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Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics

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example, in eighteenth-century Europe, population was a critical power resource because it provided a base for taxes and the recruitment of infantry. At the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, Prussia presented its fellow victors at the Congress of Vienna with a precise plan for its own reconstruction with territories and populations to be transferred to maintain a balance of power against France. In the prenationalist period, it did not matter that many of the people in those transferred provinces did not speak German. However, within half a century popular sentiments of nationalism had grown greatly, and Germany's seizure of Alsace and Lorraine from France in 1870 became one of the underlying causes of World War I. Instead of being assets, the transferred provinces became liabilities in the changed context of nationalism. In short, power resources cannot be judged without knowing the context. Before you judge who is holding the high cards, you need to understand what game you are playing and how the value of the cards may be changing.

For example, the distribution of power resources in the contemporary information age varies greatly on different issues. We are told that the United States is the only superpower in a "unipolar" world. But the context is far more complex than first meets the eye. The agenda of world politics has become like a three-dimensional chess game in which one can win only by playing vertically as well as horizontally. On the top board of classic interstate military issues, the United States is indeed the only superpower with global military reach, and it makes sense to speak in traditional terms of unipolarity or hegemony. However, on the middle board of interstate economic issues, the distribution of power is multipolar. The United States cannot obtain the outcomes it wants on trade, antitrust, or financial regulation issues without the agreement of the European Union, Japan, China, and others. It makes little sense to call this American hegemony. And on the bottom board of transnational issues like terrorism, international crime, climate change, and the spread of infectious diseases, power is widely distributed and chaotically organized among state and nonstate actors. It makes no sense at all to call this a unipolar world or an American empire—despite the claims of propa-

gandists on the right and left. And this is the set of issues that is now intruding into the world of grand strategy. Yet many political leaders still focus almost entirely on military assets and classic military solutions—the top board. They mistake the necessary for the sufficient. They are one-dimensional players in a three-dimensional game. In the long term, that is the way to lose, since obtaining favorable outcomes on the bottom transnational board often requires the use of soft power assets.

SOFT 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, and not only to 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.⁵

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. And in the business world, smart executives know that leadership is not just a matter of issuing commands, but 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.⁶

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 use carrots or sticks 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 merely the same as influence. After all, influence can also rest on the hard power of threats or payments. And soft power is more than just 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 preferences 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 appeal to our shared values about the justness of contributing to those shared values and purposes.⁷ 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—an intangible attraction that persuades us to go along with others' purposes without any explicit threat or exchange taking place.

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 range along a spectrum from coercion to economic inducement to agenda setting to pure attraction. 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 can also 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.⁸

	Hard	Soft
Spectrum of Behaviors	Command ← coercion → inducement →	agenda setting → attraction → Co-opt
Most Likely Resources	force sanctions payments bribes	institutions values culture policies

Power

In international politics, the resources that produce soft power arise in large part from the values an organization or country expresses in its culture, in the examples it sets by its internal practices and policies, and in the way it handles its relations with others. Governments sometimes find it difficult to control and employ soft power, but that does not diminish its importance. It was a former French foreign minister who observed that the 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."⁹ Soft power is an important reality. Even the great British realist E. H. Carr, writing in 1939, described international power in three categories: military, economic, and power over opinion.¹⁰ Those who deny the importance of soft power are like people who do not understand the power of seduction.

During a meeting with President John F. Kennedy, the senior statesman John J. McCloy exploded in anger about paying attention

to popularity and attraction in world politics: "'World opinion'? I don't believe in world opinion. The only thing that matters is power." But like Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt, Kennedy understood that the ability to attract others and move opinion was an element of power.¹¹ He understood the importance of soft power.

As mentioned above, sometimes the same power resources can affect the entire spectrum of behavior from coercion to attraction. A country that suffers economic and military decline is likely to lose not only its hard-power resources but also some of its ability to shape the international agenda and some of its attractiveness. Some countries may be attracted to others with hard power by the myth of invincibility or inevitability. Both Hitler and Stalin tried to develop such myths. Hard power can also be used to establish empires and institutions that set the agenda for smaller states—witness Soviet rule over the countries of Eastern Europe. President Kennedy was properly concerned that although polls showed the United States to be more popular, they also showed a Soviet lead in perceptions of its space program and the strength of its nuclear arsenal.¹²

But soft power does not depend on hard power. The Vatican has soft power despite Stalin's mocking question "How many divisions does the Pope have?" The Soviet Union once had a good deal of soft power, but it lost much of it after the invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Soviet soft power declined even as its hard economic and military resources continued to grow. Because of its brutal policies, the Soviet Union's hard power actually undercut its soft power. In contrast, the Soviet sphere of influence in Finland was reinforced by a degree of soft power. Similarly, the United States' sphere of influence in Latin America in the 1930s was reinforced when Franklin Roosevelt added the soft power of his "good neighbor policy."¹³

Sometimes countries enjoy political clout that is greater than their military and economic weight would suggest because they define their national interest to include attractive causes such as economic aid or peacemaking. For example, in the past two decades

Norway has taken a hand in peace talks in the Philippines, the Balkans, Colombia, Guatemala, Sri Lanka, and the Middle East. Norwegians say this grows out of their Lutheran missionary heritage, but at the same time the posture of peacemaker identifies Norway with values shared by other nations that enhance Norway's soft power. Foreign Minister Jan Petersen argued that "we gain some access," explaining that Norway's place at so many negotiating tables elevates its usefulness and value to larger countries.¹⁴

Michael Ignatieff describes the position of Canada from a similar point of view: "Influence derives from three assets: moral authority as a good citizen which we have got some of, military capacity which we have got a lot less of, and international assistance capability." With regard to the United States, "we have something they want. They need legitimacy."¹⁵ That in turn can increase Canada's influence when it bargains with its giant neighbor. The Polish government decided to send troops to postwar Iraq not only to curry favor with the United States but also as a way to create a broader positive image of Poland in world affairs. When the Taliban government fell in Afghanistan in 2001, the Indian foreign minister flew to Kabul to welcome the new interim government in a plane not packed with arms or food but crammed with tapes of Bollywood movies and music, which were quickly distributed across the city.¹⁶ As we shall see in chapter 3, many countries have soft-power resources.

Institutions can enhance a country's soft power. For example, Britain in the nineteenth century and the United States in the second half of the twentieth century advanced their values by creating a structure of international rules and institutions that were consistent with the liberal and democratic nature of the British and American economic systems: free trade and the gold standard in the case of Britain; the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, and the United Nations in the case of the United States. When countries make their power legitimate in the eyes of others, they encounter less resistance to their wishes. If a country's culture and ideology are attractive, others more willingly follow. If a country can shape international rules that are consistent with its interests

and values, its actions will more likely appear legitimate in the eyes of others. If it uses institutions and follows rules that encourage other countries to channel or limit their activities in ways it prefers, it will not need as many costly carrots and sticks.

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 that it creates. 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."¹⁷

Some analysts treat soft power simply as popular cultural power. They make the mistake of equating soft power behavior with the cultural resources that sometimes help produce it. They confuse the cultural resources with the behavior of attraction. For example, the historian Niall Ferguson describes soft power as "nontraditional forces such as cultural and commercial goods" and then dismisses it

on the grounds "that it's, well, soft."¹⁸ Of course, Coke and Big Macs do not necessarily attract people in the Islamic world to love the United States. The North Korean dictator Kim Jong Il is alleged to like pizza and American videos, but that does not affect his nuclear programs. Excellent wines and cheeses do not guarantee attraction to France, nor does the popularity of Pokémon games assure that Japan will get the policy outcomes it wishes.

This is not to deny that popular culture is often a resource that produces soft power, but as we saw earlier, the effectiveness of any power resource depends on the context. Tanks are not a great military power resource in swamps or jungles. Coal and steel are not major power resources if a country lacks an industrial base. Serbs eating at McDonald's supported Milosevic, and Rwandans committed atrocities while wearing T-shirts with American logos. American films that make the United States attractive in China or Latin America may have the opposite effect and actually reduce American soft power in Saudi Arabia or Pakistan. But in general, polls show that our popular culture has made the United States seem to others "exciting, exotic, rich, powerful, trend-setting—the cutting edge of modernity and innovation."¹⁹ And such images have appeal "in an age when people want to partake of the good life American-style, even if as political citizens, they are aware of the downside for ecology, community, and equality."²⁰ For example, in explaining a new movement toward using lawsuits to assert rights in China, a young Chinese activist explained, "We've seen a lot of Hollywood movies—they feature weddings, funerals and going to court. So now we think it's only natural to go to court a few times in your life."²¹ If American objectives include the strengthening of the legal system in China, such films may be more effective than speeches by the American ambassador about the importance of the rule of law.

As we will see in the next chapter, the background attraction (and repulsion) of American popular culture in different regions and among different groups may make it easier or more difficult for American officials to promote their policies. In some cases, such as

Iran, the same Hollywood images that repel the ruling mullahs may be attractive to the younger generation. In China, the attraction and rejection of American culture among different groups may cancel each other out.

Commerce is only one of the ways in which culture is transmitted. It also occurs 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.

Government policies at home and abroad are another potential source of soft power. For example, in the 1950s racial segregation at home undercut American soft power in Africa, and today the practice of capital punishment and weak gun control laws undercut American soft power in Europe. Similarly, foreign policies strongly affect soft power. Jimmy Carter's human rights policies are a case in point, as were government efforts to promote democracy in the Reagan and Clinton administrations. In Argentina, American human rights policies that were rejected by the military government of the 1970s produced considerable soft power for the United States two decades later, when the Peronists who were earlier imprisoned subsequently came to power. Policies can have long-term as well as short-term effects that vary as the context changes. The popularity of the United States in Argentina in the early 1990s reflected Carter's policies of the 1970s, and it led the Argentine government to support American policies in the UN and in the Balkans.

Nonetheless, American soft power eroded significantly after the context changed again later in the decade when the United States failed to rescue the Argentine economy from its collapse.

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.²²

The 2003 Iraq War is not the first policy action that has made the United States unpopular. As we will see in the next chapter, three decades ago, many people around the world objected to America's war in Vietnam, and the standing of the United States reflected the unpopularity of that policy. When the policy changed and the memories of the war receded, the United States recovered much of its lost soft power. Whether the same thing will happen in the aftermath of the Iraq War will depend on the success of policies in Iraq, developments in the Israel-Palestine conflict, and many other factors.

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 or attraction are simply that, not power. As we have seen, some imitation or attraction does not produce much power over policy outcomes, and neither 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 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.²³

Soft power is also likely to be more important when power is dispersed in another country rather than concentrated. A dictator cannot be totally indifferent to the views of the people in his country, but he can often ignore whether another country is popular or not when he calculates whether it is in his interests to be helpful. In democracies where public opinion and parliaments matter, political leaders have less leeway to adopt tactics and strike deals than in autocracies. Thus it was impossible for the Turkish government to permit the transport of American troops across the country in 2003 because American policies had greatly reduced our popularity in public opinion and in the parliament. In contrast, it was far easier for the United States to obtain the use of bases in authoritarian Uzbekistan for operations in Afghanistan.

Finally, though soft power sometimes has direct effects on specific goals—witness the inability of the United States to obtain the votes of Chile or Mexico in the UN Security Council in 2003 after our policies reduced our popularity—it is more likely to have an impact on the general goals that a country seeks.²⁴ Fifty years ago, Arnold Wolfers distinguished between the specific “possession goals”

that countries pursue, and their broader “milieu goals,” like shaping an environment conducive to democracy.²⁵ Successful pursuit of both types of goals is important in foreign policy. If one considers various American national interests, for example, soft power may be less relevant than hard power in preventing attack, policing borders, and protecting allies. But soft power is particularly relevant to the realization of “milieu goals.” It has a crucial role to play in promoting democracy, human rights, and open markets. It is easier to attract people to democracy than to coerce them to be democratic. The fact that the impact of attraction on achieving preferred outcomes varies by context and type of goals does not make it irrelevant, any more than the fact that bombs and bayonets do not help when we seek to prevent the spread of infectious diseases, slow global warming, or create democracy.

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 recounts 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.”²⁶

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. And this is particularly true since private sources of soft power are likely to become increasingly important in the global information age.

Finally, some skeptics argue that popularity measured by opinion polls is ephemeral and thus not to be taken seriously. Of course, one must be careful not to read too much into opinion polls. They are an essential but imperfect measure of soft-power resources because answers vary depending on the way that questions are formulated, and unless the same questions are asked consistently over some period, they represent snapshots rather than a continuous picture. Opinions can change, and such volatility cannot be captured by any one poll. Moreover, political leaders must often make unpopular decisions because they are the right thing to do, and hope that their popularity may be repaired if the decision is subsequently proved correct. Popularity is not an end in itself in foreign policy. Nonetheless, polls are a good first approximation of both how attractive a country appears and the costs that are incurred by unpopular policies, particularly when they show consistency across polls and over time. And as we shall see in the next chapter, that attractiveness can have an effect on our ability to obtain the outcomes we want in the world.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF MILITARY POWER

In the twentieth century, science and technology added dramatic new dimensions to power resources. With the advent of the nuclear age, the United States and the Soviet Union possessed not only industrial might but nuclear arsenals and intercontinental missiles. The age of the superpowers had begun. Subsequently, the leading role of the United States in the information revolution near the end of the century allowed it to create a revolution in military affairs. The ability to use information technology to create precision weapons, real-time intelligence, broad surveillance of regional battlefields, and improved command and control allowed the United States to surge ahead as the world's only military superpower.

But the progress of science and technology had contradictory effects on military power over the past century. On the one hand, it

made the United States the world's only superpower, with unmatched military might, but at the same time it gradually increased the political and social costs of using military force for conquest. Paradoxically, nuclear weapons were acceptable for deterrence, but they proved so awesome and destructive that they became muscle-bound—too costly to use in war except, theoretically, in the most extreme circumstances.²⁷ Non-nuclear North Vietnam prevailed over nuclear America, and non-nuclear Argentina was not deterred from attacking the British Falkland Islands despite Britain's nuclear status.

A second important change was the way that modern communications technology fomented the rise and spread of nationalism, which made it more difficult for empires to rule over socially awakened populations. In the nineteenth century, Britain ruled a quarter of the globe with a tiny fraction of the world's population. As nationalism grew, colonial rule became too expensive and the British empire collapsed. Formal empires with direct rule over subject populations such as Europe exercised during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are simply too costly in the twenty-first century.

In addition to nuclear and communications technology, social changes inside the large democracies also raised the costs of using military power. Postindustrial democracies are focused on welfare rather than glory, and they dislike high casualties. This does not mean that they will not use force, even when casualties are expected—witness Britain, France, and the United States in the 1991 Gulf War, and Britain and the United States in the 2003 Iraq War. But the absence of a prevailing warrior ethic in modern democracies means that the use of force requires an elaborate moral justification to ensure popular support, unless actual survival is at stake. For advanced democracies, war remains possible, but it is much less acceptable than it was a century, or even a half century, ago.²⁸ The most powerful states have lost much of the lust to conquer.²⁹

Robert Kagan has correctly pointed out that these social changes have gone further in Europe than the United States, although his clever phrase that Americans are from Mars and Europeans from Venus oversimplifies the differences.³⁰ After all, Europeans joined in

point that the effects on nonstate actors and recruitment to terrorist organization do not depend on government attitudes. Already in 2002, well before the Iraq War, reactions against heavy-handed American policies on the Korean peninsula had led to a dramatic drop over the past three years in the percentage of the Korean population favoring an American alliance, from 89 to only 56 percent.⁵⁶ That will complicate dealing with the dangerous case of North Korea. Whether in the Middle East or in East Asia, hard and soft power are inextricably intertwined in today's world.

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.⁵⁷ 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 nearly half of the world's Internet users. Though English may

	Behaviors	Primary Currencies	Government Policies
Military Power	coercion deterrence protection	threats force	coercive diplomacy war alliance
Economic Power	inducement coercion	payments sanctions	aid bribes sanctions
Soft Power	attraction agenda setting	values culture policies institutions	public diplomacy bilateral and multilateral diplomacy

Three Types of Power

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.

This political game in a global information age suggests that the relative importance of soft power will increase. The countries that are 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, as we shall see in chapter 3.

The soft power that is becoming more important in the information age is in part a social and economic by-product rather than solely a result of official government action. Nonprofit 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. But there is a danger that the United States may obscure the deeper message of its values through arrogance. As we shall see in the next chapter, 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. Smart power means learning better how to combine our hard and soft power.

Sources of American Soft Power

THE UNITED STATES has many resources that can potentially provide soft power, particularly when one considers the ways in which economic prowess contributes not only to wealth but also to reputation and attractiveness. Not only is America the world's largest economy, but nearly half of the top 500 global companies are American, five times as many as next-ranked Japan.¹ Sixty-two of the top 100 global brands are American, as well as eight of the top ten business schools.²

Social indices show a similar pattern. Consider the following:

- * The United States attracts nearly six times the inflow of foreign immigrants as second-ranked Germany.³
- * The United States is far and away the world's number one exporter of films and television programs, although India's "Bollywood" actually produces more movies per year.⁴
- * Of the 1.6 million students enrolled in universities outside their own countries, 28 percent are in the United States, compared to the 14 percent who study in Britain.⁵
- * More than 86,000 foreign scholars were in residence at American educational institutions in 2002.⁶

Other measures show that the United States . . .

5. I first introduced this concept in *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), chapter 2. It builds on what Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz called the "second face of power." See their "Decisions and Nondecisions: An Analytical Framework," *American Political Science Review* (September 1963), pp. 632-42.
6. I am indebted to Mark Moore for pointing this out to me.
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25. Ibid.
26. Milos Forman, "Red Spring Episode 14: The Sixties," interview, available at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/interviews/episode-14/forman1.html>. Quoted in Matthew Kohut, "The Role of American Soft Power in the Democratization of Czechoslovakia," unpublished paper, April 2003.
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CHAPTER 2:

SOURCES OF AMERICAN SOFT POWER

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