**Academic Review**

Producing a sound article on “P2P Networks and Boycott Diplomacy”, using BDS as a concrete example of a transnational advocacy network, would benefit from a reduction in the scope of the literature included and a clearer, simpler argumentation. This tactic considers the comments of ISQ Reviewers 1 and 2. There are several paths to take that are discussed below and on the list of recommended journals. Comments are included throughout the article as well.

**Abstract: definition of a research question and one clear hypothesis**

A well-known Harvard political philosopher with whom I had some interaction, impressed me with his ability to say what he was NOT going to cover. Remember that none other than Socrates said that he was aware that he knew “practically nothing”. Focusing on just one small element that can then be applied to many broader stories is key. Here there are at least a dozen different types of debates that are mentioned (diplomacy, global legitimacy,

There is an excellent chapter on overreach in Scott Norton’s *Development Editing*. No need to go look it up, but a technique you can use is to write down every thesis in the paper and go back and look carefully at the list. You can then try to “nest” them inside of one another, making them hierarchical, or set some aside entirely if too tangential. The point is that for an article to make an impact it must be clear, precise, and easy to grasp. Prove or show ONE thing and you will be cited for it. Discuss MANY things and it is just an essay. Of course, if you can show ONE thing that is new, it will be even more remarked. If you can then tie it very clearly to existing literature, even more so. If the conclusion is unique, surprising, counterintuitive, or very solidly based on current realities, it will have even greater impact.

**Content and structure**

The actual case of BDS arrives about 2/3 of the way through the document and one of your hypotheses as well (page 13 of 22). Instead, either in sequence or in thought, **start with the case study and expand upon it.** BDS and the functioning of the boycott are never explained in detail. Neither “P2P networks” nor “boycott diplomacy” are ever defined. Examples are not given and the characteristics that will allow you to tie into other discussions are not there. You start out with and linger on broad swaths of international relations and other political science theories and land upon the case as an afterthought. But to show the shortcomings of theory through an example (case study), one must first take the example and consider it and the related literature very closely, remark what its characteristics, aims and means are. What has already happened in the past with this type of case? What is happening today in the same or related cases? Then come back to the theory armed with these facts and arguments and show the shortcomings and links and the real-life example of BDS.

Subject matter very close to your own should be **studied exhaustively**. Consider their references as well. Social media and international relations, TANs, and/or boycotts. This article is the result of the many years you have worked in the field and represents your own questioning and your exploration of vast fields of research. You’ve been able to study at some impressive places and you are making a stab at bringing that all together. It isn’t easy. Depending on the choices you make in terms of time to invest and journals to target, come back to just one thought and set the continuing exploration aside for later. This is an article not a book with many chapters.

To me, theoretical work involves ripping something apart from the inside... but to do so you need to know it intimately. Soft power and hard power are easy ideas to grasp, hence their success, but there is not much “theory” to speak of, simply a definition. Nye was a practitioner before becoming a “theorist”. Philosophers and other serious theorists have often never stepped outside of the ivory tower (Kant never stepped outside of Konigsberg), and in my eyes that weakens their theories monumentally. Practitioners can indeed add intriguing insights to theories, but to do so you must pick just a small field of literature to master and then dive into the discussion. There is a lot to be said about the many individual aspects of the case you are working on, BUT you do have to tie it neatly back to the theories or, better yet, just one theory. If you stick with the soft/hard power of Nye, which in many ways is logical, then you can drop many of the other references and just explore this. However, as you may know, Nye moved on to other issues and became interested in the private sector. This may or may not be of use (to follow him into the domain of “smart power”. The private sector is indeed the target of some aspects of the BDS boycott.

What is not well known (to IR and other researchers) is the case study of BDS and the example of state-inspired, citizen engagement in public diplomacy as per your 2012 article. BDS as a P2P network or transnational advocacy network has chosen a boycott as its model (and a boycott that BDS openly states as having been inspired by what can be considered the successful case of boycotts related to South Africa’s apartheid). BDS could be clearly defined in terms of size, number of members, extent of formalization of the organization itself. You do say they do not have a headquarters. Do they raise funds? In what countries do they have members? How respected is BDS? How representative of the pro-Palestinian (or anti-Israeli) movement? Are their desires in line with the Palestinian government? BDS is not explored in-depth in the current article whereas it appears in the title. In some of your other work you have much more information about BDS than is evident here.

Many other approaches are possible:

Baum and Potter (2019) argue the reverse of what you are saying about the speed of action. They say that citizens have a hard time following what is happening in diplomacy and hence lose out, increasing a worsened disadvantage for citizens. You have said that governments have the monopoly on formal state interaction. And they move slowly. There are many rules. TANs can move outside of and beyond the reach of the state. Who is right?

Matthew A. Baum and Philip B. K. Potter, 2019, “Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy in the Age of Social Media”, *The Journal of Politics* 81 (2).

**Way forward: Process**

What is important for an article, according to this short description from the *International Political Science Review*, is the following (that I’ve taken the liberty of numbering): “It is expected that authors will (i) establish the significance of their research question, (ii) locate it within the relevant literature, and (iii) clearly set out the research design through which they intend addressing the question. Single-country case studies should analyze the theoretical and comparative implications of the case.” The second step seems to me to be the weakest. However, the hypothesis and hence the research question itself is hiding within your work.

Accessing the theoretical level of the discussion of BDS it is then best to go back to the level of analysis that you are undertaking to be able to sketch out sufficiently the “hook” of this study. The basic building blocks of IR theory, as you know, are the individual, the group, the state, and the system. Indeed, what is intriguing about the case study, and more broadly about the era of NGOs and the Internet and TANs, is the grouping of dispersed individuals of the same mindset who can confront a state. Might I add that the ultimate outcomes desired by BDS are only possible if recognized by states since the recognition of borders is at stake (and networks if we consider the UN and other international organizations). Therefore, the individuals do indeed confront a state (via a group and certain economic and other entities that they influence).

**References**

The reference list, which should only include those works cited within the text, is incredibly varied. This shows the vast areas of impact of such a study but there is also a sense of dispersion. There are very few journals that are cited more than once, and no sense of an exhaustive consideration of one aspect of this study. Transnational advocacy networks, boycotts, social media (hiding behind P2P) public diplomacy and in some ways soft power could all be examined in much greater detail.

Look at the work of Constance Duncombe for example. Very similar in scope to your own (and published in varied journals). Duncombe works on digital diplomacy, social media, and “emotion” all in the context of foreign policy.

https://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=author:%22Duncombe%20Constance%22