

Soft Power and Higher Education

Joseph Nye

IN 2003, I was sitting in the audience at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, when George Carey, former Archbishop of Canterbury, asked Secretary of State Colin Powell why the United States seemed to focus only on its hard power rather than its soft power. I was interested in the question because I had coined the term “soft power” a decade or so earlier. Secretary Powell correctly replied that the United States needed hard power to win World War II, but he continued, “And what followed immediately after hard power? Did the United States ask for dominion over a single nation in Europe? No. Soft power came in the Marshall Plan. . . . We did the same thing in Japan.”¹ Later in the same year, I spoke about soft power to a conference cosponsored by the U.S. Army in Washington, D.C. One of the other speakers was Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. According to a press account, “The top military brass listened sympathetically” to my views, but when someone in the audience later asked Rumsfeld for his opinion on soft power, he replied “I don’t know what it means.”²

Soft Power

What is soft power? It is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies. When our policies are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others, our soft power is enhanced. America has long had a great deal of soft power. Think of the impact of Franklin Roosevelt's Four Freedoms in Europe at the end of World War II; of young people behind the Iron Curtain listening to American music and news on Radio Free Europe; of Chinese students symbolizing their protests in Tiananmen Square by creating a replica of the Statue of Liberty; of newly liberated Afghans in 2001 asking for a copy of the Bill of Rights; of young Iranians today surreptitiously watching banned American videos and satellite television broadcasts in the privacy of their homes. These are all examples of America's soft power. When you can get others to admire your ideals and to want what you want, you do not have to spend as much on sticks and carrots to move them in your direction. Seduction is always more effective than coercion, and many values like democracy, human rights, and individual opportunities are deeply seductive. But attraction can turn to repulsion if we act in an arrogant manner and destroy the real message of our deeper values.

The United States may be more powerful than any other polity since the Roman Empire, but like Rome, America is neither invincible nor invulnerable. Rome did not succumb to the

rise of another empire, but to the onslaught of waves of barbarians. Modern high-tech terrorists are the new barbarians. As the world wends its way deeper into a struggle with terrorism, it becomes increasingly apparent that many factors lie outside American control. The United States cannot alone hunt down every suspected Al Qaeda leader hiding in remote regions of the globe. Nor can it launch a war whenever it wishes without alienating other countries and losing the cooperation it needs for winning the peace.

The four-week war in Iraq in the spring of 2003 was a dazzling display of America's hard military power that removed a tyrant, but it did not resolve our vulnerability to terrorism. It was also costly in terms of our soft power—our ability to attract others to our side. In the aftermath of the war, polling by the Pew Research Center showed a dramatic decline in the popularity of the United States compared to a year earlier, even in countries like Spain and Italy, whose governments had provided support for the war effort, and America's standing plummeted in Islamic countries from Morocco to Turkey to Southeast Asia. Yet the United States will need the help of such countries in the long term to track the flow of terrorists, tainted money, and dangerous weapons. In the words of the *Financial Times*, "To win the peace, therefore, the US will have to show as much skill in exercising soft power as it has in using hard power to win the war."³

I first developed the concept of soft power in *Bound to Lead*, a book published in 1990 that disputed the then-prevalent view that America was in decline. I pointed out that the United

States was the strongest nation not only in military and economic power but also in a third dimension that I called soft power. In the ensuing years, I have been pleased to see the concept enter the public discourse, used by the American secretary of state, the British foreign minister, political leaders, and editorial writers as well as academics around the world. At the same time, however, some have misunderstood, misused, and trivialized soft power as merely the influence of Coca-Cola, Hollywood, blue jeans, and money. Even more frustrating has been to watch some policy makers ignore the importance of soft power and make us all pay the price by unnecessarily squandering it.

More than four centuries ago, Niccolo Machiavelli advised princes in Italy that it was more important to be feared than to be loved. But in today's world, it is best to be both. Winning hearts and minds has always been important, but it is even more so in a global information age. Information is power, and modern information technology is spreading information more widely than ever before in history. Yet political leaders have spent little time thinking about how the nature of power has changed and, more specifically, about how to incorporate the soft dimensions into their strategies for wielding power.

Everyone is familiar with hard power. We know that military and economic might often get others to change their position. Hard power can rest on inducements (carrots) or threats (sticks). But sometimes you can get the outcomes you want without tangible threats or payoffs. The indirect way to get what you want has sometimes been called "the second face of

power.” A country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries—admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness—want to follow it. In this sense, it is also important to set the agenda and attract others in world politics, not just force them to change by threatening military force or economic sanctions. This soft power—getting others to want the outcomes that you want—co-opts people rather than coerces them.

Soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others. At the personal level, we are all familiar with the power of attraction and seduction. In a relationship or a marriage, power does not necessarily reside with the larger partner, but in the mysterious chemistry of attraction. In the business world, smart executives know that leadership is not just a matter of issuing commands; it also involves leading by example and attracting others to do what you want. It is difficult to run a large organization by commands alone. You also need to get others to buy in to your values. Similarly, contemporary practices of community-based policing rely on making the police sufficiently friendly and attractive that a community wants to help them achieve shared objectives.⁴

Political leaders have long understood the power that comes from attraction. If I can get you to want to do what I want, then I do not have to make you do it. Whereas leaders in authoritarian countries can use coercion and issue commands, politicians in democracies have to rely more on a combination of inducement and attraction. Soft power is a staple of daily

democratic politics. The ability to establish preferences tends to be associated with intangible assets such as an attractive personality, culture, political values and institutions, and policies that are seen as legitimate or having moral authority. If a leader represents values that others want to follow, it will cost less to lead.

Soft power is not the same as influence. After all, influence can also rest on the hard power of threats or payments. And soft power is more than persuasion or the ability to move people by argument, though that is an important part of it. It is also the ability to attract, and attraction often leads to acquiescence. Simply put, in behavioral terms soft power is attractive power. In terms of resources, soft-power resources are the assets that produce such attraction. Whether a particular asset is a soft-power resource that produces attraction can be measured by asking people through polls or focus groups. Whether that attraction in turn produces desired policy outcomes has to be judged in particular cases. Attraction does not always determine others' preferences, but this gap between power measured as resources and power judged as the outcomes of behavior is not unique to soft power. It occurs with all forms of power. Before the fall of France in 1940, Britain and France had more tanks than Germany, but that advantage in military power resources did not accurately predict the outcome of the battle.

One way to think about the difference between hard and soft power is to consider the variety of ways you can obtain the outcomes you want. You can command me to change my pref-

ferences and do what you want by threatening me with force or economic sanctions. You can induce me to do what you want by using your economic power to pay me. You can restrict my preferences by setting the agenda in such a way that my more extravagant wishes seem too unrealistic to pursue. Or you can appeal to my sense of attraction, love, or duty in our relationship and to our shared values.⁵ If I am persuaded to go along with your purposes without any explicit threat or exchange taking place—in short, if my behavior is determined by an observable but intangible attraction—soft power is at work. Soft power uses a different type of currency (not force, not money) to engender cooperation—an attraction to shared values and the justness and duty of contributing to the achievement of those values. Much as Adam Smith observed that people are led by an invisible hand when making decisions in a free market, our decisions in the marketplace for ideas are often shaped by soft power.

Hard and soft power are related because they are both aspects of the ability to achieve one's purpose by affecting the behavior of others. The distinction between them is one of degree, both in the nature of the behavior and in the tangibility of the resources. Command power—the ability to change what others do—can rest on coercion or inducement. Co-optive power—the ability to shape what others want—can rest on the attractiveness of one's culture and values or the ability to manipulate the agenda of political choices in a manner that makes others fail to express some preferences because they seem to be too unrealistic. The types of behavior between command and co-option

THE INTERNET AND THE UNIVERSITY

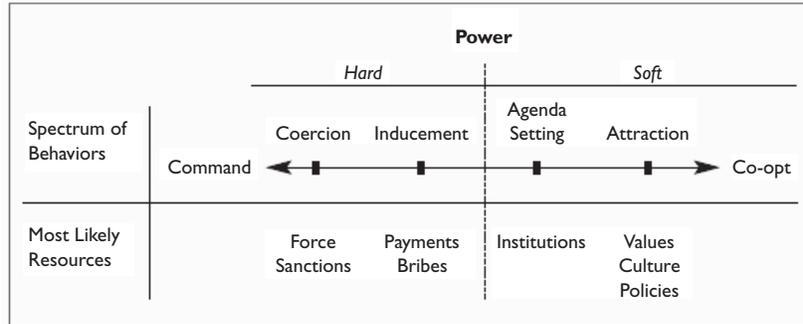


Figure 1. Power Spectrum

range along a spectrum from coercion to economic inducement to agenda setting to pure attraction (see Figure 1). Soft-power resources tend to be associated with the co-optive end of the spectrum of behavior, whereas hard power resources are usually associated with command behavior. But the relationship is imperfect. For example, sometimes countries may be attracted to others with command power by myths of invincibility, and command power may sometimes be used to establish institutions that later become regarded as legitimate. A strong economy not only provides resources for sanctions and payments but also can be a source of attractiveness. On the whole, however, the general association between the types of behavior and certain resources is strong enough to allow us to employ the useful shorthand reference to hard- and soft-power resources.⁶

Governments sometimes find it difficult to control and employ soft power, but that does not diminish its importance. A former French foreign minister observed that Americans are

powerful because they can “inspire the dreams and desires of others, thanks to the mastery of global images through film and television and because, for these same reasons, large numbers of students from other countries come to the United States to finish their studies.”⁷ Soft power is important. Self-styled realists who deny the importance of soft power are like people who do not understand the power of seduction.

Sources of Soft Power

The soft power of a country rests primarily on three resources: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority).

Let’s start with culture. Culture is the set of values and practices that create meaning for a society. It has many manifestations. It is common to distinguish between high culture such as literature, art, and education, which appeals to elites, and popular culture, which focuses on mass entertainment.

When a country’s culture includes universal values and its policies promote values and interests that others share, it increases the probability of obtaining its desired outcomes because of the relationships of attraction and duty created. Narrow values and parochial cultures are less likely to produce soft power. The United States benefits from a universalistic culture. The German editor Josef Joffe once argued that America’s soft

power was even larger than its economic and military assets: “U.S. culture, low-brow or high, radiates outward with an intensity last seen in the days of the Roman Empire—but with a novel twist. Rome’s and Soviet Russia’s cultural sway stopped exactly at their military borders. America’s soft power, though, rules over an empire on which the sun never sets.”⁸

Culture is transmitted through personal contacts, visits, and exchanges. The ideas and values that America exports in the minds of more than half a million foreign students who study every year in American universities and then return to their home countries, or in the minds of the Asian entrepreneurs who return home after succeeding in Silicon Valley, tend to reach elites with power. Most of China’s leaders have a son or daughter educated in the States who can portray a realistic view of the United States that is often at odds with the caricatures in official Chinese propaganda. Similarly, when the United States was trying to persuade President Musharraf of Pakistan to change his policies and be more supportive of American measures in Afghanistan, it probably helped that he could hear from a son working in the Boston area.

As we know, cultural critics often distinguish between high culture and popular culture. Many observers would agree that American high culture produces significant soft power for the United States. For example, Secretary of State Colin Powell said, “I can think of no more valuable asset to our country than the friendship of future world leaders who have been educated here.”⁹ International students usually return home with a greater appreciation of American values and institutions, and,

as expressed in a report by an international education group, “The millions of people who have studied in the United States over the years constitute a remarkable reservoir of goodwill for our country.”¹⁰ Many of these former students eventually wind up in positions where they can affect policy outcomes that are important to Americans. Indeed, Charlotte Beers, former U.S. undersecretary of state for public diplomacy, pointed out that American cultural and academic exchanges have involved over 200 current or former heads of state and that half of the leaders in the coalition against terrorism were once exchange visitors. “This has got to be the best buy in government,” she said.¹¹

Other countries have similar programs. For example, Japan has developed an interesting exchange program bringing 6,000 young foreigners each year from 40 countries to teach their languages in Japanese schools, with an alumni association to maintain the bonds of friendship that are developed. In recent years, European countries have been increasing their efforts to recruit students to their schools and universities from other parts of the world. American universities could establish more exchange programs for students and faculty. In that regard, U.S. higher education leaders must continue to press for less restrictive student visa policies and for more expeditious handling of visa requests. Further, colleges and universities can assess their internal policies concerning foreign enrollment and evaluate whether that enrollment is high enough to meet the needs of our global society.

Academic and scientific exchanges played a significant role in enhancing American soft power during the Cold War. Even

while some American skeptics at the time feared that visiting Soviet scientists and KGB agents would “steal us blind,” they failed to notice that the visitors vacuumed up political ideas along with scientific secrets. Many such scientists became leading proponents of human rights and liberalization inside the Soviet Union. Starting in the 1950s, the Ford Foundation, the Council of Learned Societies, and the Social Science Research Council worked with eventually 110 American colleges and universities in student and faculty exchanges. Though the Soviet Union demanded a governmental agreement to limit the scope of such exchanges, some 50,000 Soviets visited the United States between 1958 and 1988 as writers, journalists, officials, musicians, dancers, athletes, and academics. An even larger number of Americans went to the Soviet Union.

In the 1950s, only 40 to 50 college and graduate students from each country participated in exchanges, but over time, powerful policy effects can be traced back to even those small numbers. Because cultural exchanges affect elites, one or two key contacts may have a major political effect. For example, Aleksandr Yakovlev was strongly influenced by his studies with the political scientist David Truman at Columbia University in 1958. Yakovlev eventually went on to become the head of an important institute, a Politburo member, and a key liberalizing influence on Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. A fellow student, Oleg Kalugin, who became a high official in the KGB, said in looking back from the vantage point of 1997, “Exchanges were a Trojan Horse for the Soviet Union. They played a tremendous role in the erosion of the Soviet system. . . . They kept infecting

more and more people over the years.”¹² The attraction and soft power that grew out of cultural contacts among elites made important contributions to American policy objectives.

It is easier to trace specific political effects of high-cultural contacts than to demonstrate the political importance of popular culture. Alexis de Toqueville pointed out in the nineteenth century that in a democracy there are no restrictions of class or guild on artisans and their products. Popular taste prevails. In addition, commercial interests in a capitalist economy seek broad markets that often result in cultural lowest common denominators. Some believe that American popular culture seduces through sheer force of marketing and promise of pleasure.¹³ Many intellectuals and critics disdain popular culture because of its crude commercialism. They regard it as providing mass entertainment rather than information and thus having little political effect. They view popular culture as an anesthetizing and apolitical opiate for the masses.

Such disdain is misplaced, however, because popular entertainment often contains subliminal images and messages about individualism, consumer choice, and other values that have important political effects. As author Ben Wattenberg argued, American culture includes glitz, sex, violence, vapidness, and materialism, but that is not the whole story. It also portrays American values that are open, mobile, individualistic, anti-establishment, pluralistic, voluntaristic, populist, and free. “It is that content, whether reflected favorably or unfavorably, that brings people to the box office. That content is more powerful than politics or economics. It drives politics and economics.”¹⁴

As the poet Carl Sandburg put it in 1961, “What, Hollywood’s more important than Harvard? The answer is, not as clean as Harvard, but nevertheless, further reaching.”¹⁵

Government policies can reinforce or squander a country’s soft power. Domestic or foreign policies that appear to be hypocritical, arrogant, indifferent to the opinion of others, or based on a narrow approach to national interests can undermine soft power. For example, in the steep decline in the attractiveness of the United States as measured by polls taken after the Iraq War in 2003, people with unfavorable views for the most part said they were reacting to the Bush administration and its policies rather than the United States generally. So far, they distinguish American people and culture from American policies. The publics in most nations continued to admire the United States for its technology, music, movies, and television. But large majorities in most countries said they disliked the growing influence of America in their country.¹⁶

The values a government champions in its behavior at home (for example, democracy), in international institutions (working with others), and in foreign policy (promoting peace and human rights) strongly affect the preferences of others. Governments can attract or repel others by the influence of their example. But soft power does not belong to the government in the same degree that hard power does. Some hard-power assets such as armed forces are strictly governmental; others are inherently national, such as oil and mineral reserves; and many can be transferred to collective control, such as the civilian air fleet that can be mobilized in an emergency. In contrast,

many soft-power resources are separate from the American government and are only partly responsive to its purposes. In the Vietnam era, for example, American popular culture often worked at cross-purposes to official government policy. Today, Hollywood movies that show scantily clad women with libertine attitudes or fundamentalist Christian groups that castigate Islam as an evil religion are both (properly) outside the control of government in a liberal society, but they undercut government efforts to improve relations with Islamic nations.

The Limits of Soft Power

Some skeptics object to the idea of soft power because they think of power narrowly in terms of commands or active control. In their view, imitation and attraction are simply that, not power. As we have seen, some imitation or attraction does not produce much power over policy outcomes, nor does imitation always produce desirable outcomes. For example, in the 1980s, Japan was widely admired for its innovative industrial processes, but imitation by companies in other countries came back to haunt the Japanese when it reduced their market power. Similarly, armies frequently imitate and therefore nullify the successful tactics of their opponents and make it more difficult for them to achieve the outcomes they want. Such observations are correct, but they miss the point that exerting attraction on others often does allow you to get what you want. The skeptics who want to define power only as deliberate acts

of command and control are ignoring the second, or “structural,” face of power—the ability to get the outcomes you want without having to force people to change their behavior through threats or payments.

At the same time, it is important to specify the conditions under which attraction is more likely to lead to desired outcomes and those under which it will not. As we have seen, popular culture is more likely to attract people and produce soft power in the sense of preferred outcomes in situations where cultures are somewhat similar rather than widely dissimilar. All power depends on context—who relates to whom under what circumstances—but soft power depends more than hard power upon the existence of willing interpreters and receivers. Moreover, attraction often has a diffuse effect, creating general influence rather than producing an easily observable specific action. Just as money can be invested, politicians speak of storing up political capital to be drawn on in future circumstances. Of course, such goodwill may not ultimately be honored, and diffuse reciprocity is less tangible than an immediate exchange. Nonetheless, the indirect effects of attraction and a diffuse influence can make a significant difference in obtaining favorable outcomes in bargaining situations. Otherwise leaders would insist only on immediate payoffs and specific reciprocity, and we know that is not always the way they behave. Social psychologists have developed a substantial body of empirical research exploring the relationship between attractiveness and power.¹⁷

Other skeptics object to using the term soft power in international politics because governments are not in full control of

the attraction. Much of American soft power has been produced by Hollywood, Harvard, Microsoft, and Michael Jordan. But the fact that civil society is the origin of much soft power does not disprove its existence. In a liberal society, government cannot and should not control the culture. Indeed, the absence of policies of control can itself be a source of attraction. The Czech film director Milos Forman recounted that when the Communist government let in the American film *Twelve Angry Men* because of its harsh portrait of American institutions, Czech intellectuals responded by thinking, "If that country can make this kind of thing, films about itself, oh, that country must have a pride and must have an inner strength, and must be strong enough and must be free."¹⁸

It is true that firms, universities, foundations, churches, and other nongovernmental groups develop soft power of their own that may reinforce or be at odds with official foreign policy goals. That is all the more reason for governments to make sure that their own actions and policies reinforce rather than undercut their soft power. This is particularly true because private sources of soft power are likely to become increasingly important in the global information age.

Terrorism and Technology

Terrorism is not new, nor is it a single enemy. It is a long-standing method of conflict frequently defined as deliberate attack on noncombatants with the objective of spreading fear

and intimidation. Already a century ago, the novelist Joseph Conrad had drawn an indelible portrait of the terrorist mind, and terrorism was a familiar phenomenon in the twentieth century. Whether homegrown or transnational, it was a staple of conflicts throughout the Middle East, in Northern Ireland, Spain, Sri Lanka, Kashmir, South Africa, and elsewhere. It occurred on every continent except Antarctica and affected nearly every country. September 11, 2001, was a dramatic escalation of an age-old phenomenon. Yet two developments have made terrorism more lethal and more difficult to manage in the twenty-first century.

One set of trends grows out of progress in science and technology. First, there is the complex, highly technological nature of modern civilization's basic systems. As a committee of the National Academy of Sciences pointed out, market forces and openness have combined to increase the efficiency of many of our vital systems, such as those that provide transportation, information, energy, and health care. But some (though not all) systems become more vulnerable and fragile as they become more complex and efficient.¹⁹

At the same time, progress is "democratizing technology," making the instruments of mass destruction smaller, cheaper, and more readily available to a far wider range of individuals and groups. Where bombs and timers were once heavy and expensive, plastic explosives and digital timers are light and cheap. The costs of hijacking an airplane are sometimes little more than the price of a ticket.

In addition, the success of the information revolution is pro-

viding inexpensive means of communication and organization that allow groups once restricted to local and national police jurisdictions to become global in scope. Thirty years ago, instantaneous global communication was sufficiently expensive that it was restricted to large entities with big budgets like governments, multinational corporations, or the Roman Catholic Church. Today the Internet makes global communication virtually free for anyone with access to a modem.²⁰ Similarly, the Internet has reduced the costs of searching for information and making contacts related to instruments of wide-scale destruction. Terrorists also depend on getting their messages out quickly to a broad audience through mass media and the Internet—witness the widespread dissemination of Osama bin Laden’s television interviews and videotapes after September 11. Terrorism depends crucially on soft power for its ultimate victory. It depends on its ability to attract support from the crowd at least as much as its ability to destroy the enemy’s will to fight.

The second set of trends reflects changes in the motivation and organization of terrorist groups. Terrorists in the mid-twentieth century tended to have relatively well-defined political objectives, which were often ill served by mass destruction. They were said to want many people watching rather than many people killed. Such terrorists were often supported and covertly controlled by governments such as Libya or Syria. Toward the end of the century, radical groups grew on the fringes of several religions. Most numerous were the tens of thousands of young Muslim men who went to fight against the Soviet occupation of

Afghanistan. There they were trained in a wide range of techniques, and many were recruited to organizations with an extreme view of the religious obligation of jihad. As the historian Walter Laquer observed, “Traditional terrorists, whether left-wing, right-wing, or nationalist-separatists, were not greatly drawn to these opportunities for greater destruction. . . . Terrorism has become more brutal and indiscriminate since then.”²¹

This trend is reinforced when motivations change from narrowly political to unlimited or retributive objectives reinforced by promises of rewards in another world. Fortunately, unlike communism and fascism, Islamist ideology has failed to attract a global following outside the Islamic community, but that community provides a large pool—over a billion people—from which to recruit. Organization has also changed. For example, Al Qaeda’s network of thousands of people in loosely affiliated cells in some 60 countries gives it a scale well beyond anything seen before. But even small networks can be more difficult to penetrate than the hierarchical quasi-military organizations of the past.

Both trends, technological and ideological, have created a new set of conditions that have increased both the lethality of terrorism and the difficulty of managing terrorism today. Because of September 11 and the unprecedented scale of Al Qaeda, the current focus is properly on terrorism associated with Islamic extremists. But it would be a mistake to limit our attention or responses to Islamic terrorists, for that would be to ignore the wider effects of the democratization of technology and the broader set of challenges that must be met. Tech-

nological progress is putting into the hands of deviant groups and individuals destructive capabilities that were once limited primarily to governments and armies. Every large group of people has some members who deviate from the norm, and some are bent on destruction. It is worth remembering that the worst terrorist act in the United States before September 11 was the one committed by Timothy McVeigh, a purely home-grown antigovernment fanatic. Similarly, the Aum Shinrykio cult, which released sarin in the Tokyo subway system in 1995, had nothing to do with Islam. Even if the current wave of Islamic terrorism turns out to be generational or cyclical, like terrorist waves in the past, the world will still have to confront the long-term secular dangers arising from the democratization of technology.

Lethality has been increasing. In the 1970s, the Palestinian attack on Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics or the killings by the Red Brigades that galvanized world attention cost dozens of lives. In the 1980s, Sikh extremists bombed an Air India flight and killed more than 300 people. September 11, 2001, cost several thousand lives—and all of this escalation occurred without the use of weapons of mass destruction. If one extrapolates this lethality trend and imagines a deviant group in some society gaining access to biological or nuclear materials within the coming decade, it is possible to imagine terrorists being able to destroy millions of lives.

In the twentieth century, a pathological individual like Hitler or Stalin or Pol Pot required the apparatus of a totalitarian government to kill large numbers of people. Unfortunately,

it is now all too easy to envisage extremist groups and individuals killing millions without the instruments of governments. This is truly the “privatization of war,” and it represents a dramatic change in world politics. Moreover, this next step in the escalation of terrorism could have profound effects on the nature of our urban civilization. What will happen to the willingness of people to locate in cities, to our ability to sustain cultural institutions, if instead of destroying two office buildings, a future attack destroys the lower half of Manhattan, the City area of London, or the Left Bank of Paris?

The new terrorism is not like the 1970s terrorism of the IRA (Irish Republican Army), the ETA (the military wing of the Basque separatist movement), or Italy’s Red Brigades, nor is the vulnerability limited to any one society. A “business as usual” attitude toward curbing terrorism is not enough. Force still plays a role in world politics, but its nature has changed in the twenty-first century. Technology is increasing terrorists’ access to destructive power, but they also benefit greatly from increased capacities to communicate—with each other across jurisdictions and with global audiences. Many terrorist groups also have soft as well as hard power. The United States was correct in altering its national security strategy to focus on terrorism and weapons of mass destruction after September 11, 2001. But the means the Bush administration chose focused too heavily on hard power and did not take enough account of soft power. That is a mistake, because it is through soft power that terrorists gain general support as well as new recruits.

Power in a Global Information Age

Power today is less tangible and less coercive among the advanced democracies than it was in the past. At the same time, much of the world does not consist of advanced democracies, and that limits the global transformation of power. For example, most African and the Middle Eastern countries have preindustrial agricultural economies, weak institutions, and authoritarian rulers. Failed states such as Somalia, Congo, Sierra Leone, and Liberia provide venues for violence. Some large countries such as China, India, and Brazil are industrializing and may suffer some of the disruptions that analogous parts of the West encountered at similar stages of their development early in the twentieth century.²² In such a diverse world, all three sources of power—military, economic, and soft—remain relevant, although in different degrees in different relationships. However, if the current economic and social trends of the information revolution continue, soft power will become more important in the mix.

The information revolution and globalization of the economy are transforming and shrinking the world. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, these two forces have enhanced American power. But with time, technology will spread to other countries and peoples, and America's relative preeminence will diminish. Today Americans represent one twentieth of the global population total, but more than half of the world's Internet users. Though English may remain the *lingua franca*, as Latin

did after the ebb of Rome's might, at some point in the future, perhaps in a decade or two, the Asian cyber-community and economy may loom larger than the American. Even more important, the information revolution is creating virtual communities and networks that cut across national borders. Transnational corporations and nongovernmental actors (terrorists included) will play larger roles. Many of these organizations will have soft power of their own as they attract citizens into coalitions that cut across national boundaries. Politics then becomes in part a competition for attractiveness, legitimacy, and credibility. The ability to share information—and to be believed—becomes an important source of attraction and power.

Conclusion

This political game in a global information age suggests that the relative importance of soft power will increase. The countries likely to be more attractive and gain soft power in the information age are those with multiple channels of communication that help to frame issues; whose dominant culture and ideas are closer to prevailing global norms (which now emphasize liberalism, pluralism, and autonomy); and whose credibility is enhanced by their domestic and international values and policies. These conditions suggest opportunities for the United States but also for Europe and others.

The soft power that is becoming more important in the information age is in part a social and economic byproduct

SOFT POWER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

rather than solely a result of official government action. Non-profit institutions with soft power of their own can complicate and obstruct government efforts, and commercial purveyors of popular culture can hinder as well as help the government achieve its objectives. But the larger long-term trends can help the United States if it learns to use them well. To the extent that official policies at home and abroad are consistent with democracy, human rights, openness, and respect for the opinions of others, America will benefit from the trends of this global information age. There is a danger, however, that the United States may obscure the deeper message of its values through arrogance.

American culture high and low still helps produce soft power in the information age, but government actions also matter, not only through programs like the Voice of America and Fulbright scholarships, but, even more important, when policies avoid arrogance and stand for values that others admire. The larger trends of the information age are in America's favor, but only if we learn to stop stepping on our best message. It is essential that Americans—and others—better understand and apply soft power. Smart power is neither hard nor soft. It is both.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This chapter draws upon my book *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004).

THE INTERNET AND THE UNIVERSITY

NOTES

1. "Soft and Hard Power," CBS News, January 28, 2003, available at: <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/01/28/opinion/diplomatic/main538320.shtml>. See also Steven Weisman, "He Denies It, but Powell Appears to Have Gotten Tougher," *International Herald Tribune*, January 29, 2003, p. 5.
2. "Old Softie," *Financial Times*, September 30, 2003, p. 17.
3. "A Famous Victory and a Tough Sequel," *Financial Times*, April 10, 2003, p. 12.
4. I am indebted to Mark Moore for pointing this out to me.
5. See Jane J. Mansbridge, *Beyond Self-Interest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).
6. Repulsion and hatred can also move people to act, but the outcomes they produce are usually not desired by those who generate them. While some might consider repulsion a form of "negative soft power," such a term would be inconsistent with my definition of power as the capacity to produce desired outcomes. Thus I use the term "repulsion" as the opposite of "attraction."
7. Hubert Védrine with Dominique Moisi, *France in an Age of Globalization* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), p. 3.
8. Josef Joffe, "Who's Afraid of Mr. Big?" *The National Interest*, Summer 2001, p. 43.
9. Colin Powell, "Statement on International Education Week 2001."
10. Association of International Educators, "In America's Interest: Welcoming International Students," full report available at <http://www.nafsa.org/content/PublicPolicy/stf/inamericasinterest.htm>, see p. 5.

11. Beers quoted in Leonard, *Public Diplomacy* (London: Central Books, 2003), p. 19.
12. Yale Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), pp. 22–32.
13. Edward Rothstein, “Damning (Yet Desiring) Mickey and the Big Mac,” *New York Times*, March 2, 2002, p. A17.
14. Ben Wattenberg, *The First Universal Nation* (New York: Free Press, 1991), p. 213.
15. Carl Sandburg, quoted in Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), p. 222.
16. Pew Global Attitudes Project, *Views of a Changing World June 2003* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2003), pp. 22–23.
17. For an early example, see John R. P. French and Bertram Raven, “Bases of Social Power,” in *Group Dynamics: Research and Theory*, 3rd ed., Dorwin Cartwright and Alvin Zander, eds. (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), pp. 259–69.
18. Milos Forman, “Red Spring Episode 14: The Sixties,” interview. Quoted in Matthew Kohut, “The Role of American Soft Power in the Democratization of Czechoslovakia,” unpublished paper, April 2003.
19. National Research Council, *Making the Nation Safer* (Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2002), p. 25.
20. For details see Joseph Nye, *The Paradox of American Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), chapter 2.
21. Walter Laquer, “Left, Right and Beyond: The Changing Face of Terror,” in *How Did This Happen?* James Hoge and Gideon Rose, eds. (New York: PublicAffairs, 2001) p. 74.
22. See Robert Cooper, *The Postmodern State and the World Order* (Foreign Policy Centre, 2000), and Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-*

THE INTERNET AND THE UNIVERSITY

Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting (first published in 1976; paperback edition with new foreword, New York: Basic Books, 1999), foreword, passim.

Joseph Nye is University Distinguished Service Professor at Harvard University.