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SOFT POWER WORKSHOP – LESSONS FROM SINGAPORE

The Harold Hartog School of Government and Policy
S. Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies
Tel Aviv University

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A Note from the Director of Research and Program Development

I had the great pleasure of meeting Dr. Tan Tay Keong at a conference hosted by the Public Integrity Education Network (PIEN) in Hungary, two years ago. On that occasion he gave an outstanding lecture on his country's efforts to deal with the scourge of corruption. A year later we again met in Beijing and I extended him an invitation to visit Israel as a guest of the Hartog School and give a lecture.

As his topic, Tay Keong proposed "Soft Power Strategies of Small States." The topic is indeed most pertinent to the research interests of the Hartog School's Diplomacy and Jewish Policy Program, which aims to develop policy recommendations to encourage Israeli policy makers to increasingly incorporate soft power strategies as part of Israel's foreign and defense policies. In recent years, the importance of soft power and the limits of hard power have become apparent to all, not least Israel and its major sponsor, the United States in Iraq. As Joseph S. Nye Jr. noted in a recent op-ed column: ^[1]

Soft power is the ability to get what you want by attracting and persuading others to adopt your goals. It differs from hard power, the ability to use the carrots and sticks of economic and military might to make others follow your will. Both hard and soft power are important in the war on terrorism, but attraction is much cheaper than coercion, and an asset that needs to be nourished.

Pursuing soft power strategies is easier said than done. It requires the right balance with hard power as well as developing practices that resonate. Dr. Tan's excellent presentation highlighted the great deal of thought that has been given by Singaporean policy makers to the need for an effective national soft power strategy. What emerged from Tay Keong's address and the ensuing discussion was that in light of Singapore and Israel's similar limitations as small states with considerable geopolitical exposures, Israel would be well advised to give additional focus to employing soft power statecraft. It is perhaps an irony of history that it was Israel who after Singapore's independence helped that vulnerable country develop its hard power.

Dr. Avi Beker made it clear in his presentation that Israel could begin these endeavors by looking no further than the conduct of its own Diaspora. In particular, he noted that Jewish Diaspora communities have a fine tradition of diplomacy, having undertaken soft power techniques well before the phrase was coined by Joseph Nye.

We wish to thank the Singapore International Foundation for supporting Dr. Tan's travel to Israel and hope that this visit heralds the beginning of a long and fruitful collaboration. We are grateful to Prof. Rein and the S. Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies for sponsoring the event with the Hartog School.

Dr. Gary Sussman

Director of Research and Program Development
Harold Hartog School of Government and Policy

A Note from the Director of the S. Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies

I found this workshop devoted to Soft Power Strategies in International Relations fascinating. The diplomacy of small states is an issue that has long enjoyed academic attention at Tel Aviv University. Perhaps the most notable scholar was our teacher Prof. David Vital. His seminal 1967 text, entitled "The Inequality of States: A Study of the Small Power in International Relations," inspired a generation of international relations students. I am delighted that the Hartog School and The S. Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies have rekindled that tradition by hosting this workshop. As emerged in our deliberations, the practice of soft power will become increasingly important for small states and the State of Israel in particular. I hope that the University will give greater critical attention to the subject. As Vice Rector I was delighted to see so many of our diplomacy students in attendance.

The comparison with the Lion City was highly instructive and beneficial. We indeed have a great deal to gain from studying the Singapore experience and I hope that this event will mark the beginning of greater cooperation between our University and leading Singapore based institutions, like the Singapore International Foundation. I would like to thank Dr. Tan for his excellent presentation and being such a fine ambassador for his country and people. I would also like to commend Dr. Beker for injecting a Jewish perspective through his excellent presentation. Last but not least, Ambassador Itzhak Shoham deserves a note of thanks for his perspectives.

R Rein

Prof. Raanan Rein

Vice Rector, Tel Aviv University

Director, The S. Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies

Professor Raanan Rein



“As we all know, while the formal quality of states is a valuable and valued convention of international relations, it is evident that, when both at peace and at war, differences of size have political consequences for both large and small nations.”

Raanan Rein is Professor of Latin American and Spanish History and Vice Rector of Tel Aviv University and is also the founding Director of the S. Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies, Tel Aviv University. Raanan is an expert in Latin American history and his many publications include; *“The Franco-Peron Alliance: Relations between Spain and Argentina, 1946-1955 (University of Pittsburgh Press)* and *“Argentina, Israel and the Jews: Peron, the Eichmann Capture and After” (University Press of Maryland)*. He is also editor of the journal *Estudios Interdisciplinarios de America Latina y el Caribe*, as well as a member of Argentina’s National Academy of History.

Dr. Tan Tay Keong



“A land of opportunity: that is the vision for Singapore on which soft power strategies are founded. Singapore is opportunity, and that is the vision. The need for a society like ours to renew itself, to remake and reawaken the sense of optimism and opportunity that made Singapore succeed in its early years.”

Dr Tan Tay Keong is Executive Director of the Singapore International Foundation, a not-for-profit organization with a mission to build a corps of active global citizens for Singapore. From 2001 to 2003, Dr Tan served as the Special Assistant to the Under-Secretary-General and Chief of Staff of the Office of Internal Oversight Services at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Dr Tan has a Master’s and a Ph.D. in Public Policy from Harvard University. He taught public ethics and public management at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore. He also specialized in training senior officials in various executive programmes, among others, the Commonwealth Top Management Programme and the Singapore-Commonwealth Senior Management Executive Programme.

Dr. Avi Beker



“Since Jews didn’t have a State for 2000 years and didn’t execute the power of sovereignty, they had to develop their own methods of survival – particularly because they faced the threat of anti-Semitism and persecution by foreign rulers in almost every generation. This is why the Jews have become masters and experts at courting their foreign leaders.”

Dr. Avi Beker was formerly the Secretary General of the World Jewish Congress and has been involved in many international diplomatic campaigns and in cultivating Israel-Diaspora relations. He graduated from Tel-Aviv University in Political Science and Jewish History and received his Ph.D. in Political Science from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Dr. Beker currently heads the Diplomacy and Jewish Policy Program, at the Hartog School of Government and Policy and lectures on international relations, diplomacy and Jewish policy. He also writes a column for *Haaretz* and serves as a consultant on international affairs.

Ambassador Itzhak Shoham



“I think our programs for international corporation are a very good example of this soft-power approach. These days there are fewer programs but in the 1960s MASHAV was very active. I think this approach – the will to help other peoples, to share our experiences with them and try to help them to develop to a better stage – is also what brought us to Singapore.”

Mr. Itzhak Shoham has had a distinguished career in the Israeli diplomatic core. After joining the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1973, he has served in Embassies in numerous countries in Latin America including Peru, Paraguay and Uruguay. He has also been involved in Israeli development assistance work in that region, having served as the Director of the Latin American Desk of the Centre for International Cooperation. Ambassador Shoham has also served in the Israeli diplomatic missions to Istanbul and Rome. During his stint in Rome, Ambassador Shoham also served as the Israeli liaison to the Holy See. He has served as the Director of the Europe 2 Division. Until recently, he was Ambassador of Israel to Singapore and also Non-Resident Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste.

Greetings and Introductions

Professor Raanan Rein:

Shalom, good afternoon. As Vice-Rector of Tel Aviv University, I take great pleasure in convening this workshop on soft power strategies in international relations, with the participation of Dr. Tan Tay Keong, Executive Director of the Singapore International Foundation.

As we all know, while the formal quality of states is a valuable and valued convention of international relations, it is evident that, when both at peace and at war, differences of size have political consequences for both large and small nations. At least some of us here were students of Professor David Vital, and read his 1967 book *“The Inequality of the States – a Study of Small Powers in International Relations”*. In the introduction to his book Vital wrote, and I quote:

“All things being equal, the state with great economic resources and a large population has more influence on events outside its frontiers, greater security from pressure and attack, more prestige, and a larger element of choice in respect of the national policy it pursues. A small state is more vulnerable to pressure, more likely to give way under stress, more limited in respect of the political options open to it, and subject to a tighter connection between domestic and external affairs.”

This is all true, of course, but there are other factors that should be taken into consideration. The level of economic and social development, geo-strategic location, the cohesion of the population, the existence of a large and active Diaspora, the internal support given to the current government, etc. To discuss some of these issues, we are fortunate to have Dr. Tan here with us. The foundation headed by Dr. Tan is a non-profit organization with a mission to build a corps of active, loyal citizens of Singapore. The programs of the foundation, like Singapore Volunteers Overseas, or the Youth Expedition Project, are active in some 30 countries or more around the world.

In 2003, the Singapore International Foundation received the Excellence for Singapore Award for promoting international friendship and goodwill. Dr. Tan returned to Singapore after spending two years (2001-2003) at United Nations headquarters in New York, where he served as special assistant to the Under-Secretary General and the Chief of Staff of the Office of Internal Oversight Services. This office promotes transparency, accountability and quality management within the UN. As you might know from his biography, Dr. Tan also played an important role in formulating and implementing the United Nations’ first system-wide anti-corruption campaign.

Dr. Tan has a Ph.D. in Public Policy from Harvard University. He taught Public Ethics and

Public Management at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore. In 1999-2001, Dr. Tan served as Singapore's representative to the East Asia Vision Group – a task force charged by Asian leaders in developing a political, economic, and social agenda for the future of the Asia Pacific region. Dr. Tan will now talk about Survival Strategies of Small States: Lessons from Singapore.



Survival Strategies of a Small State: Lessons from Singapore

Dr. Tan Tay Keong:

I'm going to speak off the cuff, as I'd like there to be a more informal atmosphere here. You may interrupt me if there is anything you're not certain of, but I will also leave enough time for some questions and answers. This will be a 30-minute presentation on Singapore as a global city, and the soft power strategies of a small state. The Vice-Rector has kindly given a very good introduction to the small state. I must say that one level of kinship that Singapore feels it has with Israel is its certain sense of smallness, or isolation.

Today I will review a few concepts of soft power, as well as some of the special burdens of small states. I will also discuss why soft power is especially useful for small countries – whether they are small in size or according to any other criteria. Lastly, I will review how Singapore reconciles its soft power strategies with its own survival and future success. Before I begin, I want to say that my first introduction to Israel was yesterday. I had a very wonderful time thanks to the hospitality of many of your colleagues, who showed me the culture. I have an interpersonal connection with many of your colleagues, and I want to thank them.

Joseph Nye, the former Dean of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, wrote a book on soft power in 2004. His purpose was to highlight some policy options that the Bush administration had not considered. Nye felt that the US was very strong in military might. The US had overwhelming superiority in Bosnia, Afghanistan and, lately, in Iraq, but the US did not necessarily become a more loved or respected country as it was becoming the “hyper power” of the world.

To explain this paradox, Joseph Nye called attention to the idea that besides military power and economic might, other policy instruments or methods of influence might be at the disposal of a society or country. He used the idea of “soft power”, about which he wrote in his previous book: *Bound to Lead*. Let me just summarize a few ideas from that book, which are relevant here. He says that power is not simply a function of resources. If it were a function of resources, high and mighty countries would be able to influence the course of world events and determine whether certain other countries would follow their lead to democratization, to respect for human rights or to their other political objectives. Nye's view is that leaders who have both hard and soft power at their disposal have crucial choices to make as to how they will influence the behavior of other nations.

Very basically, what is power? The ability to influence someone to do what you want them to do. And power can be wielded by three basic means: the use of threat or force; through bribery or some form of payment; or by example or propagation of values – that is, the ability to attract

or persuade. “Hard power” basically boils down to military force, as in the use of armed forces or the threat to use force, and economic might, or in the use of economic sanctions. “Soft power” is the exercise of influence through more indirect means. Let me elaborate on this a bit further. Soft power is anything from Hollywood to Harvard. A group of institutions that are very attractive, that attract other nations and peoples to see a certain society as a model or as a benevolent power they should follow and cooperate with. Examples of the exercise of soft power has been provided by Karen Hughes, the new Under Secretary of Public Diplomacy in the United States whose role is to project the best face of America overseas; and the use of used art galleries and libraries, orchestras, lecture tours and circus troupes to wield American influence.

But if I were to boil down the basic approaches to soft power, I would cite three things:

The first is the approach to policy and public action. Are you consultative? Are you unilateral? Do you bring people along in a certain cause of action? The second way to promote or project soft power is through the force of your institutions and the attractiveness of your values. In this respect, some societies are particularly strong in cultural diplomacy. The French put a lot of their budget into cultural exchanges, for example. Germany, too, did this, after World War II. Japan said that it was sorry for World War II in many different ways, most of them through cultural diplomacy, although many countries in Asia do not recognize the apology and want it to be more direct. The third area I will call building goodwill and warm ties through “development assistance and service”. This is where the Singapore International Foundation has some direct experience. Scholarships are the predominant strategy that Singapore uses. Due to Singapore’s small size, direct transfers of funds are seen as less effective than transfers of skills and knowledge: bringing others to Singapore and sending Singaporeans overseas (through volunteer and exchange programs).

Now I’d like to quickly review what happens in small states. There’s a Greek saying: “The strong do what they will while the weak suffer what they must”. This has been echoed in studies by The World Bank. There are two main problems that confront small states. First, they are vulnerable to external events. For example, external trade is a bigger part of the economic activity of a small state than of a large one, which has a greater buffer. Second, small players tend to be price takers. They are less likely to be able to set the terms and conditions of international trade and relations than are larger States.

The United Nations University and World Institute for Development Economics published a research paper on small states in 2001. To summarize, that paper relates that small States are at a disadvantage on three grounds: volatility, vulnerability and the value of their institutions and policies. The first is volatility: They tend to be more susceptible to external shocks. As the saying goes, “Where the elephant walks, the grass suffers”. The second is that small states

tend to be more dependent on external powers for protection, for sustenance of their economy; they're hence more vulnerable. The third is that because of these previous circumstances, small states must have their institutions and national strategies correct, otherwise they will suffer the consequences of wrong strategies. Their margin of error is not that great.

Since many of you might not know Singapore that well, let me take some time to introduce you to my country. It is a small island at the tip of the Malaysian peninsula; the former Indonesian President who took over from General Suharto – Bacharuddin Jusuf (BJ) Habibie – called it “a little red dot”. That’s a figurative term, but what he meant was that Singapore is so small that it does not even register on the world map. And we are indeed small. We are about 30 times smaller than Israel; only 700 square kilometers. Exactly that. From the north to the south of the island is about 20 kilometers, and from the east to the west is about 40 kilometers.

You can travel around Singapore in an hour. In fact, we are ranked 118th out of 235 countries in size. Israel is ranked 97th, so you can tell that we are very small geographically.

Singapore rests in the middle of the southeast of the globe. This region is now facing many emerging threats, of which terrorism and Islamic extremism are but two. In fact, the pandemic bird flu very likely originated in one of the countries in this region.

If you look at the flag of Singapore, what do you notice? It has a crescent, which is a symbol of Islam. And if you look at an Indonesian flag, which is red at the top and white below, it is very similar to Singapore’s flag. Because of how it is situated in the region, Singapore has to symbolize itself – in some ways – as almost Islamic. But we’re not. We are a secular state. In fact, most of Singapore’s population are descended from emigrants from China. The country has a small population of 4.2 million, about half of a million of whom are foreigners on a work permit. So like many cosmopolitan societies, and like Israel, we are dependent on foreign labor and expatriate talents.

More importantly, we have a heterogeneous population. People of Chinese origin comprise 76 percent of the population, and most of them are Buddhist or Taoist. Malays – 99 percent of whom are Muslims – constitute 14 percent of our total population, and Indians account for 8 percent of the population. We also have Eurasians, other Asians, as well as Arabs and Jews. Some of our architecture reflects the multiculturalism of the country – Hindu temples, Chinese temples, mosques, and of course we have synagogues and churches, as well. This ethnic mix creates problems of both internal and ethnic harmony problems, and confronts us with international political imperatives, which I’ll discuss later.

Because Singapore is situated in a Muslim region, when it was formed it was seen by many countries as a very unlikely nation. In fact, in 1950, the World Bank published a report that said

that the country in Southeast Asia most likely to succeed at that time was Myanmar (Burma), and one of the countries least likely to succeed was Singapore. One of the reasons was because we had a very heterogeneous population. We are a Chinese society, a non-Muslim society, - in the largest Muslim region in the world. We live today among 240 million Indonesians. So Singapore was born under a sense of siege. When the British withdrew from their military bases alone, they took away about 40 percent of our GDP. Although their pullout wasn't overnight, there was ethnic strife at the time, and there were urban slums, and the Indonesian policy of "confrontation," basically a low-intensity war against Singapore and Malaysia.

However, Singapore grew from a third-world country to a first-world country in a span of one generation, 40 years. We are currently fortieth in the world in nominal GDP out of 184 countries surveyed, just three places below Israel. We have the twenty-second highest per capita GDP (\$ 29,600) in the world, just below Germany and France and above Sweden. Israel (\$ 22,200) is ranked forty-fourth (according to CIA publicized data).

The city of Singapore is fairly cosmopolitan, and a bit stressed out because it is very fast-paced society. Those of you who have had a chance to visit Singapore will recall stories about chewing gum being forbidden and caning for littering in public places. We are infamous for some of these things. We went through a chaotic period: the Vietnam War, the Sukarno period (1945-1967) of uncertainty in Indonesia, separation from Malaysia (1965). At one stage, at our inception, we were merged with Malaysia, which is a largely Muslim country. However, we were kicked out of that country because we couldn't agree on some policies. So at the time our country was formed, we were very insecure. The Israel Defense Force helped to build our Singapore Armed Forces. In order to avert a regional upset over Israeli military aid, Israeli advisors were referred to as Mexicans by the media. One of your colonels – Yaacov Elizary – together with the Israeli Mission Team was in Singapore, helping us get our defenses in order. Even today there is quite a lot of cooperation between our two countries in defense industries.

What has made Singapore succeed, and what makes Singapore so vulnerable? Some factors seem to be intertwined, and I'll highlight just three of them. Even a weak or a small state may have some strengths. First, we do not have many natural resources – in fact we have no natural resources at all; Singapore is one country that imports almost 100 percent of its food. We have no agricultural sector, and practically all of our fuel is imported. So our only resource is our people. From the very beginning, Singapore invested a lot in its people. My parents, who were second-generation immigrants, were both uneducated. When I was growing up, their only ambition for me was that I finish primary school. But while I was growing up, Singapore evolved from being a third world country to being a second-world entity and then a first-world country. Opportunities opened to me through scholarships, and with education came employment. I managed to get some of the best education that money can buy, which is

very rare for anyone born in a third-world country. Second, we have an excellent port and are very well located for shipping. That was one of our strengths in the early years of Singapore's development. Third, we have a fairly strong government, which is able to take a long-term view of policies. It doesn't have to work on a four-year time frame.

Nevertheless, Singapore still lives under a state of siege. In fact, our security and our prosperity seem to be so tenuous that they are a continuous public reminder that we should not take Singapore for granted. To give you an example; when the bird flu broke – it's not even a human pandemic, just a bad flu in some countries in Southeast Asia – the headlines said that Singapore and Hong Kong would be the worst hit if a pandemic flu were to come about. This was based on an Asian Development Bank study. According to their worst case scenario, Singapore's GDP would suffer a loss of between 10.8 percent and 22.8 percent. That itself would be a major crisis for Singapore. We are now investing in surveillance overseas, beyond Singapore's borders. We have to be sensitive about this. How do you survey or monitor the outbreak of diseases on another country's soil?

Some of the greatest threats today – which Kofi Annan called “problems without passports”, such as terrorism, transnational pollution, pandemic diseases, corruption – seem to be risks that could paralyze Singapore at any time. Apparently, globalization and the links that Singapore has made with the rest of the world during the past 40 years in order to survive and prosper have also become some of the greatest threats, if not the greatest; a terrorist attack, or major pollution like the haze you find in Southeast Asia, or a pandemic flu outbreak - all could paralyze the country.

How does Singapore cope with this situation?

We have a theory which I'll present to you, as well as the strategies behind that theory. How will things work out? I do not know. But this theory is now being fully implemented. We believe that the knowledge economy is going to be a global one, and that it will need a global network of connected “nodes”. Singapore need not be the same as Bangkok or Dubai or New York or London, but it can be one of the nodes. It can be an important node for people or businesses that are interested in trading with China or India or both. We have cultural ties with these two countries. Singapore aims to be the London of finance, the New York of culture, and the Boston of education.

In his speech about the budget last year, our current Prime Minister, Lee Hsien Loong, said – and I quote: “Singapore is what it is today because it is a land of opportunity for enterprising people from all over Asia.” Our attraction – in other words, soft power – is unique. We are at the crossroads of the east and the west of modern cosmopolitan society, connected to the world of finance, business, and yet rooted in the Asian cultures of our forebears. We offer a vibrant

economy where people can earn a good living, a stable society where we can raise strong families, and opportunities for all to build a bright future. And now with Asia on the rise, we must remake Singapore as a land of opportunity. This was the vision articulated by Prime Minister Lee. “A land of opportunity”: that is the vision for Singapore on which soft power strategies are founded. Singapore is opportunity, and that is the vision. The need for a society like ours to renew itself, to remake and reawaken the sense of optimism and opportunity that made Singapore succeed in its early years. This is what we are trying to capture through the strategies I’ll be describing to you. The former head of the civil service, who just stood down about a month ago, said that Singapore, the opportunity it offers, is not a “cute theme”, but rather a strategic paradigm for building hope for our future, for building hope for a country under “siege”, for a people who form what is a very unlikely nation.

Now I would like to present the strategies. They can be classified as “The Four T’s”:

- Talent;
- Trade,;
- Technology, and;
- Tolerance.

Talent

In essence, these are the soft power paradigms of Singapore. As I said, because we have no natural resources, Singapore’s success strategies focus on human capital and knowledge. We need to attract creative people from abroad, and we need to keep Singaporeans in Singapore or to connect them to Singapore if they work overseas. To do this, the government has abolished some strict rules. You know, during the 1970s, if you had come to Singapore with long hair, you would have been prevented from entering the airport. There were people who patrolled the streets to watch for people who are littering. They fined them on the spot. This is the Singapore that we know. Today, bar top dancing is allowed – no big deal in many countries, but a very big deal to us, until recently. Gay bars – they’re commonplace in New York, but in Singapore – it is an eye-opener. Today, Singapore is sponsoring world-class cultural events. We have a \$500 million world-class theatre called “The Esplanade”. It was built largely to spice up the cultural life of the city. In fact I read that the opening itself cost \$10 million! Nevertheless, it is an important part of our national strategy that money is allocated to such things – and no small change, at that. We need to demonstrate to the rest of the world that we can attract the best talents to Singapore.

Also, Singapore is opening political and public space for freer speech and freer discussion. Singapore was recently rated by the Paris-based organization “Reporters without Borders” as 140th out of 167 countries in freedom of the media. This is a very low rank. It is even lower

than Sudan's. I'm serious. Yes, it's true. This created some public discussion in Singapore. How could we have been ranked lower than countries like Sudan? It's ridiculous, but true. Over the years, our political leaders began to free up discussion, especially over the Internet. We have our own Speaker's Corner, and we are beginning to create a system conducive to breeding more creativity.

Trade

The second of the four T's is trade, which must be the life-blood of Singapore. We are highly dependent on it. Our imports and exports are more than twice our GDP. We are – by this particular criterion – the most open economy in the world. And being highly trade-dependent, we are completely reliant on food energy, industrial raw materials and external markets. Nevertheless, because of this strategy many countries have a stake in Singapore. During Singapore's early years we sought to encourage multi-national corporations (MNCs) from developed countries to invest in Singapore. In fact, during the Cold War, one of our greatest strategies was to attract a lot of Western countries to invest in Singapore.

We have also begun free trade agreements with some 11 countries and have secured them with the US, India, Japan, Korea, Australia, and many other countries. Because we are a small state and so vulnerable, we support and encourage a well-functioning global multi-lateral system. Hence, organizations like the World Trade Organization (WTO) are important to us. Singapore is one of the countries that is strongly advocating for an economic or a regional block called the East Asia Community, which will consist of the ten ASEAN countries in Southeast Asia, including China, South Korea and Japan. We are also therefore paying a lot of attention to international institutions like the United Nations (UN), Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). All of these are soft power strategies as well. We have to be a good citizen in the international community of nations. We have an organization called IE Singapore; it helps Singapore firms set up offices overseas, including those coming to Tel Aviv. In addition to such public-sector investments, the Singapore International Foundation (for which I currently work) is a not-for-profit organization that helps soften Singapore's hard economic trade posture and promote its overseas enterprises. That's why whenever a Singaporean businessman goes to another country, our volunteers, overseas development assistance, and scholarships follow. It is a mission of the SIF to build a cadre of global citizens for Singapore. For example, our Youth Expedition Project sent 3,450 young people overseas last year on service learning projects, largely to the poorest countries in the region. We are now promoting executive expeditions, getting CEOs and senior executives to go abroad to do the same. That is, to get involved with the social or cultural problems of the society in which they may or may not have business subsidiaries. This is a soft power strategy.

Technology

The third T is technology. Technology is an important strategy thrust because it is about enabling more and more businesses to come to Singapore to function in pre-selected areas. For example, Singapore has selected bio-technology to be one of its major engines of growth. Research and development will be another important growth engine. We're beginning to invest in a major way in high technology, for several reasons. First, we have a highly literate work force. Second, we have among the highest rates of Internet penetration in the world: 68 percent from recent statistics. Some 85 percent of all households in Singapore have a PC.

We believe that high technology and R&D will attract top talent to Singapore. Technology is not just about the Internet, however. Singapore wants to set itself up as the "Biopolis" of Asia. To this end, it has developed institutions like the Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology (IMCB) – which is now leading stem cell studies, diabetes research and cancer research in Southeast Asia. Billions of dollars have been pumped into this and other forms of research.

Tolerance

The last soft power strategy "T" is tolerance; it affects our lifestyle and values. It is also very important in attracting talent to Singapore and inducing Singaporeans to stay or those overseas to return. We want to create an atmosphere that is conducive for talented people to remain and live a fairly balanced life. About three years ago, the American professor Richard Florida published a book called *"Rise of the Creative Class"*. In it he says that the cities that do very well are those that have a lot of creative capital – that is, artists, Bohemians and great entertainment outlets that facilitate the kind of lifestyle that attracts intellectuals, who are the people who generate most of the value in a knowledge economy. As I said before, we now have more tolerance for varied physical appearance in Singapore, relative to a country that is known for strict law enforcement. We are allowing casinos to be built for the first time in Singapore's history.

I'd like to talk about something that has been a fundamental strategy in Singapore for the past 30-40 years. Mr. George Yeo, our foreign minister, once commented to me that Singapore is modeled on medieval cities, where work, knowledge expansionism, and diversity held sway. An important part of medieval cities was the guild, which represented the formation of crafts, and of the trade associations we know today. Medieval trade fairs were yesterday's version of today's conferences. When a city offers the person independence – that is, the ability to find what is important for his future, including schools and universities, and the ability to adapt to emerging challenges, it can attract the creative capital that drives many of the best cities in the world, from New York to San Francisco.

Trust

I want to propose one last “T”: Trust. In order to be able to attract the best people and the best businesses, we must have a reputation or be “branded” as being trustworthy. This is why there is also a policy to make Singapore a brand name: “made in Singapore”, “experienced in Singapore” are meant to signify a certain level of quality and a certain level of attractiveness.

For this reason, Singapore was one of the countries that mobilized most quickly after the recent tsunami; helping in Aceh province and Sri Lanka. We had soldiers in Banda Aceh [the capital of Aceh] and have tried to help the country rebuild its infrastructure so that relief supplies could be brought in to the communities that were affected by the recent earthquake and tsunami.

Other soft power strategies are reflected in two of our other programs, which I would like to speak about. As part of “Singapore Volunteers Overseas”, we place doctors and teachers, including university professors, in other countries for anywhere from two weeks to two years. As part of the “Friends of Singapore” Program, we offer scholarships to students from poorer countries in the Asian region. They are brought to Singapore for one whole semester on these scholarships to get to know our lifestyle and culture. We believe this builds links between the young people of Singapore and the young people of the region. This is an important first step to preventing friction and tension within the region. We also have a Diaspora program, called the “Overseas Singaporeans”, very much like what you have here in Israel. Our Diaspora is also supported by the Singapore International Foundation; we not only give it money, but we encourage Singaporeans living in the Diaspora to become active in their society, to do community service wherever they live.

I’d like to end with a few reflections. I think soft power is not a panacea for everything. Military deterrence has its place. Economic sanctions and economic policy have their significant roles as well. A good combination of hard and soft power might be a better way to safeguard a country’s security and win friends, allies, and trading partners. For many years, Singapore has been dubbed by some to be a “paradise with the death penalty”. In some ways, this reflects both the hard and the soft power wielded by Singapore. We have very tough laws which are very strictly enforced, but we are also good in other ways – a paradise, so to speak. This is reflected in how we have dealt with SARS, for example. We do a lot of public outreach using soft power, persuading people to take precautions, but this is accompanied by strict enforcement and very strict quarantine rules. Community policing is something we adopted from the *koban* system in Japan about 20 years ago, and it involves police officers visiting homes, offering crime prevention advice and counseling, in addition to their tough enforcement posture. This is combining hard and swift enforcement action with the soft power strategy of community engagement. Now we are promulgating the community policing strategy overseas, helping other countries develop this soft-sell law and order messages with tough enforcement.

To draw some conclusions: Because Singapore is a small state, because it has an open economy, soft power strategies are in many ways an imperative - not an option. We do not have enough hard power and we cannot use our military readily without severe consequences. We must deploy soft power on a regular basis, and use hard power, obviously only as a last resort. Singapore takes an integrated approach to its four “T’s” of talent, trade, tolerance and technology. They use all of our institutions. They are not just a policy or a strategy that is to be implemented by a university or a government ministry. The media, public institutions, even non-profit organizations like the Singapore International Foundation are involved. Lastly, survival and success lie in remaking Singapore as a land of opportunity and mitigating the risks that are emerging in the region. Without soft power, we cannot successfully prevent or mitigate many of these risks.

I would like to raise some ideas for discussion and open the floor to all of you.

First, based on our limited experience, we feel that using the appropriate action channel might make a difference. Who do you use to project your soft power? Is it your “cultural troops”? Is it your libraries? Israel has a great wealth of culture and history. Are they the right avenue? Should it be a state enterprise or a non-profit organization? These are things to think about.

Second, if you want to use soft power, some things really matter. I call them relevance or authenticity. In order to exercise soft power, you cannot preach to a people who are not ready to listen. You cannot give aid where there is no need. You cannot build a schoolhouse where there are no teachers. Relevance to the needs and aspirations of the people you are preaching to – the audience that you are targeting – is very important. Also, you can’t do this in a kind of a “let me teach you, let me empower you” kind of way. It has to be authentic. The use of civil society organizations, volunteers, or the use of artists, might be worth thinking about, because volunteers are authentic. Many times they are driven by passion, not by a political agenda or a profit motive.

Third, soft power strategies take time – to build trust, to win people over – and hence sustainability is key. These are not strategies that can be used for one year and then abandoned. Finally, what are Israel’s soft power options? Might Israel have a special role as advocates against all forms of genocide and the rights of minority populations and take it upon herself to raise such issues at international forums and the global media? Do you have a special way to keep in touch with your Diaspora that could set an example to other nations?

What is attractive about this society, and how can you bring this to the rest of the world in a way that will matter to your businesses, to your security, to your people?

Thank you.

Soft Power: The Case of the Jewish Diaspora

Dr. Avi Beker:

Soft power is a buzz word which became very popular in the 1990s, and was finally the title of a book by the American scholar who coined it: Joseph Nye.^[2] It may be argued that Joseph Nye was simply rephrasing the Biblical tradition about the power of ideas and the power of values in international relations. Soft power is the practical effect of what the prophet Isaiah terms being a “light unto the nations”, and what is referred to by the popular Kabbalistic term “tikkun olam”. The story of the Jewish Diaspora is a perfect example of soft power in theory and practice.

Soft power is not exactly what a person has in mind when he contrasts hard power and soft power. Nye calls it the “second face of power”. Instead of using the coercion of military and economic influence, you try to shape the preferences of others by co-opting them: “You try to obtain influence over other countries because they admire your values, emulate your political and economic system, aspiring to your level of prosperity and openness.” There is no better way to describe it than the most simple but very lofty and idealistic words of Isaiah: “light unto the nations”. As part of the vision for the end of days, we, here, are discussing a vision of peace, a vision of an idealistic world, a vision of a universal way to transmit ideas and moral values without coercion, but rather by simply attracting others to your ideas.

What we are saying here is not a course in Biblical text or in Jewish values. The notion of “light unto the nations” is central in Jewish thought; it affects policies and perceptions – that is, how Jews regard themselves and their mission in the world, as well as how Jews are perceived by others, which is no less important in international relations. It is well known that in foreign policy and international relations, perceptions are sometimes more important than reality.

Light unto the nations is also a central concept in the Reform movement, the most liberal group of the three major religious trends in the American Jewish community. Light unto the nations was central to the vision of David Ben Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel. It was behind his foreign policy and the establishment of the international assistance program of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1958, which in the 1960s became a major endeavor of the young State of Israel.

Some Gentile observers claim that Jewish dispersion is part of their mission. Nicholas Berdiaev, a Russian thinker early of the 20th century who left Russia because of the revolution, regarded the Jewish Diaspora as part of the Jewish role in the world: “If you wish to gain a feeling of the mysteries of national existence, ponder more deeply and more seriously upon the Jewish question... Jewry exists in the world with a single purpose, that of proving to all

peoples the existence of national, as well as religious mystery...The Jews have a mission to fulfill in world history, and this mission goes beyond all national missions. It speaks of an existence broader than the national one.”^[3]

Diaspora as Charity

If the history of mankind is our laboratory, we can argue that Jewish dispersion is a source of Jewish soft power. Since Jews didn't have a state for 2000 years and didn't execute the power of sovereignty, they had to develop their own methods of survival – particularly because they faced the threat of anti-Semitism and persecution by foreign rulers in almost every generation. This is why the Jews have become masters and experts at courting their foreign leaders and, in this day and age, lobbying governments, using arguments that transmit their sense of attractiveness - i.e. soft power. Because Jews experienced so many expulsions and pogroms, they had to convince kings and feudal lords why they served a useful purpose for their regimes and societies.

In the Babylonian Talmud, there is an interesting statement concerning the Diaspora condition of the Jews. In the tractate Pesachim (87a), one can identify the Jewish political theory of exile: “God made charity with the Children of Israel by dispersing them among the nations.”

Traditional commentaries explain the above statement as reflecting different aspects of the Jewish condition,^[4] which are sometimes in conflict with one another. On one hand, the “charity” that God gave the Jews is basically a safety measure, so they would not be forced to live under a regime that might become hostile and persecute them. Since the Jews often faced physical threat, it was their dispersion that enabled them to survive. When one community was in distress, another that was stronger and safer could provide succor. A more universal interpretation of the above statement is posited in the commentary that the Jews have to be dispersed because they have a special mission to fulfill, that is, Isaiah's prophecy of their being a “light unto the nations.” This is a clear assignment for the Jew, as God tells Abraham: “All the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your descendants, because you have obeyed my command”(Genesis 22:18).

One can find an early expression of this in the Jews' Covenant with God, when God tells Abraham that “all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you” (Genesis 12:2).

Later, God tells Jacob: “And you shall spread out powerfully Westward, Eastward, Northward and Southward; and all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you and by your offspring” (Genesis 28:14). This is an early and precise version of soft power: “all the families of earth shall bless themselves by you”. The Diaspora is a central feature of the Jewish condition, and the dispersion of the Jews has made them a crucial element in the international

arena. Arthur Herzberg has said, "Jews speak almost all the languages of the world, and they are at home in almost every country. The Jew is, at once, a nomad, a nationalist, and a cosmopolitan."^[5]

An articulate defense of the Jews against the accusations by the vox populi of their role as moneylenders was written in 1748 by French writer and philosopher Charles Louis Montesquieu. Montesquieu described how the Jews had reached their special position in the economic field and developed their global network just because they were banished from one country after the other. Commerce says Montesquieu, was developed through a process motivated by persecution directed against the Jews:

Enriched by their abuses, the Jews were fleeced by the princes with the same tyranny: this consoled the people, ... What happened in England will give an idea of what was done in other countries. King John had the Jews thrown in jail in order to get his hands on their property... there were few of them who had not had at least one eye gouged out, since this was how the king administrated his courts of justice. One of them, who had had seven teeth pulled out, one every day, on the eight day gave ten thousand silver marks. Henry III managed to extract from Aaron the Jew of York fourteen thousand marks, and another ten thousand for the Queen.... We can see how commerce emerged from the midst of harassment and despondency. Banished from one country after the other, the Jews found ways of saving their property. In this way they forever gave up their fixed retreats; for any prince who was tempted to get rid of them would nevertheless not feel like parting with their money... They invented bills of exchange; and, in this fashion, commerce was able to evade violence and continue to operate everywhere, whereby the richest merchant had only invisible assets, which could be sent far and wide, leaving no traces anywhere...The theologians were compelled to curb their principles; and commerce, which had been cruelly attributed to bad faith, was able to be received into the midst of probity.^[6]

One hundred and fifty years later, German sociologist Werner Sombart (1911) wrote about what he regarded as a fascinating Jewish role in shaping and designing the international economy:

It is indeed surprising that the parallels between Jewish wanderings and settlement and the economic fate of the various nations and their cities has not before been observed. Israel passes over Europe like the sun: At its coming new life bursts forth; at its going all falls into decay.^[7]

Sombart explains why Jews could have a major effect on the international economy because

of their dispersion, their education and anti-Semitism, which led them always to be more innovative and globally attuned.

Isaac Ben Judah Abravanel (1437-1508) wrote about the two dimensions of dispersion: security and the spiritual mission. His view has special significance because of his background, which combined scholarship with statesmanship. Abravanel was a philosopher and leader of Spanish Jewry at the time of the Expulsion, and wrote a comprehensive commentary on the Bible. In his comments to Isaiah 52:13, he explains that while exile and dispersion had brought suffering to the Jews, it was part of their mission to uphold the Jewish religion with pride and to be prepared to debate it with the Gentiles without apology. He argued that with their spiritual powers, the Jewish people would succeed “to bring nations under the divine...and will remove their false beliefs” and that the Jews would not be deterred even under great Gentile pressure. In Deuteronomy 32:26 it is written: “I had said, I will scatter them, I will cause their memory to cease from man.”

Secular and Reform Approaches

Secular Jewish writers such as British philosopher George Steiner argue that the true mission of the Jews is to be found in their exile. That is why he expressed opposition to the Zionist enterprise of ingathering the exiles to Israel, and opposed the concept of Jewish sovereignty. He said – to again draw on the concept of power – that the State requires the powers of a State, which include an army, police, weapons etc., and that the Jews should rather engage in the war of ideas. Steiner also said that the Jews were guests among the nations, as aliens, refugees, restless and dispossessed. Only then, outside their homeland, could the Jews fulfill their role as the moral conscience of the nations, and their cultural vanguard as prophets who deliver lofty human ideals.^[8]

There is another central Jewish concept borrowed from the Kabbalah: “tikkun olam”, which is a corollary of “light unto the nations”. The actor Richard Dreyfus, a self-confessed atheist, once said of his upbringing:

I grew up with a number of stories my Rabbis told me, and when you are a kid, you get things imprinted on your hard disk that are very hard to abandon... repairing the world (tikkun olam) is very meaningful to me...we are a people who stand for a certain thing, a certain sense of justice and freedom... we must do right by the world. We must not treat the world as the world treats us.

The Jewish Reform movement made a clear attempt to move away from traditional Jewish distinctiveness and concentrate on other aspects of Jewish existence. Among those who gathered in 1885 and adopted the “Pittsburgh Platform” were many Jews of German descent

who had arrived in the USA decades earlier, and who were attempting to distance themselves from the waves of Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe that were then arriving in America. Daniel Gordis, writing on the history of American Jewry notes:

(They) were horrified and humiliated by the masses of East European Jewish immigrants flowing onto American shores. They saw these impoverished, ‘uncultured’ new Jewish arrivals as far too obviously foreign.^[9]

By “uncultured,” adherents of the Reform movement referred to the outward marks of the Jews, which made them appear to be strangers in Gentile society, such as the strict observance of Jewish laws and rituals and their overtly Jewish dress code and appearance.

In the Pittsburg Platform, the Reform Jews indicated that they did not wish to be a nation apart; in fact, they did not wish to be a nation at all. Nevertheless, the concept of a Jewish mission is central to them, too, if in a very universal fashion:

We recognize, in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect, the approaching of the realization of Israel’s great messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice and peace among all men. We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community... We are convinced of the utmost necessity of preserving the historical identity with our great past. Christianity and Islam being the daughter religions of Judaism...we extend the hand of fellowship to all who co-operate with us in the establishment of the reign of truth and righteousness among men.^[10]

Kaufman Kohler, who was the guiding spirit and convener of the Pittsburg Platform, was a great believer in Israel’s mission and Election, which he regarded as “the central point of Jewish theology and the key to an understanding of the nature of Judaism.”^[11] In continuing the trend in Reform Judaism that had originated in Germany, Kohler was notable for his ringing condemnation of “Ghetto Judaism,” which included rejection of the dietary laws of kashrut and other outward marks of the Jews. At the same time, however, it included developing the universal message of Judaism into a “glorious mission” to be spread all over the world.^[12] “Israel’s mission is not to convert the world to Judaism” he said, but to “unfold and spread the light of the monotheistic truth, and also to die, if needs be, as martyrs for the Only One and Holy God.” Kohler emphasized that both Christianity and Islam “owe their origin” to Judaism. In his view, the purpose of living in America and the Diaspora was to spread these ideas.

Gershom Scholem, who was more Zionist in his approach to Jewish history, once wrote that the idea of a “light unto the nations” as a mission for the Jews was a weak attempt to justify Jewish existence in the Diaspora. Jewish historic experience shows that there are far deeper elements in the Jewish drive, sometimes imposed, toward wandering and dispersion.

The Jewish Contribution

Prominent jurist Prof. Alan Dershowitz provides an interesting analysis of the Jewish contribution to mankind. There is no question in his mind about the Jewish contribution to humanity:

The Jewish people has contributed enormously and disproportionately to the welfare of the world...Much of what Western civilization is today - from Christianity to Islam, from culture to economics, from science to law to medicine - would look different if we were to eliminate the contributions of the Jews.^[13]

But Dershowitz makes an important distinction between the contribution of the Jews to religious concepts and the contribution of individual Jews to mankind. The religious contribution of the Jews is well recognized: "the Bible, monotheism, Jewish theology, the code of laws", which, according to Jewish rabbinical tradition, are immutable. But what about the contribution of individuals, asks Dershowitz rhetorically - people such as Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, Franz Kafka, Baruch Spinoza, Albert Sabin, Rosa Luxemburg, Marc Chagall, the Marx Brothers, Barbara Streisand, Steven Spielberg and so on. What most, or possibly even all, of these Jews have in common is that they were neither observant nor practicing Jews. The Jews who contribute to the general community are those who remain in touch with their Jewish tradition while living a full life in the general community. This tension, he says, creates a special challenge as to how to "reconcile differing and often clashing worldviews." This clash and the need for reconciliation, concludes Dershowitz, "stimulates the kind of creativity and imagination that is often lacking in those for whom there is no such clash." This is why many Jewish parents, who "seem instinctively to recognize this paradox" want to provide their children with a core of Jewish religious values and rituals, but then to move them away "toward a more 'reasonable' and 'balanced' approach which will lead them to success in the outside world." ^[14]

The Jews in America, who account for the tiny minority of only two percent of the population, offer an impressive statistical record of achievements. Senator Joseph Lieberman, the first Jew to be nominated as a candidate for vice president at the Democratic Convention of 2000, an Orthodox Jew, used the term "tikkun olam" (repairing the world) to explain the desire of Jews to become involved in political affairs. According to two leading American sociologists, Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, in the last three decades of the 20th century, Jews in America "made up 50 percent of the top two hundred intellectuals, 40 percent of American Nobel Prize winners in science and economics, 20 percent of professors at the leading universities, 21 percent of high-level civil servants, 40 percent of partners in the leading law firms in New York and Washington, 26 percent of the reporters, editors, and executives of the major print and broadcast media, 59 percent of the directors, writers, and producers of the 50 top-grossing

motion pictures from 1965 to 1982, and 58 percent of directors, writers, and producers in two or more prime-time television series.”^[15] Jews attend Ivy League colleges at ten times their percentage in the general population; in some years, 40 percent of the students at these schools are Jewish. ^[16] The total number of Nobel Prize winners of Jewish descent is 155 in all fields, of which 117 are in physics, chemistry, and medicine.^[17] This does not mean that Jews have better access to divine wisdom. It does say something, however, about the Jewish condition, which provided the unique circumstances of a “People that Dwells Alone” and its sense of a mission to serve as a light unto the nations.

Paul Johnson, a loyal supporter of Israel and a noted philo-semitic, makes an unusual statement that would not necessarily be approved of by ardent Zionists: “The expansion and consolidation of United States Jewry in the late 19th and 20th centuries was as important in Jewish history as the creation of Israel itself; in some ways more important.” Zionism, he says, “gave the Diaspora a sovereign instrument to defend the destiny of the Jews but the power of US Jewry provided the Jews with a legitimate and important part in shaping the policies of the greatest state on earth.” ^[18]

Jewish solidarity and Jewish lobbying for other Jews is an encompassing effort to build an effective soft power. The struggle for Soviet Jewry...for human rights...“Let my people go”... became a model for human rights, and the famous link between trade and immigration. The campaign to preserve memories of the Holocaust, or for the restitution of Jewish assets from the Holocaust, is also soft power in action.

Radical “Tikkun Olam”

Ever since the Emancipation, Jews have been at the forefront of social struggle, and drawn to radical and revolutionary movements. Many of their names are familiar to us: Karl Marx, Ferdinand Lassalle, Rosa Luxemburg, Moses Hess, Bernard Lazare, Leon Blum, Leon Trotsky. Many more could be added. A long list of Jewish liberals led – and some are still leading – the struggle for human rights in the United States, Western Europe and elsewhere; contributing to United Nations’ tractates on genocide and its Declaration of Human Rights; active in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa; active in the fight against globalization – and so on.

Isaac Deutscher wrote an essay on “The Non-Jewish Jew”, in which he stated that “The Jewish heretic who transcends Jewry belongs to a Jewish tradition.” Deutscher himself had a strong Jewish education during his childhood, but later became a liberal with left-leaning views. He said that although no racial superiority is conferred by intellect, there was “something” about the Jews, because they “dwelt on the borderlines of various civilizations, religions, and national cultures... Their minds matured where the most diverse cultural influences crossed

and fertilized each other. They lived on the margins or in the nooks and crannies of their nations.”^[19]

So why are the Jews at the forefront of liberal causes, whether on the left or the right?

This, of course, is part of their oppression, discrimination, education and culture. Disraeli would have said that Jews were conservative by nature, but that oppression had led them to support radical causes. The disproportionate role of Jews in social activism, labor unions and socialist parties is directly traceable to the heritage of the Prophets, to an early Jewish education, or to a family tradition of seeking social justice. This is so even for Jews who have grown far from their Jewish roots and become alienated from their families and communities.

A study of the role of the Jews in the student rebellion in France in May 1968 showed that the Jewish presence among the radical leadership was very noticeable indeed. Although this was not a “Jewish revolt,” it was led predominantly by students of Jewish origin. A joke was then in circulation about the Trotskyite organization in the *Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire* (LCR), one of the more important groups at that time:

Question: “Why don’t they speak Yiddish in the politburo of the LCR?”

Answer: “Because of Ben-Sa’id.”

Daniel Ben Sa’id was a French-born Jew of North African descent, and as a Sephardi he did not speak Yiddish. Of the 12 LCR politburo members during the organization’s founding years, ten (in addition to Ben-Said) were French Jews of Eastern or Central European origin. Only one member was not Jewish. It should be noted that Jewish activists formed only a minority of the total body of Jewish students, but their percentage was far greater than any other group.^[20] For many of these radicals, most of whom were assimilated and non-observant Jews, the Holocaust had been a fiercely personal experience. This experience had also caused their reaction to authority’s attempt to play down the memory of French collaboration with the Nazis. They also strongly believed in the moral-social message of Judaism.^[21]

Like their role in the international economy, Jews played a leading role in the advancement of social change and social justice. Not only Jews, and certainly not all Jews, but a tiny minority of Jews played a role that cannot be denied and is beyond all proportion to their numbers in their respective populations. A leading scholar on social revolution, Prof. Jacob Talmon, explained that young Jews felt a special sensitivity to suffering; as result of their assimilation, they would become restless, and try to take revenge on their parents, who preached to them about revolution and social justice but eventually reneged on their own ideas.^[22]

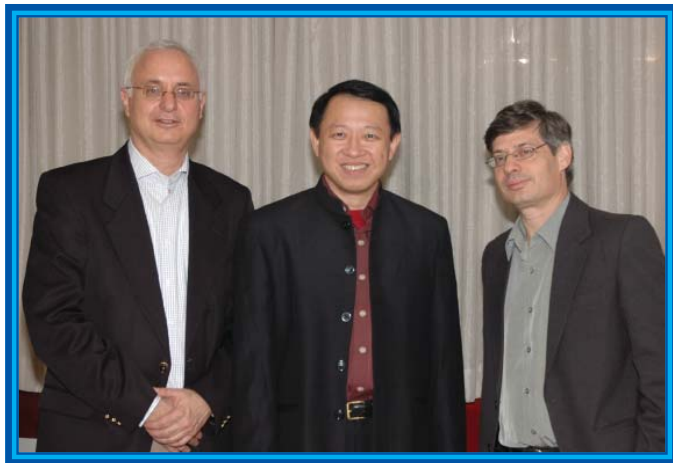
Soft power is therefore part and parcel of the Jewish experience. In the Bible it is called being a “light unto the nations”; in the Talmud it is the “charity” of Dispersion; in the Kabbalah it is

called tikkun olam; and in modern times it can be seen as Jewish radicalism or Jewish lobbying on Capitol Hill. Because of their history, dispersion and oppression, Jews had to invent and reinvent new methods and new techniques of soft power.





Dr. Tan Tay Keong making his presentation.



Professor Raanan Rein, Dr. Tan Tay Keong and Dr. Avi Beker.



Dr. Tan Tay Keong responding to questions.

Soft Power in Israel-Singapore Relations

Ambassador Itzhak Shoham:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak about my last love: Singapore. I just came back from this incredible country, and it is an honor and a pleasure to be able to share some of my experiences there. Well as Avi said, soft power was used by the State of Israel and by the Jewish people much before that, and also much before Joseph Nye coined the term in the 1990s, it has been the basis of our foreign policy.

Some of you may recall the story about the five Jews who, in some way, changed the world. The first one was Moses, the second was Jesus, the third was Marx, and then came Freud, and after that Einstein. Whenever there's a turning point in human history, you find a Jew. Sometimes it's a pleasure, but sometimes we suffer from it. In any case, a large part of the foreign policy of Israel was based on soft power – in other words, co-opting other peoples.

I think our programs for international corporation are a very good example of this soft-power approach. These days there are fewer programs but in the 1960s MASHAV was very active. I think this approach – the will to help other peoples, to share our experiences with them and try to help them to develop to a better stage – is also what brought us to Singapore. As Dr. Tan said at the beginning of the symposium, at first, we helped with defense. To this day I receive thanks and greetings from people in Singapore who say that it wouldn't be an independent country or what it is today without Israel's support in the defense field. Of course, this support goes far beyond training. I was very touched when I read an article by Yaakov Jack Elazari, in which he recalled the instructions that the first emissaries received from then-Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin before departing for Singapore. Rabin told them:

You are going to a far away country. You are not mercenaries. You are not going to train and stay there. You are going to teach the people and then hand them the command. We are not colonialists; we are not going to impose our presence anywhere. Second, you are not weapons traders. You are not going to sell Israeli weaponry. You will advise them about what is best for their needs, but they will buy whatever they need even if it's not Israeli – remember that. Overall, remember you are coming back.

That was the approach.

We engaged in additional types of cooperation with Singapore, including public housing. There were very, very extensive programs of cooperation in building houses. At the time, we had experience resettling waves of immigrants, moving them from temporary quarters in transit

camps (*ma'abarot*) to permanent housing. We shared this with Singapore's social workers, tens if not hundreds were trained here in Israel at the Mt. Carmel Training Center in Haifa.

Another field in which we helped Singapore, and which Dr. Tan mentioned, is cultural power. We helped Singapore to form its symphony orchestra. Meshulam Riklis was the first conductor of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra. Wherever you go in Singapore, you find traces of our presence, even though we always kept a very low profile and were very discreet. By the way, even now we are continuing with this kind of activity. Next week, we hope to receive permission from the Ministry for Community Development to teach Singaporeans about our system for the so-called "Golden Age" or "Third Age". Since some of us are approaching that age, we have to be careful with the terminology.

The interesting thing is that, of course, this was not a one-way street. The small child we held in our hands in the 1960s grew to be a brother and now – I dare think – a partner.

Also, we are constantly trying to learn about Singapore, particularly those aspects that Dr. Tan clearly described. How really to use soft power in our own society? How to reach a balance among different components and approaches. In this we are singular not only in our small size and in being bordered by more or less hostile neighboring countries, but also in the very delicate balance of our own society. Between 15 percent and 20 percent of our population is from a Muslim background or creed, and by definition identify strongly with other countries, which are their homeland. I think we can learn from the model presented by Singapore of how to co-opt these people into society, given the difficulties, it is not an easy task. But we should bear in mind that even in Singapore members of a *Jemaah Islamiyah* (JI) cell - linked to al-Qaeda – were arrested. People born and bred in Singapore wanted to commit suicide in terrorist attacks against their fellow citizens.

In any case, we have to learn from each other; fortunately, we have a very open channel between our two countries. The flow is constant and all options are open.

Discussion:

Prof. Ehud Harari:

First of all, I would like to congratulate the three speakers, who complemented each other very nicely. Actually, they provided an introduction to what I want to say. First of all, the idea of a soft power is really not new, as we have just heard. Secondly, if you include foreign aid as a kind of soft power, then the precedent of “soft power” was actually comprehensive security. In other words, you can achieve security through non-military means. The Japanese developed this concept in the late 1970s and early 1980s; Nye merely built on and refined it. I would refine the concept of foreign aid. Foreign aid is an economic measure to gain influence. Foreign aid with a soul – so to speak – is the kind of foreign aid that Israel gives to developing countries.

I think Dr. Beker summed up a very important and long-standing tension within Judaism and also in Israel, between universality and particularism, between globalism and nationalism. Dr. Tan, you spoke about “the 4 T’s”. Let me tease you with a provocative question: Does Singapore have this tension at all? I mean, have you resolved the issue of nationalism by doing away with it? You want to be a center of culture like New York. You want to be a center of “cool” like Tokyo – and so on and so forth. And you also say that you want Singapore to present a nice face to the world. What is Singaporean about Singapore in addition to being a receptor of “cool” cultures, of technology? Is it openness? Tolerance? Trust? The Jews argue that they have something unique to offer to the world. What is Singaporean about Singapore?

Amb. Mordechai Arbel

I have a question: If Israel and Singapore can be successful in soft power, is it because they are small countries, or because they have a large Jewish Diaspora or Chinese Diaspora in the world which helps them, creates global contacts, and enables them to use soft power?

Student:

Thank you, Dr. Tan, for your presentation. It was enlightening. I would like to touch upon a topic which you discussed very briefly when you mentioned freedom of the press in Singapore. When speaking about soft power, democracy may be the most spoken about, that is, trying to present democracy to places in which it’s not practiced. Do you think that – and we know that Singapore is lacking in a way in this area – do you think that Singapore can become a soft-power power without having democracy as its model?

Eli Fried, Hartog School of Government and Policy:

As you were speaking, it was quite incredible to me that if had you cut Singapore out of the equation and substituted it with Israel, the similarities would be astounding – that is, the issues that are at stake, the size of the country, the size of the population, the lack of natural resources, the concentration of talent, etc. Despite the similarities, there is one – to me – outstanding difference; and I think it is one of the things that defines Israeli history: the immediacy of the threat. Both Israel and Singapore are surrounded by threats, but one of them has experienced six wars and continues to experience the immediacy of those threats. So the question in terms of soft power is: How effective do you think you can be in using soft power, when you face imminent threat? I think MASHAV is one of the best examples, because all of the work that was done during the first 20 years of its existence, between 1958 and the early 1970s – until 1973, when the Yom Kippur War happened, and the door to the African nations closed; since then, MASHAV's political capital has all but disintegrated. I think it's Israel's shining example of soft power, though I think a bad taste still lingers today.

So what do you feel is the role of soft power in that kind of environment? If you think it still can play a strong role, how would you advise those who are pushing the barrow of soft power on a patch with very strong budgetary constraints, and a powerful Ministry of Defense Ministry? How would you advise those who are trying to obtain budgets? How would you advise them to argue their case for culture and education in the face of high defense budgets?

Dr. Tan Tay Keong:

Thank you. They are very provocative questions, and let me address them one at a time, perhaps beginning with Eli's questions. There are a lot of similarities [between Israel and Singapore], and the sense of threat is a matter of perception. Perception becomes reality even if you disagree with it. The perception in Singapore is that we are under imminent threat from others in the region. There have been – as Ambassador Shoham said – plots to attack US and British installations in Singapore by radical Islamist groups in Singapore.

Secondly, a country as small as Singapore – and unlike Israel we have no US lobby to depend on – has no land to retreat to. Any battle that is fought in Singapore is a lost situation. If a major pandemic occurs in Singapore, the consequences will be beyond what we can bear. If a terrorist threat has been made real – well, terrorists need only be successful once, while we must be successful 100 percent of the time. Were a terrorist attack to succeed, confidence would be shattered. In my opinion, looking at [terrorist groups] today, capital comes in fairly easily. People move fairly easily. They can also move out quite easily. But we have nothing to fall back upon. Our human resources are internationally mobile. Our geo-strategic location, too, could be wiped out or neutralized by some of these threats. So, in some ways, our perception of the

threat might be very different, but no less serious. Indeed, the threat to us is no less serious.

From here, I wish to address the question on democracy as a model, whether we are attractive enough given our form of democracy. We will never become a liberal democracy like that in some in some Western societies. I will say that Singapore has tried to invent its own version of democracy. It is one that rests very strongly on state dominance. It is a very conservative form of democracy, because most of the people in Singapore – if you were to draw a bell curve – are very conservative. We favor law and order and security more than free speech or some of the civil liberties cherished in the West. However, the political system lets our people decide. If the people decide that Singapore will have strict laws and a one-party dominant system – which is what we have at present – and they consistently vote that party back into power, in what I would say are fair and clean elections – then so be it. Our aim, then, is not be to present ourselves as a model. Singapore is small. We are fairly unique, and some people say we are lucky. Therefore, when Singapore tries to be responsible or nice or helpful, it's because we have benefited from the assistance given to us when we were extremely vulnerable. Israel came to our aid. It is the same thing, too, for other countries, like Bhutan, which looks to Singapore as an important benefactor as they are trying to open up their political system.

Prof. Ehud Harari:

And now I'd like to quote. It doesn't mean that I agree, but as you know, one of the most serious problems that we are all facing is the problem with Islamic extremism and what's happening in Muslim Arab societies. Singapore came out with an initiative a few years ago, which the then-Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong called AMED – Asia-Middle East Dialogue. He said, "Let's establish a dialogue between Asian and Middle Eastern countries". In this way he tried to push some ideas, particularly on women's status and economic openness, and so forth. Behind this initiative, of course, was the desire to encourage moderate Muslims in Arab or Muslim societies. The first meeting of AMED was held a few months ago, and it was quite successful and well attended. The Singaporeans colleagues with whom I went said, "You know, the Arabs are not afraid of us because – unlike the Americas – we don't come with any democratization agenda". This is exactly what frightens those regimes. When the Americans come to the Saudis or the Kuwaitis or whomever with an open agenda but with democratization at the top of it, they get frightened, and they don't want. Why should their kings and families agree with the Western democratic system? We Singaporeans come without this item in the agenda, so they receive us, and believe me they will come more and more and, hopefully, In'shalla, one day things will change.

Dr. Tan Tay Keong:

I want to address the question of why we gravitate toward soft power. Is it because we are small, or is there really something so unique about Singapore? I think that observers like myself like to post-rationalize what was done by or for a country. You know, we go back and say “this was done according to the 4 T’s, that was part of the strategy”. Singapore’s government is at the center of the soft power strategy without a doubt. We have a State-led society. The private sector is relatively small in Singapore, and the non-profit sector is very nascent.

Most soft power activities and institutions are funded by the State and, I believe, are construed in an integrated fashion. They are reinforced by, and are consistent with, the society’s institutions. And the reason we are pushed to do this is that we have very few other options as a small State. As we discussed previously, there are not many ways a small state can coerce or influence the behaviors of big States. Also, we cannot change the rules of the game in the conduct of international affairs and trade relations. They are often determined by the big states or are made in their favor. Therefore concerted efforts have been made to mobilize and exercise soft power to maximize our chances of survival and success.

Student:

You were speaking about using soft power to promote your country, to be friends with everyone and, it sounds great. I was wondering whether you could bring up a few ideas about how we in Israel could use soft power in our situation, that is, when we are already in conflict with the Palestinians, and [the conflict] is being conducted with very hard power and constant violent threats from both sides. Would it be naive to think that maybe we could use soft power to try to resolve this very difficult conflict?

Dr. Tan Tay Keong:

That is a very interesting question. Israel might not be able to change the approaches of certain governments in the region or the extremists within a given society. But the struggle you are involved in might not be simply a struggle between Israel and another nation. There could be another struggle within the nations themselves, between the moderates and the extremists. Some extremist groups may want to wipe Israel off the map. They will launch an attack at the earliest opportunity. But there might be moderates in these same nations and other actors around the world, who will see the position of Israel differently. Soft power can help you reach out to these moderates and strengthen their position.

I’d not want to neglect Professor Harari’s question, which is: What’s so essential about Singapore? We want to be Tokyo, New York, London, and so on, yes. I always feel that

Singapore has to find her place in the world. We try to rank ourselves very much with other international actors. We are very much pursuing what is now called in business literature the “Blue Ocean Strategy”. We try to compete harder. We try to lower costs. We try to differentiate ourselves and try to shine brighter according to international rankings. But recently I sensed a shift in our thinking, towards a “Blue Ocean Strategy”. A Blue Ocean Strategy basically means redefining the competition, moving into areas that other people are not moving into. A good example of this is Cirque du Soleil, the Canadian circus company. They are now a \$22 billion dollar company. When they entered into the circus business it was a declining industry, but they combined circus with theatre, and redefined the way the circus was seen; they became a booming business.

Similarly, I believe Singapore’s survival cannot be staked on trying harder and competing stronger with China, with India. Some of our businesses are declining in Singapore, including those in the manufacturing sector. It is difficult for them to continue to compete with the lower-cost competitors from China and India. Therefore we have to look to other means, like biotechnology, nano-technology, and consulting in the knowledge industries.

Conclusion of discussion



Endnotes

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