter of films and television programs. Moreover, many students who completed their studies inside and outside the United States have returned to their countries and occupied prominent positions in their leadership. (Hamid Hamad Saadoun, *The American Use of Hard and Soft Power in Foreign Policy*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, University of Baghdad, 2016, p. 9)

As for the political and strategic developments witnessed in the international and regional environment, they have revealed an important fact: the United States cannot be effective and maintain control and influence over the structures of the international system through military force (hard power) alone. It only moved to soft power as a result of transformations that required it to reconsider the power strategy it employed. Therefore, the United States sought to maximize the role of soft power in strengthening and supporting its strategic capabilities, and this maximization of capabilities is not a product of the moment, but rather the result of the accumulation of indicators of the global role it plays. (Mohammed Hamdan, *Soft Power and Remote Conflict Management*, Hammurabi Center for Research and Strategic Studies, First Edition, 2013)

It is certain that this shift was not the product of sound political judgment on the part of American administrations, but rather came under the pressure of circumstances and changes that no one could face alone. This can be observed on two levels:

First: On the military and strategic levels.

Hard power has proven its inability to resolve many key issues, as has become evident in Iraq, Afghanistan, Vietnam, and even the War on Terror. This is confirmed by the statement of Jerry Brennan, President Obama's counterterrorism advisor, who said, "We will use soft power and public diplomacy to defeat extremists." Therefore, the United States has come to realize that relying solely on hard power as a component of the international system poses a threat to its economic, cultural, and political goals and aspirations, especially in the Middle East. (Mohammed Hamdan, *Soft Power and Remote Conflict Management*, Hammurabi Center for Research and Strategic Studies, First Edition, 2013)

Second: On the economic and financial levels:

The excessive use of hard power, especially during the presidency of George W. Bush, led to significant losses in the American economy. The economic deficit reached \$5.1 trillion in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq alone. Furthermore, the American economy failed to achieve its usual growth, resulting in high unemployment and a decline in health, social, scientific, and even educational services. This was compounded by increased poverty and bankruptcies among many individuals and companies, a situation the United States has experienced since 2008 and from which it has yet to recover. Nye also points to other factors that contributed to the shift in American foreign policy towards reducing the use of hard power and embracing soft power, which can be summarized as follows: (Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power...*, op. cit., p. 29)

1. Due to the prevalence of globalization, particularly its economic aspect, which has transformed the global economy into a reciprocal system, the use of hard power poses risks to economic growth and financial interests.
2. The increasing number of non-national actors, as well as multinational and transnational corporations, along with the growing power of international governmental and non-governmental organizations, including terrorist and organized crime groups, have enabled them to exercise forms of power previously exclusive to nation-states.
3. The rise of nationalist sentiment in response to the unchecked violence these populations have faced due to American policies has complicated the use of hard power, posing a threat to American citizens and interests. The failure to subdue the lightly armed Somali tribes, or what transpired in Iraq despite the overwhelming numerical and firepower of the United States, serves as a highly significant example.
4. The widespread availability and ease of access to technology across all fields point to the ability of others to possess it and use it as a source of power, which can be employed against American policies. This is perhaps what we might call "asymmetrical warfare."
5. The failure of large armies to solve contemporary problems, despite their immense firepower, coupled with other variables and issues in the international environment such as poverty, pollution, global warming, and the spread of epidemics, among others, not to mention that the use of military force has become extremely costly compared to previous circumstances.

Therefore, the concept of soft power is summarized as the ability to subtly contain and gently attract others, making them willing to do what the dominant power desires without resorting to force, or without employing a carrot-and-stick policy. In other words, while hard power stems primarily from military and economic capabilities, soft power arises from the attractiveness of the model and its ability to influence and entice both elites and the public. As Joseph Nye argues, when American policy appears acceptable and legitimate in the eyes of others, the role of soft power increases, and the need to use brute force diminishes. Conversely, the more coercive force is used and the weaker its legitimacy, the more cultural, political, and commercial influence—and everything else within the realm of soft power—diminishes. (Rafiq Abdel Salam, *The United States of America Between Hard and Soft Power*, Center for Thought Industry Studies and Research, 4th ed., Lebanon, pp. 10-11, 2015)

Second Section: Tools of Soft Power in the New American Strategy

The United States has come to understand a crucial factor in determining its global power: strategic performance is not a matter of chance or mere coincidence. Rather, it stems from a vision developed by American policymakers to propel themselves toward global prominence by relying on both material and moral resources to achieve their desired goals.

The emergence of the United States on the international political stage, along with the factors that enabled its rise and dominance, has granted it a distinguished and influential position in contemporary international relations. This allows it, on many occasions, to influence and even impose its will on events unfolding in the international community. Among the important and effective factors contributing to the rise of the United States is soft power and its active role in American strategy. Through soft power, the state shapes its policies and interactions with other nations, based on principles that have given American life a progressive humanitarian dimension, making its overall framework a model for other peoples and countries. (Munim Sahi Al-Ammar, Ali Muhammad Amneef, "Variables Affecting the United States' Use of Soft Power," *Political Issues Journal*, College of Political Science, Al-Nahrain University, Issue 42, 2015, Vol. 38, 2015)

This is what prompted the United States, as a superpower, to adopt a soft power strategy within the framework of its relations with all countries, in order to achieve its national interests and foreign policy objectives. This was done through providing economic and financial aid to many countries around the world, especially poor ones. It also relied on presenting attractive American values to other peoples of the world. Since its inception, US policy has been fueled by the defense of lofty principles and ideas such as freedom, equality, and justice. It succeeded in attracting countries to its side in its wars and peace processes under idealistic banners such as democracy, freedom, and equality, in addition to various cultural and social values represented in educational methods and the reliance on the latest scientific and technological means. This strategy also involved disseminating different American social lifestyles and ways of thinking in social relations and influencing the private sector and civil society organizations. (Hussein Ali Hussein Ali Al-Bahiri, Soft Power, International Center for Future and Strategic Studies, October 2008, p. 22)

Therefore, these values The United States has adopted a distinctively attractive approach through its lifestyle, clothing (the "denim culture"), fast food, and music. All these values, customs, and lifestyle practices have been disseminated through American films, leading viewers to admire the American model. This positively impacts American national interests in most countries worldwide. (Hussein Ali Hussein Ali Al-Bahiri, Soft Power, International Center for Future and Strategic Studies, October 2008, p. 22)

Therefore, the United States possesses a highly influential soft power internationally. This attractive American soft power is manifested in the following: (Mohammed Hamdan, Soft Power and Remote Conflict Management, Hammurabi Center for Research and Strategic Studies, Baghdad, p. 23, 2013)

1. Strengthening American values and institutions while weakening the resources of its competitors and adversaries.
2. Expanding the reach and appeal of American cultural, commercial, media, and scientific symbols while diminishing the influence of its competitors and adversaries.
3. To improve America's attractiveness and image, establish the legitimacy of its foreign policies, and the credibility of its international dealings and behaviors, and to strike at the policies of its enemies.

The sources and tools of American soft power are numerous, including the following: (Same source, pp. 24-25)

- Hollywood's media and film production studios.
- American universities and educational institutions, which attract foreign students and researchers. These students will form a powerful network, spreading goodwill and promoting study in America. They will present a positive image of American society and life in general, thus becoming, intentionally or unintentionally, ambassadors for the American project abroad.
- Immigrants and foreign businesspeople connected to the American business sector.
- American internet networks and websites.
- International cultural exchange programs and conferences sponsored and co-organized by the United States.
- Transnational corporations.
- American or affiliated international development and aid agencies.
- Military training and cooperation programs for leaders and officers of foreign armies. On another front, in addition to the aforementioned elements of American soft power, there is also the technological and informational advancements in the world of software that the United States has achieved, making it a global leader in this field. Most computer programs used worldwide, and the majority of video games, are designed by American companies specializing in this area. For example, Apple, the American manufacturer of computers, mobile phones, and software, is one of the world's leading companies in information systems and software, and its products are among the best-selling and most popular globally. This, in itself, naturally constitutes an effective and important element of American soft power. (Cooper et al., 1999)

Third Section: The American Application of Soft Power Strategy in the Middle East.

The developments witnessed in the international and regional environment, particularly in the Middle East, have revealed an important reality: the United States cannot be effective and influential in terms of achieving impact, dominance, and control, ultimately leading to unilateralism. Leading the global order for decades to come through military force alone is not enough. The role of soft power must be maximized in consolidating and circulating American strategic capabilities. These capabilities are based on a set of comprehensive

power components linked to the positive interaction between the quantity and quality of objective capabilities and the extent of the United States' own readiness to bear the expected costs of employing those capabilities. Therefore, the components of American power have begun to focus on soft power and its components as a means to achieve the state's higher goals. This is especially true since a state's power lies in its ability to influence desired objectives and the effectiveness of that ability in achieving those objectives. Soft power thus plays a role in the development of the components of comprehensive American power, particularly when we realize that the increased capabilities the United States has acquired are not a recent phenomenon but rather indicators of the global role it plays. (Ammar Hamid Yassin, previously cited source, p. 403.)

Despite the broad challenges posed by the Arab Spring to American foreign policy, the US resorted to using soft power in dealing with the events unfolding in the region, employing the internet and social media to incite Peoples and their motivation to change in accordance with their characteristics and goals, in addition to American public diplomacy, which focuses less on media attention and prioritizes direct communication, education, and various forms of exchange that include civil society and target youth in particular, as well as its significant role in addressing all regional and international challenges. (Khaled Aliwi Jiyad Al-Ardawi, *The Role of Soft Power in Reshaping the Middle East (Iraq and Syria as a Model)*, Center for Strategic Studies, University of Karbala, available at the following link: <https://m.annabaa.org/arabic/studies/16347>, 2018)

In addition to the increasing influence of globalization, the American strategy for evaluating political/intellectual globalization operates through several economic and social channels. The United States works to spread American values through a number of axes, most notably, for example, the capitalist restrictions imposed by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization on countries seeking loans. These institutions serve as the Western gateway to developing countries and are the main avenue for these countries to improve their economies.

This is what makes the Middle East region, in terms of security, The American homeland holds significant strategic depth, as the United States has always linked it to global security. This region also represents the center from which the United States seeks to launch its project for a new world order. American foreign policy is not driven solely by politics, economics, and security; other aspects,

most notably the role of religion, are also significant, especially after the rise of the American right wing in American politics. Generally, the most prominent features of the application of the American soft power strategy in the Middle East are evident in the American approach to what is called the "Arab Spring" revolutions (Mustafa Ibrahim Al-Shammari, "The American Application of the Smart Power Strategy in the Arab Region," Al-Mustaqbal Center for Strategic Studies, available at <http://mcsr.net/news361>, 2018).

The most important characteristic of these revolutionary movements was their purely youthful nature, devoid of any political or union framework, and the attempt to steer the waves of change in Arab countries in a manner consistent with American interests, in order to contain them. The revolutions and the exploitation of their gains, considering them a legitimate offspring of the idea of "creative chaos" (Khalida Kasis, "The Arab Spring: Between Revolution and Chaos," Al-Mustaqbal Al-Arabi Journal, Issue 412, Center for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut, pp. 225-226-228; see also: Osama Ali Muhammad, "Approaching the Arab Revolutions and Foreign Interests (The Syrian and Bahraini Models)," published research, Institute of Sciences, 2014). Through this approach, the United States gradually moves away from resorting to military force to impose its visions, opting instead for another option. It has thus distanced itself from the "hard power" option due to the exorbitant costs it would incur given its struggling economy and high debt levels, and has turned to "soft power," which will enable it to fully implement its plans without any loss of life or money.

Therefore, it has resorted to regime change by mobilizing the Arab street through its agents and those trained in political and mass organization, influencing public opinion, and preparing courses and training outside their countries for young volunteers through civil society organizations, in addition to... American organizations and institutions played this role, most notably the Gene Sharp Institute, whose writings and ideas, particularly his book "The Transition from Dictatorship to Democracy," had a significant and dangerous impact on the outbreak of revolutions worldwide. These began in Serbia in 2000 (the Otpor movement), continued in Georgia in 2003 (the Rose Revolution and the Kmara movement), and extended to Ukraine (the Orange Revolution), culminating in the Arab Spring revolutions in the Middle East (Adel Al-Gogary, "Bernard Lewis: The Middle East's Sword and the Architect of Sykes-Picot II," Dar Al-

Kitab Al-Arabi, Damascus, p. 150, 2015). The aim was to tighten Western control over the Arab Spring countries, with all their ethnicities, sects, and races, through colonial domination and the dismantling of the religious, intellectual, civilizational, cultural, and productive foundations of the entire Middle East. This was then replaced by organized immigration to the United States through what is known as (By lottery). (Khaled Ghazal, The New World Order, Hegemony and America, available at the following link: <https://www.slideshare.net/Omarish/ss-6424113>)

The United States also worked to exploit the internal conditions in the Arab Spring countries and used them to ensure the success of its projects in the region. It began spending millions of dollars on freedom programs, education reform, youth skills development courses, and training. An example of this is what WikiLeaks showed in a cable issued by the US Embassy in Cairo on December 6, 2007, that the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) allocated \$665 million in 2008 and \$75 million in 2009 for Egyptian programs that contribute to establishing democratic institutions and training individuals to demand their rights. (Iyad Khalaf Omar, The Soft Power Strategy and Its Role in Implementing US Foreign Policy Objectives in the Arab Region, Middle East University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, p. 103, 2016)

In this regard, the United States, through soft power, played a significant role in inciting Arab populations against their authoritarian regimes before, during, and after the period of change. The most prominent manifestation of this role was: (Mustafa Ibrahim Al-Shammari, previously cited source)

1. The role of technological means and the international information network (the Internet), and its associated social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and others. It is well known that these platforms are linked to the US administration, whether directly or indirectly, due to its global dominance of the international sphere. Consequently, these platforms have become the largest sources for gathering information about populations. From this, we can observe how these means and platforms were employed in regime change operations, as happened in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, by influencing and mobilizing public opinion in these countries to overthrow their governments.

This is what happened in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. 2. The role of American trainers and delegates in preparing and training young people in Arab countries in methods of non-violent influence, with the aim of bringing about change in the leadership of some Arab countries that have lost their popularity, under the banner of achieving democracy. Furthermore, the United States has worked to strengthen its ties with some Arab intellectuals and journalists, particularly those adhering to liberal thought, and has opened channels of communication with them through civil society organizations and other means.

The goals of American cultural policy toward the Middle East are defined by the following main objectives: (John Waterbury, "Hate Your Policies, Love Your Institution," *Foreign Affairs*, p. 58, 2003)

- Securing an American cultural presence in a way that ensures continuous and effective influence on Arab public opinion and its alignment with the aspirations and interests of American policy in the region. This can be understood from the content of American advisory reports, which frequently recommend the necessity of relying on cultural diplomacy due to the importance of its role in achieving American national security objectives.
- To implant American values and cultural patterns in the Arab world, and to strengthen their role to a degree that ensures Arab acceptance of American policy, thereby securing the future of American interests and the continuation of its utilitarian harvest from Arab resources. The process of implanting American values in the Arab world is carried out through a number of methods, perhaps the most important of which are the diverse efforts exerted by American public diplomacy agencies, which are based primarily on a war of ideas, according to the American approach that "final victory is not achieved on the battlefield, but rather in the human mind." The process of implanting American values in all their forms, content, and orientations leads to the creation of cultural conditions and realities through which the United States can achieve its goals and interests in the Arab world. This is because this process is based on shaping minds and adapting temperaments to align with the tenets of American culture. In this regard, relevant studies indicate that the Arab reality is dominated by manifestations of cultural imperialism or cultural subordination, represented by linguistic and cultural alienation, the erosion of Arab identity, the distortion of the image of the Arab individual, and the transformation of national culture into a consumer commodity, accompanied by a significant increase in emigration. From Arab

minds abroad, in addition to imposing cultural structures in the Arab world that are dependent on centers of global cultural imperialism (Masoud Daher, *Confronting the Zionist Imperialist Cultural Invasion of the Arab East: A Study in Resistance Culture*, Confronting Cultural Invasion Series, National Council for Culture, p. 30, 1989). This is alongside the strong and increasing entrenchment of the English language in education in general, and university education in particular, as a result of globalization and American leadership in the field of information and communication technology. This has led to a decline in the status of the Arabic language, and there is no doubt that this poses a danger to the Arab future, considering that the Arabic language is the indicator of individual and collective Arab identity and the means of advancing and promoting Arab culture (Riyad Qasim, *The Arabic Language: From Decline to Empowerment*, Al-Mustaqbal Al-Arabi Magazine, Issue 4, Year 1, pp. 81-96, 2013).

The United States' unique leadership of the world has led to the entrenchment of a cultural and intellectual strategy that the contemporary Moroccan thinker, Mohammed Abed Al-Jabri, called the "strategy of penetration." This means that cultural dependency has transformed into a process of entrenching a culture of penetration. Mohammed Abed Al-Jabri tends to use this term, considering that cultural dependency presupposes a relationship of subordination to superiority as an expression of need, while the term "cultural imperialism" refers to a relationship of domination exercised by the strong party over the weak. He rejects the term "cultural invasion," which was commonly used in Salafist and revolutionary Arab discourse, due to its ideological implications. (Mohammed Abed Al-Jabri, *Critique of Arab Reason*, Center for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut, pp. 174-175, 1998)

This strategy comes in light of the tremendous development of communication methods, which has opened the way for a cultural flood sweeping the globe, originating from the North and subject to its standards, particularly the United States of America, which almost monopolizes the information market, whether through news agencies or television broadcasting, as 65% of global information flows from the United States of America. This flood of information shapes the desires and needs of consumers, their behavioral patterns and lifestyles, and leads to the stifling of all cultural creativity among the passive prisoners of the

messages. (Serge Latouche, translated by Khalil Kalfat, *The Westernization of the World*, Dar Al-Alam Al-Thalith, Cairo, p. 27, 1992)

This is what makes the media aim to reshape the social life of peoples according to the Western lifestyle, urging them to actively participate in it in a way that transforms the individual according to the Western social model. This is achieved by instilling concepts of personal choice and individualism, obscuring social conflict, and focusing on the myth of media pluralism. (Herbert Schiller, translated by Abdel Salam Radwan, *The Mind Manipulators - Alam Al-Ma'rifah Series*, No. 243, 2nd ed., National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, Kuwait, p. 17, 1999) The process of promoting the idea of engaging in the new cultural life is carried out by highlighting its outward appearance and praising those who adopt it as a modern lifestyle, with new forms of food, clothing, entertainment, and spending, in a way that aligns with the capitalist need to increase consumption, and on the other hand, by emphasizing the values of capitalist society. We conclude that the soft power tools employed or promoted by the United States have led to various forms of internal conflict, civil wars, and tribal and clan rivalries. This has exacerbated chaos and instability following regime changes in some Arab states, further eroding their legitimacy and diminishing their effectiveness. Some Arab regimes have become incapable of defending themselves and cooperating with one another due to a lack of mutual trust with their people. This situation has rendered the Arab system ineffective, prompting some states to seek external and regional alliances to maintain power and protect their security from external aggression. This has led to the penetration of these external powers into the Arab system, allowing them to interfere in internal affairs, control crucial issues, and steer them toward their own interests. Examples of this include Syria's efforts in the five years preceding the Syrian crisis to strengthen its relations with Turkey and enhance cooperation in various fields, as well as its pursuit of closer ties and an alliance with Iran, facilitated by Iran's support for the regime. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who rejected the opposition and the revolution against him (Bashir Abdel Fattah, "The Arab Spring and the Re-engineering of Regional Relations," *Arab Affairs Journal*, General Secretariat of the League of Arab States, Issue 148, pp. 46-47, 2011). These examples point to the existence of a weak and ineffective Arab system due to errors in its foundation, practice, and performance. Most importantly, there is a lack of genuine leadership capable of guiding Arab states and

protecting them from the dangers surrounding them and threatening their security. Furthermore, there is a lack of a shared vision among the Arab states in dealing with and adapting to international and regional changes.

Regardless of the effects and repercussions of these revolutions, whether internally within their respective countries or regionally, when evaluating the soft power strategy, we observe its success, both tactically in terms of the methods employed and strategically in terms of the objectives that smart power seeks to achieve and the situation in which it has been implemented in the Middle East. (Mustafa Ibrahim Al-Shammari, previously cited source.)

Fourth Section: The Future Vision of the American Soft Power Strategy in the Middle East

The fundamental pillars governing American policy in the Middle East have remained unchanged for decades. They can be summarized as follows: first, maintaining the security of oil resources and ensuring their flow to American and, in particular, European markets; second, ensuring the security of Israel; and third, a third objective added after the events of September 11, 2001, namely, the challenge of combating terrorism and addressing its root causes, especially after terrorist attacks struck at the heart of the United States and its symbols. This objective is, in reality, linked to the two previous fundamental objectives, as combating terrorism primarily protects the favored ally, Israel, and also falls within the plan to maintain the flow of oil. (Ibrahim Al-Madhoun et al., "Anxious Revolutions: Socio-Strategic Approaches to the Arab Movements," Center for Civilizational Development of Islamic Thought, 1st ed., Beirut, pp. 161-162, 2013)

From these fundamental pillars, one can begin to understand the policies and future visions of successive US administrations in the Middle East. Despite their differing political and partisan orientations, and the succession of presidents and administrations, US foreign policy sets its priorities and long- and short-term goals based on the principle of serving the supreme interests of the United States, and the principles and slogans it promotes, such as freedom, democracy, and respect for human rights. (Same source, p. 162.)

The Japanese-born American scholar Francis Fukuyama defined American foreign policy in the Middle East as: the activity undertaken by decision-makers in the American administration at the external level towards the Middle East region, represented by the call to spread the values of democracy and the culture

of human rights (Ammar Sharaan et al., *The Middle East under the Agendas of American Foreign Policy: An Analytical Study of the Transitional Period between Obama and Trump*, Arab Democratic Center for Strategic, Political and Economic Studies, 1st ed., Berlin, p. 39, 2017). This is paralleled by an intellectual trend that focuses on economic dealings. International finance and what can be settled (through the economic assassination of the region's countries) are not grants from the World Bank or any other donor organization. They are not intended to develop or grow the economy of this country, nor to endorse an American decision, nor to support foreign companies by improving their business environment and investment climate in a country with attractive resources. Ultimately, privatization takes place through the sale of state assets to avert bankruptcy resulting from debt, the enormous burden of which is borne by the general public. This amounts to the enslavement of the people. Economically, while the beneficiaries of these debts are the upper class of society and the capitalist companies investing in this country (Raed Rafiq Al-Rahia, *The Oil Dimension of the US National Security Strategy and its Repercussions on US Foreign Policy towards the Middle East: An Analytical Study of the Role and Implications during the Period 1990-2010*, Master's Thesis, Damascus University, Faculty of Economics, Syria, pp. 158-159), the US economic soft power aims, through these economic and financial transactions, to:

1. Sell the state's assets and all its resources, including its social services, utility companies, and even the school system, the penal system, and insurance—all of which are privatized. (Ibid., p. 159)
2. Buy support by forcing the government of this country to enter into base-building agreements. The American military, and the ratification of a specific agreement such as the protection-for-oil agreement, or food-for-supportive-positions agreement, or voting in favor of a specific project in the United Nations and the Security Council, is the mechanism on which the United States of America builds its new world order, as a system in which the ownership of the facilities of peoples' lives returns to the huge corporations by involving governments in deals to sell the state to those corporations, while the politicians remain as a front for what is taken against the peoples.

The United States government, in cooperation with its allies in the volatile and turbulent Middle East, and as a result of the influence and pressure exerted by

neoconservatives and AIPAC within the decision-making apparatus of American state institutions and beyond, has begun to adopt a strategy based on deepening vertical divisions and waging war from within, rather than resorting to direct military intervention. Its aim is to create a new Middle East in accordance with the new world order it desires, relying on creating chaos and then rearranging the region (geographically and demographically) on the one hand, and restructuring the region's economies by attempting to directly link them to American markets on the other. This would allow the United States to tighten its control over the resources of Middle Eastern countries, according to its new geopolitical methodology (Raed Rafiq Al-Rahia, previously cited source, p. 171). The United States believes that economic success is what creates The financial foundation of national power, from which the drive towards global dominance begins, includes the following:

- Controlling the oil and non-oil economic resources of the Middle East, thus diminishing oil's importance as a strategic weapon in future and potential conflicts, such as preemptive and preventive wars waged by Israel and the United States against countries in the region, whether directly or indirectly, using soft power tools.
- Dominating oil wells to isolate economic powers like China and Russia, preventing them from playing a new polely role. This allows the United States to remain the sole controller of the destinies of countries and peoples, achieved through the privatization of the oil sector for the benefit of major American oil companies. (Ammar Abdul Rahman, *The Issue of Terrorism: Between Right and Wrong, A Study*, Arab Writers Union Publications, Damascus, p. 188, 2003)
- Also, the disarmament of states threatening Israel's security in the Middle East first, ensuring Israel's continued status as an unrivaled nuclear power in the region, and the establishment of multilateral committees under American auspices to achieve Arab states' recognition of Israel and the establishment of economic relations with it, in addition to opening trade offices with some countries in the region, including Egypt and Qatar.
- • Keeping Middle Eastern countries preoccupied with their internal problems and instigating internal conflicts under the guise of freedom, democracy, and the Arab Spring revolutions has contributed to undermining nationalist thought and promoting the idea of individual states as political entities within the Arab world. This, coupled with accompanying economic repercussions, has led to a clear

fragmentation of Arab affairs and political decisions at the pan-Arab and Islamic levels. Consequently, each Arab state has been isolated from the broader Arab world, and each Islamic state in the Middle East has been detached from the deteriorating state of the Islamic world and from the core issue of Islam and the Arabs: the Palestinian cause. This issue has been reduced to a Palestinian issue concerning only the Palestinians. (Same source, p. 184.)

- Spreading chaos and economic instability, manifested in various ways, such as ongoing looting and plundering, theft of public funds, disruption of production facilities, recession, unemployment, foreign borrowing, capital flight, and official control over banking institutions. Finally, there is media mobilization. The entity sponsoring the change process employs its media apparatus, using advanced technologies, to erase all traces of the old regime from the collective consciousness and replace them with the symbolic stereotypes of the new era. This leads to the erosion of national identity and the weakening of the sense of belonging. (Iyad Khalaf Omar Al-Kaoud, previously cited source, pp. 119-120.)

In light of the above, it can be said that the United States, with its significant advantages in power—whether economic, political, military, or cultural—makes it powerful and unique within the international system, even if it experiences weakness or competition in certain fields or sectors. Maintaining hegemony remains a strategic choice for decision-makers, at least during the current phase. Despite the United States' efforts to bolster its soft power, military force remains effective and its use is essential, as it is the most important tool for achieving and maintaining hegemony.

Conclusion

The effects of the United States' use of soft power tools have been more effective in achieving its foreign policy objectives in the Middle East compared to hard power tools. In fact, there are several reasons that prompted the United States to respond clearly to calls for reducing reliance on military force. To this end, it employed cultural, media, and political means and tools, achieving the results the United States sought. Perhaps the most prominent of these was the spread of democracy and the change of some authoritarian regimes. These achievements also aligned with the trends advocating for the dismantling of Middle Eastern states, particularly Arab states, and the regional Arab order, with the aim of redrawing the geopolitical map of the Middle East according to different and

new criteria. The current situation is perhaps the best evidence confirming the validity of this trend. American soft power, with its cultural, political, and media dimensions, has contributed significantly to bringing about the desired change without engaging in military battles and confrontations that could inflict further material and moral losses on the United States.

Therefore, there are essential points that must be mentioned, representing the important conclusions we have drawn from this research, which are as follows:

1. The information and communications revolution has impacted the role of soft power in consolidating American hegemony and diminished the role of hard power. The development of information and communications has led to a diversification of power sources and highlighted the intangible aspects of soft power, represented by culture, political values, and foreign policy. This has prompted the United States to leverage this as a cover for its military superiority, to reduce hostility towards it, or to lessen fears of its hard power. This makes the US eager to maintain its hegemony and prevent the emergence of opposing alliances or powers.

2. The focus on communication and information tools, the internet, and social media has become a crucial and effective instrument of soft power, now playing a role comparable to that of military force. This was evident during the so-called Arab Spring, where the media and social media played a significant role in changing many Arab regimes. This would not have been possible without American approval, aimed at strengthening its dominance in the region, especially since the Middle East in general, and the Arab region in particular, is an area of American influence and interests.

Practical unite

Analysis of American Political Discourse After 2011

An analysis of American political discourse after 2011 revealed that the United States clearly focused on the concepts of democracy, freedom, human rights, political participation, and political reform, especially after the events of the Arab Spring. This was evident in the speeches of President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, where the United States was presented as a supporter of democratic transitions and political openness in the Middle East. American discourse was also linked to the concept of “internet freedom” as an extension of freedom of expression and political communication. Hillary

Clinton emphasized that freedom of communication and digital openness are fundamental human rights (Clinton, 2011).

The analysis also showed that American discourse was not merely media-driven, but rather part of a strategic framework aimed at improving the image of the United States, influencing Arab public opinion, and supporting more open political environments. This discourse relied on persuasion and intellectual appeal rather than direct coercion, aligning with Joseph Nye's concept of soft power, which is based on the ability to influence through appealing values, ideas, culture, and policies (Nye, 2004).

Second: Analysis of USAID Programs

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has been one of the most important instruments of American soft power in the Middle East since 2011. Its programs have focused on supporting civil society, governance, transparency, training, capacity building, and empowering youth and women. The agency has also relied on funding, grants, and local partnerships to reach communities indirectly, giving it greater influence within local environments. The analysis reveals that USAID programs were not solely developmental but also carried political and strategic dimensions related to building long-term influence within the region, particularly in countries that experienced political transitions after the Arab Spring, such as Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Yemen. The study also revealed that the agency focused on youth and civil society as the two groups most capable of influencing the political and social future, and relied on training and capacity building as means of indirect influence within Arab societies (USAID, 2014; USAID OIG, 2015).

Third: Analysis of MEPI Programs

The analysis showed that the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) represented one of the tools of American public diplomacy in the region, as it focused on supporting political reform, civic participation, education, and the empowerment of youth and women. The initiative also supported NGOs, educational programs, and youth initiatives with the aim of building local leadership and long-term networks within Arab societies.

MEPI programs also relied on training, capacity building, and skills development as means of indirect influence, with an emphasis on disseminating the concepts of governance, participation, and political openness. The study showed that the initiative treated youth as the most influential group in the future of political and social transformations within the region, which made them a central focus of American soft power programs

(MEPI, 2016a; MEPI, 2016b). Fourth: Analysis of Voice of America (VOA)

The analysis revealed that Voice of America was one of the most important tools of American international media after 2011. Its coverage focused on the Arab Spring as a movement for political and social change linked to democracy and freedom, not merely internal unrest. The media coverage also emphasized concepts of political reform, participation, youth, and human rights, making American media a tool of public diplomacy and American soft power.

The study also showed that VOA sought to present the United States as a supporter of democratic transitions and political openness, focusing on direct communication with Arab populations and influencing public opinion and political perceptions of events. The Voice of America Charter explained that long-term American interests are achieved through direct communication with the peoples of the world, reflecting the strategic dimension of American media in foreign policy (USAGM, 1976; Voice of America, 2011).

Table 1: Key Indicators for analyzing Voice of America after 2011

Result	Index
International Media and Public Diplomacy	Tool type
Democracy, Freedom, and Reform	Central message
Change, Protests, Youth, and Freedom	Recurring themes
Arab Public Opinion and Youth	Target audience
Media Framing and Image Building	Mode of influence
Influencing Political Perception and Public Opinion	Strategic objective

Fifth: Analysis of Social Media and Digital Media

The analysis revealed that social media and digital media have become among the most important tools of American soft power since 2011, particularly with the rise of digital platforms during the Arab Spring. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube played a significant role in mass mobilization, information dissemination, organizing protests, and influencing public opinion,

thus making the digital environment an integral part of the modern political and media landscape.

American discourse has also been linked to the concepts of internet freedom, digital openness, and freedom of expression, presenting digital technology as a tool to support political participation and open communication. The study showed that young people were the most frequent users of these platforms, making them the primary target of digital and media influence. Furthermore, digital media has helped circumvent traditional censorship and build extensive, cross-border communication networks, enhancing the United States' ability to exert indirect influence within Arab societies (Clinton, 2011; Castells, 2012).

Table 2: Key Indicators for Digital Media and Social Media Analysis

Result	Index
Digital Media and Social Media	Tool type
Freedom of Expression and Digital Openness	Central message
Freedom, Youth, Communication, Participation	Recurring themes
Youth, Activists, and Public Opinion	Target audience
Digital Mobilization and Media Influence	Mode of influence
Influencing Public Opinion and the Digital Sphere	Strategic objective

Sixth: General Results of the Analysis

The analysis revealed that the United States increasingly relied on soft power tools after 2011, particularly given the declining effectiveness of direct military interventions and the rising importance of media and digital technology. It also showed that digital media, development programs, public diplomacy, and civil society have become key tools for indirect influence within the Middle East.

Furthermore, the study revealed that youth and civil society were the two most targeted groups within American soft power programs, due to their role in the political and social transformations following the Arab Spring. American media and social media also played a significant role in shaping political perceptions and public opinion by focusing on the concepts of democracy, freedom, and political openness.

The results indicated that American soft power did not rely solely on media discourse, but also utilized:

- Training

- Funding
- Capacity building
- Local partnerships
- Digital media as tools for building long-term influence within Arab societies.

Table 3: The Most Prominent American Soft Power Tools After 2011

Nature of use	The tool
Influencing public opinion and shaping public image	American Media
Mobilization and political and media influence	Digital Media
Development and capacity building	USAID
Supporting reform and civic engagement	MEPI
Building local influence networks	Civil Society
The most targeted and influential group	Youth

Table 4: Key Recurring Messages in American Discourse

Attendance level	message
High	Democracy
High	Freedom
High	Human Rights
High	Political Participation
Moderate to High	Internet Freedom
Moderate	Political Reform

Seventh: Testing the Study Hypotheses

The analysis results confirmed the study's hypothesis that the United States increasingly relied on soft power tools in the Middle East after 2011. Washington focused on media, civil society, digital technology, and development programs as tools for indirect influence within the region.

The results also demonstrated that digital media and social media constituted a central tool within the US soft power strategy, particularly during the Arab Spring. Digital platforms were used for political mobilization, influencing public opinion, and disseminating discourse related to democracy and political openness.

Furthermore, the study confirmed that USAID and MEPI programs contributed to building long-term influence within Arab societies through:

- Training
- Capacity building

- Supporting civil society
- Empowering youth
- Local partnerships

The results also showed that the United States preferred using indirect influence through media, public diplomacy, and technology rather than relying solely on military force. This aligns with the concept of soft power, which is based on attraction and persuasion rather than coercion (Nye, 2004).

Table 5: Results of the Study Hypothesis Test

Result	Hypothesis
Verified	The United States' reliance on soft power after 2011
Verified	Digital media as a central tool of soft power
Verified	USAID and MEPI as tools of indirect influence
Verified	Focus on youth and civil society
Verified	Reliance on indirect influence rather than direct intervention

Section Two

Applied Analysis of American Soft Power Tools

First: Analysis of American Political Discourse After 2011

An analysis of American political discourse after 2011 revealed that the United States clearly focused on the concepts of democracy, freedom, human rights, political participation, and political reform, especially after the events of the Arab Spring. This was evident in the speeches of President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, where the United States was presented as a supporter of democratic transitions and political openness in the Middle East. American discourse was also linked to the concept of “internet freedom” as an extension of freedom of expression and political communication. Hillary Clinton emphasized that freedom of communication and digital openness are part of fundamental human rights (Clinton, 2011).

The analysis also showed that American discourse was not merely media-driven, but rather part of a strategic framework aimed at improving the image of the United States, influencing Arab public opinion, and supporting more open political environments. This discourse relied on persuasion and intellectual appeal rather than direct coercion, aligning with Joseph Nye's concept of soft power (Nye, 2004).

Second: Analysis of USAID Programs

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has been one of the most important instruments of American soft power in the Middle East since 2011. Its programs have focused on supporting civil society, governance, transparency, training, capacity building, and empowering youth and women. The agency has also relied on funding, grants, and local partnerships to reach communities indirectly, granting it greater influence within local environments. The analysis revealed that USAID programs were not solely developmental but also carried political and strategic dimensions related to building long-term influence within the region, particularly in countries that experienced political transitions after the Arab Spring, such as Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Yemen. The study also revealed that the agency focused on youth and civil society as the two groups most capable of influencing the political and social future (USAID, 2014; USAID OIG, 2015).

Third: MEPI Program Analysis

The analysis revealed that the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) served as a tool of American public diplomacy in the region, focusing on supporting political reform, civic engagement, education, and the empowerment of youth and women. The initiative also supported NGOs, educational programs, and youth initiatives to build local leadership and long-term networks within Arab societies.

MEPI programs relied on training, capacity building, and skills development as means of indirect influence, emphasizing the dissemination of concepts of governance and political openness. The study showed that the initiative treated youth as the most influential group in the future of political and social transformations within the region (MEPI, 2016a; MEPI, 2016b).

Fourth: Voice of America (VOA) Analysis

The analysis revealed that Voice of America was one of the most important tools of American international media after 2011, focusing its coverage on the Arab Spring as a movement for political and social change linked to democracy and freedom. Media coverage also focused on concepts of political reform, participation, youth, and human rights, making American media a tool of public diplomacy and soft power.

The study also showed that VOA sought to present the United States as a supporter of democratic transitions and political openness, focusing on direct communication with Arab populations and influencing public opinion and political perceptions of events.

(USAGM, 1976; Voice of America, 2011).

Table 6: Key Indicators for analyzing Voice of America after 2011

Result	Index
International Media and Public Diplomacy	Tool type
Democracy, Freedom, and Reform	Central message
Change, Protests, Youth, and Freedom	Recurring themes
Arab Public Opinion and Youth	Target audience
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Influencing Political Perception and Public Opinion	Strategic objective

Fifth: Analysis of Social Media and Digital Media

The analysis revealed that social media and digital media have become among the most important tools of American soft power since 2011, particularly with the rise of digital platforms during the Arab Spring. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube played a significant role in mass mobilization, information dissemination, and the organization of protests.

American discourse has also been linked to the concepts of internet freedom, digital openness, and freedom of expression, presenting digital technology as a tool to support political participation and open communication. The study showed that young people were the most frequent users of these platforms, making them the primary target of digital and media influence (Clinton, 2011; Castells, 2012).

Table 7: Key Indicators for Digital Media and Social Media Analysis

Result	Index
Digital Media and Social Media	Tool type
Freedom of Expression and Digital Openness	Central message
Freedom, Youth, Communication, Participation	Recurring themes
Youth, Activists, and Public Opinion	Target audience
Digital Mobilization and Media Influence	Mode of influence
Influencing Public Opinion and the Digital Sphere	Strategic objective

Sixth: CNN International Analysis

The results of CNN International's analysis showed that the channel played a significant role in covering the Arab Spring events and the political transformations in the Middle East after 2011. News coverage focused on protests, political change, democracy, human rights, and the role of youth in the protest movements.

The channel also relied on live coverage, field reports, and political analysis to present a picture of events linked to the concepts of freedom, reform, and political openness, thus making it part of the media landscape associated with American soft power.

Table 8: Key Indicators of CNN International Analysis

Result	Index
International Media	Tool type
Democracy and Political Reform	Central message
International and Arab Public Opinion	Target audience
Media Coverage and Political Framing	Mode of influence
Freedom, Protests, Youth, Change	Recurring concepts
Influencing Perception and Public Opinion	Strategic objective

Seventh: Quantitative Indicators for Applied Analysis

The applied aspect of the study relied on quantitative content analysis by monitoring the frequency of concepts and messages related to American soft power within the media and political materials analyzed during the period (2011–2020). The analysis included:

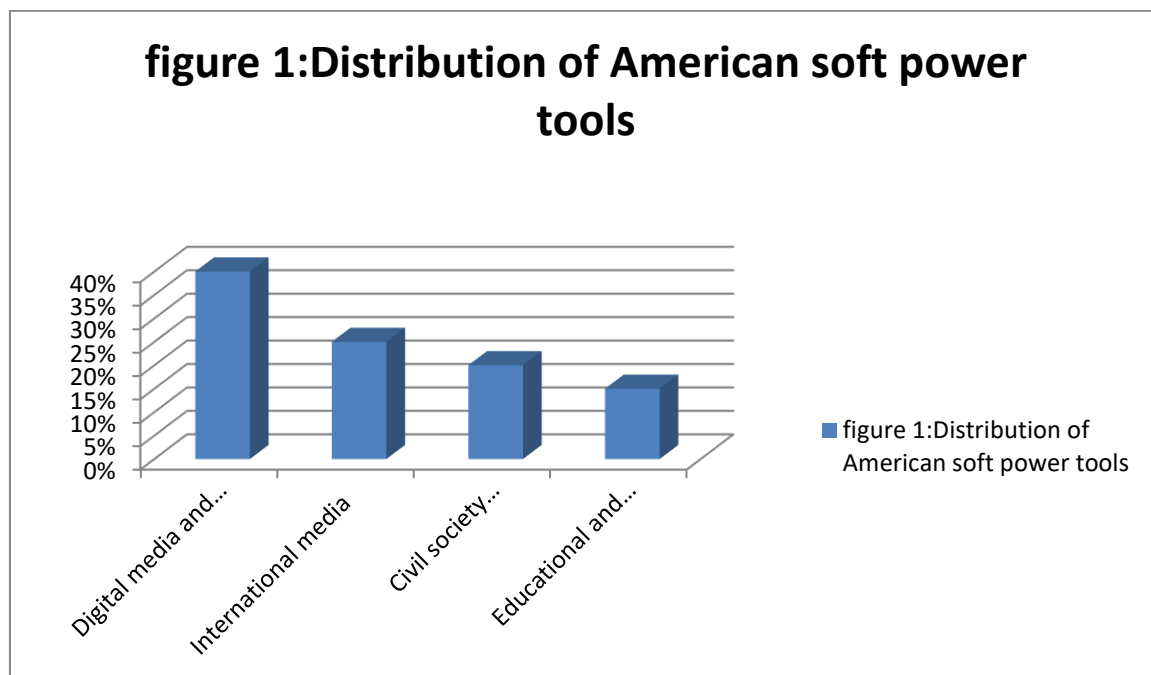
- American political speeches.
- Voice of America reports.
- CNN International content.
- Social media posts.
- USAID and MEPI programs.

The results showed that digital media and social media constituted the most prominent tool among American soft power instruments, due to the increased reliance on the digital space to influence public opinion and manage political and media discourse after the Arab Spring events.

Table 9: Distribution of American Soft Power Instruments

Visibility	The tool
40%	Digital media and social media
25%	International media
20%	Civil society organizations and programs
15%	Educational and cultural programs

figure 1: Distribution of American soft power tools



The table reveals that digital media ranked first among American soft power tools, reflecting a shift towards using technology and online platforms to manage political and media influence within the region.

The analysis also showed that American discourse heavily emphasized the concepts of democracy, freedom, and human rights, making them the most frequently used themes in American media and political content directed at the Middle East.

Conclusions

1. The study concluded that the United States increasingly relied on soft power tools in the Middle East after 2011. Quantitative indicators showed that digital media and social media were the most frequently used tools (40%), reflecting a shift from direct military intervention to indirect media and digital influence.

2. The analysis revealed that American discourse heavily emphasized the concepts of democracy, freedom, and human rights. Democracy had the highest frequency (30%), followed by freedom (25%), indicating the United States' reliance on rights-based and political discourse within its soft power strategy.

3. The study revealed that youth were the most targeted group by American soft power tools (45%), followed by civil society (30%). This reflects the United States' focus on the groups most capable of influencing political and social transformations within the region. 4. The analysis revealed that social media and digital media played a pivotal role in mobilizing the masses and shaping public opinion during the Arab Spring. They also facilitated the direct dissemination of American discourse related to freedom and political openness to the Arab public. 5. The study demonstrated that USAID and MEPI programs were not limited to developmental dimensions but were also used as tools for political and social influence through funding, training, capacity building, and support for civil society, with the aim of building long-term influence within Arab societies.

6. The results showed that American media, particularly Voice of America and CNN International, played a significant role in influencing political perceptions of events by focusing on concepts of political reform, protests, human rights, and youth. This made media an essential component of American public diplomacy.

7. Quantitative indicators revealed that media influence ranked first among the influence methods used (35%), followed by digital mobilization (25%). This confirms that the United States relied primarily on media and digital technology to manage its influence within the region. 8. The study clarified that American soft power relied on the integration of media, digital technology, civil society, and development programs within a comprehensive strategy aimed at improving the American image, influencing public opinion, and building networks of indirect influence.

9. The study concluded that the digital space has become part of the modern political and media conflict environment, and that information, technology, and digital communication have transformed into key tools in contemporary international relations.

10. The results confirmed that soft power has become one of the most important elements of American strategy in the Middle East after 2011, especially with the

increasing importance of digital media and cognitive influence in managing modern international conflicts.

Recommendations

1. The study recommends the necessity of strengthening Arab studies related to soft power and digital media, due to the significant shift in the nature of political and media influence tools in modern international relations.
2. The study emphasizes the importance of developing local and digital Arab media to be more competitive and influential in shaping public opinion, especially in light of the increasing role of international media and digital platforms in shaping political perception.
3. The study recommends enhancing media and digital literacy among young people, as the analysis revealed that they are the most targeted group by American soft power tools (45%). This necessitates developing critical thinking and information verification skills.
4. The study emphasizes the importance of developing national policies related to information security and the digital space, given the increasing reliance on digital media and social media as tools for political and media influence.
5. The study recommends supporting scientific research in the fields of digital media, public diplomacy, and political discourse analysis to understand the modern shifts in the tools of international influence.
6. The study affirms the necessity of building Arab soft power based on media, culture, technology, and education to strengthen the Arab presence regionally and internationally and reduce its vulnerability to foreign media.
7. The study recommends developing Arab media strategies capable of engaging with international media and digital platforms, especially since the analysis showed that international media constituted 25% of the influence tools used in American discourse.
8. The study emphasizes the importance of supporting awareness programs related to the safe and responsible use of social media, given the significant role these platforms play in mobilization and influencing public opinion.
9. The study recommends focusing on training programs for youth and civil society organizations in digital media skills and information literacy, as civil society and youth have been central to the US soft power strategy in the region.

10. The study underscores the necessity of linking national security and digital security, as modern conflicts increasingly rely on information, media, and psychological and cognitive influence, not just traditional military tools.

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1. Joseph Nye defined "soft power" as "the ability to influence desired outcomes and change the behavior of others when necessary." The combination of power with the attribute of "soft" implies the ability to obtain what one wants through persuasion and attraction, not coercion. His definition excludes economic, political, and military sanctions. Operationally, soft power can be defined as: the ability to influence and attract others through persuasion, not coercion, to a path that serves the interests of the state and its entity, using means that do not involve the use of hard power tools other than physical coercion.
2. Joseph Nye is an American political scientist and former dean of the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He co-founded, with Robert Cohen, the Center for New Liberal Studies in International Relations. He held several official positions, including Assistant Secretary of Defense for National Security Affairs in the Clinton administration and Chairman of the National Intelligence Council. Source: See: Karrar Nouri Hamid, "The Smart Power Project Towards the Arab Spring Revolutions," Tikrit Journal of Political Science, Volume 3, Issue 9, Year 2013, pp. 146-147.
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12. *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.
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For more information on the topic, see:
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17. Mustafa Ibrahim Al-Shammari, *The American Application of the Smart Power Strategy in the Arab Region*, Al-Mustaqbal Center for Strategic Studies, article published on March 6, 2018, available at the following link: <http://mcsr.net/news361>
18. The United States has developed the approach of creative chaos and formulated it into a strategic theory that relieves it of the need to resort to direct military action unless absolutely necessary. The theory of creative chaos, which targets the state of chaos in conflict zones between local parties, allows the United States to ride the wave of creative chaos and direct it to its advantage and implement its plans, foremost among them, controlling oil, energy, and gas resources, and ensuring Israel's security and its dream of realizing its project. The concept of a "Greater Israel" stretching from the Euphrates to the Nile is based on the idea that resources like oil and gas are what allow the United States to maintain its global dominance. The

US also works to control the world's economies and transform them into large markets for its products through the use of soft power. As Joseph Nye states, several Middle Eastern and Asian countries also possess impressive potential resources. The arts, cultures, fashions, and cuisines of ancient Asia have had a powerful influence on other parts of the world for centuries. For further information, see: Khalida Kasis, "The Arab Spring: Between Revolution and Chaos," *Al-Mustaqbal Al-Arabi Journal*, Issue 412, Center for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut, 2014, pp. 225-226-228. See also: Osama Ali Muhammad, "Approaching the Arab Revolutions and Foreign Interests (The Syrian and Bahraini Models)," published research, Institute of Social Sciences, Lebanese University, Beirut, 2013, p. 69.

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