**1 Hard and Soft Power in a Global Information Age**

Joseph Nye

The nature of power in world politics is changing. Power is the ability to effect the outcomes you want, and, if necessary, to change the behaviour of others to make this happen. In the 21st century, under the influence of the information revolution and globalisation, the sources and distribution of power are being transformed in a profound way. Non-state actors have gained greater power and, as a result, more activities are outside the control of even the most powerful states. The recent terrorist attacks on New York and Washington dramatised this change. 11 September 2001 also showed us that there is no alternative to mobilising international coalitions and building institutions to address shared threats and challenges. More than ever before, the United States – and others – will have to include global interests in formulating their own national interests. No country today is great enough to solve the problem of global terrorism alone.

# The Role of Force

Traditionally, the test of a great power was ‘strength for war’.1 War was the ultimate game in which the cards of international politics were played and estimates of relative power were proven. Over the centuries, as technologies evolved, the sources of power have shifted. Today, the foundations of power have been moving away from the emphasis on military force and conquest. Paradoxically, nuclear weapons were one of the causes. As we know from the history of the Cold War, nuclear weapons proved so awesome and destructive that they became musclebound – too costly to use except, theoretically, in the most extreme circumstances.2 A second important change was the rise of nationalism, which has made it more difficult for empires to rule over awakened populations. In the 19th century, a few adventurers conquered most of

2

Africa with a handful of soldiers, and Britain ruled India with a colonial force that was a tiny fraction of the indigenous population. Today, colonial rule is not only widely condemned but far too costly, as both Cold War superpowers discovered in Vietnam and Afghanistan. The collapse of the Soviet empire followed the end of the European empires by a matter of decades.

A third important cause is social change inside great powers. Postindustrial societies are focused on welfare rather than glory, and they loathe high casualties, except when survival is at stake. This does not mean that they will not use force, even when casualties are expected – witness the 1991 Gulf War and US and allied military involvement in Afghanistan today. But the absence of a warrior ethic in modern democracies means that the use of force requires an elaborate moral justification to ensure popular support. Roughly speaking, there are three types of countries in the world today: poor, weak pre-industrial states, which are often the chaotic remnants of collapsed empires; modernising industrial states such as India or China; and the postindustrial societies that prevail in Europe, North America, and Japan. The use of force is common in the first type of country, still accepted in the second, but less tolerated in the third. In the words of British diplomat Robert Cooper, “a large number of the most powerful states no longer want to fight or conquer”.3 War remains possible, but it is much less acceptable now than it was a century or even half a century ago.4

Finally, for most of today’s great powers, the use of force would jeopardise their economic objectives. Even non-democratic countries that feel fewer popular moral constraints on the use of force have to consider its effects on their economic objectives. As Thomas Friedman has put it, countries are disciplined by an “electronic herd” of investors who control their access to capital in a globalised economy.5

None of this is to suggest that military force plays no role in international politics today. For one thing, the information revolution

3

has yet to transform most of the world. Many states are unconstrained by democratic social forces, as Kuwait learned from its neighbour Iraq, and terrorist groups pay little heed to the normal constraints of liberal societies. Civil wars are rife in many parts of the world where collapsed empires left power vacuums. Moreover, throughout history, the rise of new great powers has been accompanied by anxieties that have sometimes precipitated military crises. In Thucydides’ immortal description, the Peloponnesian War in ancient Greece was caused by the rise to power of Athens and the fear it created in Sparta.6 World War I owed much to the rise of the Kaiser’s Germany and the fear this created in Britain.7 Some foretell a similar dynamic in this century arising from the rise of China and the fear it creates in the United States.

Geo-economics has not replaced geopolitics, although in the early 21st century there has clearly been a blurring of the traditional boundaries between the two. To ignore the role of force and the centrality of security would be like ignoring oxygen. Under normal circumstances, oxygen is plentiful and we pay it little attention. But once those conditions change and we begin to miss it, we can focus on nothing else.8 Even in those areas where the direct employment of force falls out of use among countries – for instance, within western Europe or between the United States and Japan – non-state actors such as terrorists may use force. With that said, economic power *has* become more important than in the past, both because of the relative increase in the costliness of force and because economic objectives loom larger in the values of post-industrial societies.9 In a world of economic globalisation, all countries are to some extent dependent on market forces beyond their direct control.

# Soft Power

Military power and economic power are both examples of hard command power that can be used to induce others to change their position. Hard power can rest on inducements (carrots) or threats (sticks). But there is also an indirect way to exercise power. A country

4

may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries want to follow it, admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness. In this sense, it is just as important to set the agenda in world politics and attract others as it is to force them to change through the threat or use of military or economic weapons. This aspect of power getting others to want what you want I call soft power.10 It co-opts people rather than coerces them.

Soft power rests on the ability to set the political agenda in a way that shapes the preferences of others. At the personal level, wise parents know that if they have brought up their children with the right beliefs and values, their power will be greater and will last longer than if they have relied only on spankings, cutting off allowances, or taking away the car keys. Similarly, political leaders and thinkers such as Antonio Gramsci have long understood the power that comes from setting the agenda and determining the framework of a debate. The ability to establish preferences tends to be associated with intangible power resources such as an attractive culture, ideology, and institutions. If I can get you to want to do what I want, then I do not have to force you to do what you do not want to do. If a country represents values that others want to follow, it will cost us less to lead. Soft power is not merely the same as influence, though it is one source of influence. After all, I can also influence you by threats or rewards. Soft power is also more than persuasion or the ability to move people by argument. It is the ability to entice and attract. And attraction often leads to acquiescence or imitation.

Of course, hard and soft power are related and can reinforce each other. Both are aspects of the ability to achieve our purposes by affecting the behaviour of others. Sometimes the same power resources can affect the entire spectrum of behaviour from coercion to attraction.11 A country that suffers economic and military decline is likely to lose its ability to shape the international agenda as well as its attractiveness. And some countries may be attracted to others with hard power by the

5

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.

But soft power is not simply the reflection of hard power. The Vatican did not lose its soft power when it lost the Papal States in Italy in the 19th century. Conversely, the Soviet Union lost much of its soft power after it invaded Hungary and Czechoslovakia, even though its economic and military resources continued to grow. Imperious policies that utilised Soviet hard power actually undercut its soft power. And some countries such as Canada, the Netherlands, and the Scandinavian states have political clout that is greater than their military and economic weight, because of the incorporation of attractive causes such as economic aid or peacekeeping into their definitions of national interest.

# Soft power in an information age

The countries that are likely to gain soft power in an information age are (1) those whose dominant culture and ideas are closer to prevailing global norms (which now emphasise liberalism, pluralism, and autonomy), (2) those with the most access to multiple channels of communication and thus more influence over how issues are framed, and (3) those whose credibility is enhanced by their domestic and international performance. These dimensions of power in an information age suggest the growing importance of soft power in the mix of power resources, and a strong advantage to the United States and Europe.

Soft power is not brand new, nor was the United States the first government to try to utilise its culture to create soft power. After its defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, the French government sought to repair the nation’s shattered prestige by promoting its language and literature through the Alliance Française, created in 1883. “The projection of French culture abroad thus became a significant component of French diplomacy.”12 Italy, Germany, and others soon

6

followed suit. The advent of radio in the 1920s led many governments into the area of foreign language broadcasting, and in the 1930s, Nazi Germany perfected the propaganda film.

The American government was a latecomer to the idea of using American culture for the purposes of diplomacy. It established a Committee on Public Information during World War I but abolished it with the return of peace. By the late 1930s, the Roosevelt administration became convinced that “America’s security depended on its ability to speak to and to win the support of people in other countries”. With World War II and the Cold War, the government became more active, with official efforts such as the United States Information Agency, the Voice of America, the Fulbright programme, American libraries, lectures, and other programmes. But much soft power arises from social forces outside government control. Even before the Cold War, “American corporate and advertising executives, as well as the heads of Hollywood studios, were selling not only their products but also America’s culture and values, the secrets of its success, to the rest of the world”.13 Soft power is created partly by governments and partly in spite of them.

A decade ago some observers thought the close collaboration of government and industry in Japan would give it a lead in soft power in the information age. Japan could develop an ability to manipulate perceptions worldwide instantaneously and “destroy those that impede Japanese economic prosperity and cultural acceptance”.14 When Matsushita purchased MCA, its president said that movies critical of Japan would not be produced.15 Japanese media tried to break into world markets, and the government-owned NHK network began satellite broadcasts in English. The venture failed, however, as NHK’s reports seemed to lag behind those of commercial news organisations, and the network had to rely on CNN and ABC.16 This does not mean that Japan lacks soft power. On the contrary, its pop culture has great appeal to teenagers in Asia.17 But Japan’s culture remains much more inward-oriented than that of the United States.

7

To be sure, there are areas, such as the Middle East, where ambivalence about, or outright opposition to, American culture limits its soft power. All television in the Arab world used to be state-run until tiny Qatar allowed a new station, Al-Jazeera, to broadcast freely, and it proved wildly popular in the Middle East.18 Its uncensored images, ranging from Osama bin Laden to Tony Blair, have had a powerful political influence. Bin Laden’s ability to project a Robin Hood image enhanced his soft power with some Muslims around the globe. As an Arab journalist described the situation earlier, “Al-Jazeera has been for this intifada what CNN was to the Gulf War”.19 In the eyes of Islamic fundamentalists, the openness of western culture is repulsive. But for much of the world, including many moderates and young people, our culture still attracts. To the extent that official policies at home and abroad are consistent with democracy, human rights, openness, and respect for the opinions of others, the United States and Europe will benefit from the trends of this global information age, although pockets of fundamentalism will persist and react in some countries.

# Conclusion

Power in the global information age is becoming less tangible and less coercive, particularly among advanced countries, but most of the world does not consist of post-industrial societies, and that limits the transformation of power. Much of Africa and the Middle East remains locked in pre-industrial agricultural societies with weak institutions and authoritarian rulers. Other countries, such as China, India, and Brazil, are industrial economies analogous to parts of the West in the mid-20th century.20 In such a variegated world, all three sources of power – military, economic, and soft – remain relevant, although to different degrees in different relationships. However, if current economic and social trends continue, leadership in the information revolution and soft power will become more important in the mix.

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8

1. A. J. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), xxix.
2. Whether this would change with the proliferation of nuclear weapons to more states is hotly debated among theorists. Deterrence should work with most states, but the prospects of accident and loss of control would increase. For my views, see Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Nuclear Ethics* (New York: Free Press, 1986).
3. Robert Cooper, *The Postmodern State and the World Order* (London: Demos / The Foreign Policy Centre, 2000), 22.
4. John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (New York: Basic Books, 1989).
5. Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), chapter 6.
6. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner (London: Penguin, 1972), book I, chapter 1.
7. And in turn, as industrialisation progressed and railroads were built, Germany feared the rise of Russia.
8. Henry Kissinger portrays four international systems existing side by side: the West (and Western Hemisphere), marked by democratic peace; Asia, where strategic conflict is possible; the Middle East, marked by religious conflict; and Africa, where civil wars threaten weak postcolonial states. “America at the Apex”, *The National Interest*, summer 2001, 14.
9. Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Power and Interdependence*, 3rd ed. (New York: Longman, 2000), chapter 1.
10. For a more detailed discussion, see Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), chapter 2. This builds on what Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz called the “second face of power” in “Decisions and Nondecisions: An Analytical Framework,” *American Political Science Review*, September 1963, 632–42.
11. The distinction between hard and soft power is one of degree, both in the nature of the behaviour and in the tangibility of the resources. Both are aspects of the ability to achieve one’s purposes by affecting the behaviour of others. 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 ideology or the ability to manipulate the agenda of political choices in a manner that makes actors fail to express some preferences because they seem to be too unrealistic. The forms of behaviour between command and co-optive power range along a continuum: command power, coercion, inducement, agenda setting, attraction, co-optive power. Soft power resources tend to be associated with co-optive power behaviour, whereas hard power resources are usually associated with command behaviour. But the relationship is imperfect. For example, 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. But the general association is strong enough to allow the useful shorthand reference to hard and soft power.

9

1. Richard Pells, *Not Like Us* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 31–32.
2. Ibid., 33, xiii.
3. Jerome C. Glenn, ‘Japan: Cultural Power of the Future,’ *Nikkei Weekly*, December 7, 1992, 7.
4. ‘Multinational Movies: Questions on Politics,’ *New York Times*, November 27, 1990, D7.
5. ‘Japanese News Media Join Export Drive,’ *International Herald Tribune*, May 10, 1991; David Sanger, ‘NHK of Japan Ends Plan for Global News Service,’ *New York Times*, December 9, 1991.
6. Calvin Sims, ‘Japan Beckons and East Asia’s Youth Fall in Love,’ *New York Times*, December 5, 1999, A3; ‘Advance of the Amazonesu,’ *The Economist*, July 22, 2000, 61.
7. Mark Huband, ‘Egypt Tries to Tempt Back Broadcasters,’ *Financial Times* (London), March 7, 2000, 14.
8. John Kifner, ‘Tale of Two Uprisings,’ *New York Times*, November 18, 2000, A6.
9. See Cooper, *Postmodern State*, and Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1999) [original 1973].

10

**2 The Post-Modern State**

Robert Cooper

In 1989 the political systems of three centuries came to an end in Europe: the balance of power and the imperial urge. That year marked not just the end of the Cold War, but also, and more significantly, the end of a state system in Europe which dated from the Thirty Years War. 11 September showed us one of the implications of the change.

To understand the present, we must first understand the past, for the past is still with us. International order used to be based either on hegemony or on balance. Hegemony came first. In the ancient world, order meant empire. Those within the empire had order, culture and civilisation. Outside it lay barbarians, chaos and disorder. The image of peace and order through a single hegemonic power centre has remained strong ever since. Empires, however, are ill-designed for promoting change. Holding the empire together – and it is the essence of empires that they are diverse – usually requires an authoritarian political style; innovation, especially in society and politics, would lead to instability. Historically, empires have generally been static.

In Europe, a middle way was found between the stasis of chaos and the stasis of empire, namely the small state. The small state succeeded in establishing sovereignty, but only within a geographically limited jurisdiction. Thus domestic order was purchased at the price of international anarchy. The competition between the small states of Europe was a source of progress, but the system was also constantly threatened by a relapse into chaos on one side and by the hegemony of a single power on the other. The solution to this was the balance of power, a system of counter-balancing alliances which became seen as the condition of liberty in Europe. Coalitions were successfully put

The Post-Modern State 11