

The Changing Nature of Power

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.

WHAT IS POWER?

Power is like the weather. Everyone depends on it and talks about it, but few understand it. Just as farmers and meteorologists try to forecast the weather, political leaders and analysts try to describe and predict changes in power relationships. Power is also like love, easier to experience than to define or measure, but no less real for that. The dictionary tells us that power is the capacity to do things. At this most general level, power means the ability to get the outcomes one wants. The dictionary also tells us that power means having the

capabilities to affect the behavior of others to make those things happen. So more specifically, power is the ability to influence the behavior of others to get the outcomes one wants. But there are several ways to affect the behavior of others. You can coerce them with threats; you can induce them with payments; or you can attract and co-opt them to want what you want.

Some people think of power narrowly, in terms of command and coercion. You experience it when you can make others do what they would otherwise not do.¹ You say “Jump!” and they jump. This appears to be a simple test of power, but things are not as straightforward as they first appear. Suppose those whom you command, like my granddaughters, already love to jump? When we measure power in terms of the changed behavior of others, we have first to know their preferences. Otherwise we may be as mistaken about our power as a rooster who thinks his crowing makes the sun rise. And the power may evaporate when the context changes. The playground bully who terrorizes other children and makes them jump at his command loses his power as soon as the class returns from recess to a strict classroom. A cruel dictator can lock up or execute a dissident, but that may not prove his power if the dissenter was really seeking martyrdom. Power always depends on the context in which the relationship exists.²

Knowing in advance how others would behave in the absence of our commands is often difficult. What is more, as we shall see, sometimes we can get the outcomes we want by affecting behavior without commanding it. If you believe that my objectives are legitimate, I may be able to persuade you to do something for me without using threats or inducements. It is possible to get many desired outcomes without having much tangible power over others. For example, some loyal Catholics may follow the pope’s teaching on capital punishment not because of a threat of excommunication but out of respect for his moral authority. Or some radical Muslim fundamentalists may be attracted to support Osama bin Laden’s actions not because of payments or threats, but because they believe in the legitimacy of his objectives.

Practical politicians and ordinary people often find these questions of behavior and motivation too complicated. Thus they turn to a second definition of power and simply define it as the possession of capabilities or resources that can influence outcomes. Consequently they consider a country powerful if it has a relatively large population and territory, extensive natural resources, economic strength, military force, and social stability. The virtue of this second definition is that it makes power appear more concrete, measurable, and predictable. But this definition also has problems. When people define power as synonymous with the resources that produce it, they sometimes encounter the paradox that those best endowed with power do not always get the outcomes they want.

Power resources are not as fungible as money. What wins in one game may not help at all in another. Holding a winning poker hand does not help if the game is bridge.³ Even if the game is poker, if you play your high hand poorly, you can still lose. Having power resources does not guarantee that you will always get the outcome you want. For example, in terms of resources the United States was far more powerful than Vietnam, yet we lost the Vietnam War. And America was the world's only superpower in 2001, but we failed to prevent September 11.

Converting resources into realized power in the sense of obtaining desired outcomes requires well-designed strategies and skillful leadership. Yet strategies are often inadequate and leaders frequently misjudge—witness Japan and Germany in 1941 or Saddam Hussein in 1990. As a first approximation in any game, it always helps to start by figuring out who is holding the high cards. But it is equally important to understand what game you are playing. Which resources provide the best basis for power behavior in a particular context? Oil was not an impressive power resource before the industrial age nor was uranium significant before the nuclear age.

In earlier periods, international power resources may have been easier to assess. A traditional test of a Great Power in international politics was “strength for war.”⁴ But over the centuries, as technologies evolved, the sources of strength for war often changed. For

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.

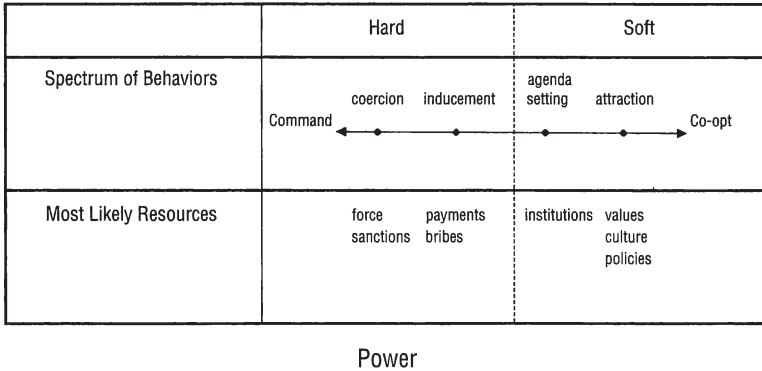
Soft power is not merely the same as influence. After all, influence can also rest on the hard power of threats or payments. And soft power is more than just persuasion or the ability to move people by argument, though that is an important part of it. It is also the ability to attract, and attraction 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 a 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



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 Peterson 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

pressing for the use of force in Kosovo in 1999, and the Iraq War demonstrated that there were Europeans from Mars and Americans who preferred Venus. Nonetheless, the success of the European countries in creating an island of peace on the continent that had been ravaged by three Franco-German wars in less than a century may predispose them toward more peaceful solutions to conflict.

However, in a global economy even the United States must consider how the use of force might jeopardize its economic objectives. After its victory in World War II the United States helped to restructure Japan's economy, but it is hard to imagine that the United States today could effectively threaten force to open Japanese markets or change the value of the yen. Nor can one easily imagine the United States using force to resolve disputes with Canada or Europe. Unlike earlier periods, islands of peace where the use of force is no longer an option in relations among states have come to characterize relations among most modern liberal democracies, and not just in Europe. The existence of such islands of peace is evidence of the increasing importance of soft power where there are shared values about what constitutes acceptable behavior among similar democratic states. In their relations with each other, all advanced democracies are from Venus.

Even nondemocratic countries that feel fewer popular moral constraints on the use of force have to consider its effects on their economic objectives. War risks deterring investors who control flows of capital in a globalized economy.³¹ A century ago, it may have been easier to seize another state's territory by force than "to develop the sophisticated economic and trading apparatus needed to derive benefit from commercial exchange with it."³² But it is difficult to imagine a scenario today in which, for example, Japan would try to or succeed in using military force to colonize its neighbors. As two RAND analysts argue, "In the information age, 'cooperative' advantages will become increasingly important. Moreover, societies that improve their abilities to cooperate with friends and allies may also gain competitive advantages against rivals."³³

None of this is to suggest that military force plays no role in international politics today. On the contrary, the information revolution has yet to transform most of the world, and many states are unconstrained by democratic societal forces. Civil wars are rife in many parts of the world where collapsed empires left failed states and power vacuums. Even more important is the way in which the democratization of technology is leading to the privatization of war. Technology is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, technological and social changes are making war more costly for modern democracies. But at the same time, technology is putting new means of destruction into the hands of extremist groups and individuals.

TERRORISM AND THE PRIVATIZATION OF WAR

Terrorism is not new, nor is it a single enemy. It is a long-standing method of conflict frequently defined as deliberate attack on non-combatants 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.³⁴

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 providing 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.³⁵ 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 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 has 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."³⁶

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 wide following outside the Islamic community, but that community provides a large pool of 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. Technological 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 who 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 homegrown 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 out of 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 over 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, 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 juris-

dictions, and with global audiences. As we will see in chapter 3, many terrorists 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. And that is a mistake, because it is through soft power that terrorists gain general support as well as new recruits.

THE INTERPLAY OF HARD AND SOFT POWER

Hard and soft power sometimes reinforce and sometimes interfere with each other. A country that courts popularity may be loath to exercise its hard power when it should, but a country that throws its weight around without regard to the effects on its soft power may find others placing obstacles in the way of its hard power. No country likes to feel manipulated, even by soft power. At the same time, as mentioned earlier, hard power can create myths of invincibility or inevitability that attract others. In 1961, President John F. Kennedy went ahead with nuclear testing despite negative polls because he worried about global perceptions of Soviet gains in the arms race. Kennedy “was willing to sacrifice some of America’s ‘soft’ prestige in return for gains in the harder currency of military prestige.”³⁷ On a lighter note, it is amusing that in 2003, just a few months after massive antiwar protests in London and Milan, fashion shows in those cities used models in U.S. military commando gear exploding balloons. As one designer put it, American symbols “are still the strongest security blanket.”³⁸

Throughout history, weaker states have often joined together to balance and limit the power of a stronger state that threatens. But not always. Sometimes the weak are attracted to jumping on the bandwagon led by a strong country, particularly when they have little choice or when the large country’s military power is accompanied

by soft power. Moreover, as we saw earlier, hard power can sometimes have an attractive or soft side. As Osama bin Laden put it in one of his videos, "When people see a strong horse and a weak horse, by nature, they will like the strong horse."³⁹ And to deliberately mix the metaphor, people are more likely to be sympathetic to underdogs than to bet on them.

The 2003 Iraq War provides an interesting example of the interplay of the two forms of power. Some of the motives for war were based on the deterrent effect of hard power. Donald Rumsfeld is reported to have entered office believing that the United States "was seen around the world as a paper tiger, a weak giant that couldn't take a punch" and determined to reverse that reputation.⁴⁰ America's military victory in the first Gulf War had helped to produce the Oslo process on Middle East peace, and its 2003 victory in Iraq might eventually have a similar effect. Moreover, states like Syria and Iran might be deterred in their future support of terrorists. These were all hard power reasons to go to war. But another set of motives related to soft power. The neoconservatives believed that American power could be used to export democracy to Iraq and transform the politics of the Middle East. If successful, the war would become self-legitimizing. As William Kristol and Lawrence Kaplan put it, "What is wrong with dominance in the service of sound principles and high ideals?"⁴¹

Part of the contest about going to war in Iraq became a struggle over the legitimacy of the war. Even when a military balance of power is impossible (as at present, with America the only superpower), other countries can still band together to deprive the U.S. policy of legitimacy and thus weaken American soft power. France, Russia, and China chafed at American military unipolarity and urged a more multipolar world. In Charles Krauthammer's view, Iraq "provided France an opportunity to create the first coherent challenge to that dominance."⁴² Even without directly countering the superpower's military power, the weaker states hoped to deter the U.S. by making it more costly for us to use our hard power.⁴³ They were not able to prevent the United States from going to war,

but by depriving the United States of the legitimacy of a second Security Council resolution, they certainly made it more expensive.

Soft balancing was not limited to the UN arena. Outside the UN, diplomacy and peace movements helped transform the global debate from the sins of Saddam to the threat of American empire. That made it difficult for allied countries to provide bases and support and thus cut into American hard power. As noted earlier, the Turkish parliament's refusal to allow transport of ground troops and Saudi Arabia's reluctance to allow American use of air bases that had been available in 1991 are cases in point.

Since the global projection of American military force in the future will require access and overflight rights from other countries, such soft balancing can have real effects on hard power. When support for America becomes a serious vote loser, even friendly leaders are less likely to accede to our requests. In addition, bypassing the UN raised the economic costs to the United States after the war, leading the columnist Fareed Zakaria to observe, "The imperial style of foreign policy is backfiring. At the end of the Iraq war the administration spurned any kind of genuine partnership with the world. It pounded away at the United Nations."⁴⁴

In the summer of 2003, the Bush administration's initial resistance to a significant role for the United Nations in the reconstruction of Iraq is estimated to have cost the United States more than \$100 billion, or about \$1,000 per American household. In most major peacekeeping missions, the UN covers most of the expenses for countries that contribute troops. In the 1991 Gulf War, the broad coalition assembled by President George H. W. Bush covered 80 percent of the costs, and during the Clinton interventions abroad, the United States shouldered only 15 percent of the reconstruction and peacekeeping costs.⁴⁵ But without a UN mandate, some countries refused to participate in peacekeeping in Iraq, and for those who did—countries such as Poland, Ukraine, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, and others—it was estimated that the United States would have to spend \$250 million to help underwrite their participation.⁴⁶

Some neoconservatives argued that the solution was to avoid the UN and to deny its legitimacy. For some, thwarting the UN was a gain.⁴⁷ They viewed the Iraq War as a “twofer”: it removed Saddam and damaged the UN. Some urged the creation of an alliance of democracies to replace the UN. But such responses ignore the fact that the key divisions were among the democracies, and the United States can influence but not alone determine international views of the legitimacy of the UN. Moreover, soft balancing that puts pressure on parliaments in democracies can be conducted outside the framework of the UN. The Internet has allowed protests to be quickly mobilized by free-wheeling amorphous groups, rather than hierarchical organizations. In the Vietnam era, planning a protest required weeks and months of pamphlets, posters, and phone calls, and it took four years before the size of the protest rallies, 25,000 at first, reached half a million in 1969. In contrast, 800,000 people turned out in the United States and 1.5 million in Europe on one weekend in February 2003 before the start of the war.⁴⁸

Protests do not represent the “international community,” but they do often affect the attitudes of editorial writers, parliamentarians, and other influential people in important countries whose views are summarized by that vague phrase.⁴⁹ Though the concept of an international community may be imprecise, even those who dismissed international concerns about how the United States entered the war seem to appeal to such opinion when they argue that the legitimacy of American actions will be accepted after the fact if we produce a better Iraq. Such post hoc legitimization may help to restore American soft power that was lost on the way in, but it also shows that legitimacy matters. And in the difficult cases of Iran and North Korea, it is worth noting that President Bush appealed to the views of the “international community” that some of his advisors dismissed as “illusory.”⁵⁰ The continual contest for legitimacy illustrates the importance of soft power. Morality can be a power reality.

The initial effect of the Iraq War on opinion in the Islamic world was quite negative. Al Jazeera television (the soft-power resource owned by the same government of Qatar that provided head-

quarters for American hard power) showed bloody pictures of civilian casualties night after night. An Egyptian parliamentarian observed, "You can't imagine how the military strikes on Baghdad and other cities are provoking people every night."⁵¹ In Pakistan, a former diplomat reported that "the US invasion of Iraq is a complete gift to the Islamic parties. People who would otherwise turn up their noses at them are now flocking to their banner."⁵² American intelligence and law enforcement officials reported that Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups intensified their recruitment on three continents by "tapping into rising anger about the American campaign for war in Iraq."⁵³ After the war, polls found a rise in support for bin Laden and a fall in the popularity of the United States even in friendly countries such as Indonesia and Jordan.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, in Europe polls showed that the way the United States went about the Iraq War had dissipated the outflow of sympathy and goodwill that had followed the September 11 events. It is still too soon to tell whether the hard-power gains from the war in Iraq will in the long run exceed the soft-power losses, or how permanent the latter will turn out to be, but the war provided a fascinating case study of the interaction of the two types of power.

Looking to the future, much will depend on the effectiveness of American policies in creating a better Iraq and moving the Middle East peace process forward. In addition, much will depend on whether the intelligence failures and political exaggeration of intelligence evidence will have a permanent damaging effect on the credibility of the American government when it approaches other countries for help on cases like Iran and North Korea, as well as in the war on terrorism. As the British weekly *The Economist* observed, "The spies erred and the politicians exaggerated. . . . The war, we think, was justified. But in making the case for it, Mr Bush and Mr Blair did not play straight with their people."⁵⁵

Skeptics argue that because countries cooperate out of self-interest, the loss of soft power does not matter much. But the skeptics miss the point that cooperation is a matter of degree, and that degree is affected by attraction or repulsion. They also miss the

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.