

Chapter 22

The Soft Power of Talent: Comparative Analysis of China's Talent Acquisition and Retention Strategies in the Middle East

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ABSTRACT

In the midst of a global competition for talent, it is crucial to grasp China's distinctive strategy for attracting and retaining top talent in countries as culturally and geographically varied as the Middle East and East Asia. This chapter tries to provide a holistic examination of China's talent initiatives, which are a key component of the country's soft power diplomacy and, by extension, its geopolitical impact. This chapter compares and contrasts the ways in which China's southern, eastern, and northern regions handle talent management by analyzing empirical data and case studies. The findings not only provide insight into how soft power techniques may be improved for talent acquisition and retention, but also provide a road map for long-term, cross-cultural HR practices. Talent management in today's geopolitically complicated world can benefit greatly from such new viewpoints, especially as the future of work becomes more globalized and competitive.

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced, linked world, a nation's place on the international arena is determined by more than military strength, economic might, and political influence. This is where 'soft power,' a term coined by Joseph Nye, comes into play; it describes a country's ability to influence and sway the opinions of others by allure rather than threat or monetary compensation (Nye, 2008). Culture, diplomacy, ideology, and the ability to attract and keep talented people are all examples of how a country might exert its soft power. When compared to "hard power," which tends to incite hostility and opposition, "soft power" paves the way for countries to form bonds predicated on mutual admiration and respect (Nye, 2021).

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The globalization of international relations has made the use of soft power increasingly important in the field of talent acquisition and retention. Human capital, or talent, is an invaluable asset that knows no national boundaries. In a worldwide “brain race” that has implications for economic growth and scientific discovery, countries compete for the best and brightest workers, thinkers, entrepreneurs, and academic visionaries (Zweig & Wang, 2013). In this way, countries are able to staff their own projects and initiatives with top-tier talent while simultaneously indirectly influencing the global distribution of skills and experience by employing soft power.

This is especially true in the scientific, medical, financial, and academic communities, where a single discovery can alter the worldwide pecking order (Wang et al., 2020). The availability of talented individuals is now a major factor in determining a country’s international standing. Countries can increase their “soft power,” or influence over other nations, by becoming centers of global talent (Shambaugh, 2015).

A noteworthy illustration of how soft power and talent management may be integrated to promote geopolitical goals is the rise of China as a global superpower (Zreik, 2023a). China has been able to create an image of opportunity and innovation thanks to the coordination of its educational, cultural, and commercial platforms with its global diplomacy activities (Nye, 2012). Taking into account cultural, historical, and geopolitical differences, the country’s initiatives in the Middle East and East Asia demonstrate its flexible and sophisticated approach to global talent management.

The importance of leveraging soft power and attracting top personnel will only grow as we get further into the 21st century. The globe has shrunk to the size of a town, and the winner of the talent war will also control a significant portion of the future (Hall & Pfeiffer, 2013). Therefore, it is vital for both international relations and global human resource management to comprehend how countries like China navigate this complex landscape.

The rise of China as the world’s second largest economy is both remarkable and instructive. China’s development is characterized not just by its economic and military muscle, but also by its purposeful use of soft power. China’s grand geopolitical strategy includes a focus on “talent management,” which includes “talent acquisition,” “talent development,” and “talent retention,” as a multifaceted method for expanding China’s worldwide influence (Vaiman et al., 2018).

China’s strategy for managing its human capital is firmly ingrained in the country’s overarching plans and objectives. The country’s “Thousand Talents Plan” and “Double First-Class” program demonstrate its aspiration to attract and develop the best and brightest minds in a variety of fields, including research, development, and business (Shambaugh, 2015). These initiatives aren’t just about fostering homegrown talent; they’re also geared at bringing in foreign expertise, including that of Chinese citizens who have worked abroad. Not only is the economy attractive, but so is China’s cultural diversity, technological innovation, and expanding research ecosystems (Parente, Geleilate, & Rong, 2018).

In the realm of international talent acquisition and retention, the concept of ‘soft power’ extends far beyond the borders of any single nation, encompassing a global landscape where diverse strategies lead to varying degrees of success. A prime example of soft power in action is seen in Canada, known for its welcoming immigration policies and emphasis on cultural diversity, which have collectively positioned it as a hub for international talent, particularly in the technology sector. Canada’s approach contrasts yet complement China’s, offering a comparative perspective on the use of soft power in talent management.

Canada’s Global Skills Strategy, for instance, streamlines visa processing for skilled workers, making it an attractive destination for talent in fields like information technology, green energy, and biotechnology. Cities like Toronto and Vancouver have become melting pots of innovation, drawing experts from around the world, thanks to an environment that not only values diversity but actively integrates it into

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