America's information edge

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Abstract:
The US has further solidified its position atop the world order with its decided edge in information technology. The old adage that 'knowledge is power' has never been more correct than in the age of high-speed computing and global communications. The utilization of this technology for political purpose is referred to as 'soft power.' Soft power would allow US diplomacy goals to be reached sans traditional economic or military resources.

Full Text:
THE POWER RESOURCE OF THE FUTURE

KNOWLEDGE, MORE than ever before, is power. The one country that can best lead the information revolution will be more powerful than any other. For the foreseeable future, that country is the United States. America has apparent strength in military power and economic production. Yet its more subtle comparative advantage is its ability to collect, process, act upon, and disseminate information, an edge that will almost certainly grow over the next decade. This advantage stems from Cold War investments and America's open society, thanks to which it dominates important communications and information processing technologies--space-based surveillance, direct broadcasting, high-speed computers--and has an unparalleled ability to integrate complex information systems.

This information advantage can help deter or defeat traditional military threats at relatively low cost. In a world in which the meaning of containment, the nuclear umbrella, and conventional deterrence have changed, the information advantage can strengthen the intellectual link between U. S. foreign policy and military power and offer new ways of maintaining leadership in alliances and ad hoc coalitions.

The information edge is equally important as a force multiplier of American diplomacy, including "soft power"--the attraction of American democracy and free markets.(1) The United States can use its information resources to engage China, Russia, and other powerful states in security dialogues to prevent them from becoming hostile. At the same time, its information edge can help prevent states like Iran and Iraq, already hostile, from becoming powerful. Moreover, it can bolster new democracies and communicate directly with those living under undemocratic regimes. This advantage is also important in efforts to prevent and resolve regional conflicts and deal with prominent post-Cold War dangers, including international crime, terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and damage to the global environment.

Yet two conceptual problems prevent the United States from realizing its potential. The first is that outmoded thinking clouds the appreciation of information as power. Traditional measures of military force, gross national product, population, energy, land, and minerals have continued to dominate discussions of the balance of power. These power resources still matter, and American leadership continues to depend on them as well as on the information edge. But these measures failed to anticipate the demise of the Soviet Union, and they are an equally poor means of forecasting for the exercise of American leadership into the next century.

In assessing power in the information age, the importance of technology, education, and institutional flexibility has risen, whereas that of geography, population, and raw materials has fallen. Japan adapted to these changes through growth in the 1980s far better than by pursuing territorial conquest in the 1930s. In neglecting information, traditional measures of the balance of power have failed to anticipate the key developments of the last decade: the Soviet Unions fall, Japan's rise, and the continuing prominence of the United States.

The second conceptual problem has been a failure to grasp the nature of information. It is easy to trace and forecast the growth of capabilities to process and exchange information. The information revolution, for example, clearly is in its formative stages, but one can foresee that the next step will involve the convergence of key technologies, such as digitization, computers, telephones, televisions, and precise global positioning. But to capture the implications of growing information capabilities, particularly the interactions among them, is far more difficult. Information power is also hard to categorize because it cuts across all other military,

economic, social, and political power resources, in some cases diminishing their strength, in others multiplying it.

The United States must adjust its defense and foreign policy strategy to reflect its growing comparative advantage in information resources. Part of this adjustment will entail purging conceptual vestiges. Some of the lingering Cold War inhibitions on sharing intelligence, for example, keep the United States from seizing new opportunities. Some of the adjustment will require innovation in existing institutions. Information agencies need not remain Cold War relics, as some in Congress describe them, but should be used as instruments that can be more powerful cost effective, and flexible than ever before. Likewise, the artificially sharp distinction between military and political assets has kept the United States from suppressing hate propaganda that has incited ethnic conflicts.

MILITARY CAPABILITY AND INFORMATION

THE CHARACTER OF U.S. Military forces is changing, perhaps much more rapidly than most appreciate, for, driven by the information revolution, a revolution in military affairs is at hand. This American-led revolution stems from advances in several technologies and, more important, from the ability to tie these developments together and build the doctrines, strategies, and tactics that take advantage of their technical potential.

ISR is the acronym for intelligence collection, surveillance, and reconnaissance. Advanced C41 refers to technologies and systems that provide command, control, communications, and computer processing. Perhaps the best-known advance is precision force, thanks to the videotapes of precision-guided munitions used in Operation Desert Storm. The latter is a broader concept than some imagine, for it refers to a general ability to use deadly violence with greater speed, range, and precision.

In part because of past investments, in part serendipitously, the United States leads other nations in each of these areas, and its rate of improvement will increase dramatically over the next decade. Sensors, for example, will give real-time continuous surveillance in all types of weather over large geographical areas. Fusing and processing information--making sense of the vast amount of data that can be gathered-will give U.S. forces what is called dominant battlespace knowledge, a wide asymmetry between what Americans and opponents know. With that, the United States will be able to prevail militarily, whether the arena is a triple-canopy jungle, an urban area, or similar to Desert Storm. Improvements in command-and-control systems and in other communication technologies--already funded and entering service-posit leaps in the ability to transfer information, imagery, and other data to operating forces in forms that are immediately usable. In short, the United States is integrating the technical advances of ISR, C41, and precision force. The emerging result is a system of systems that represents a qualitative change in U.S. military capabilities.

These technologies provide the ability to gather, sort, process, transfer, and display information about highly complex events that occur in wide geographic areas. However, this is important for more than fighting wars. In a rapidly changing world, information about what is occurring becomes a central commodity of international relations, just as the threat and use of military force was seen as the central power resource in an international system overshadowed by the potential clash of superpowers.

There has been an explosion of information. Yet some kinds of information--the accurate, timely, and comprehensible sort--are more valuable than others. Graphic video images of Rwandan refugees fleeing the horror of tribal hatreds may generate worldwide sympathy and demands for action. But precise knowledge of how many refugees are moving where, how, and under what conditions is critical for effective action.

Military information on the disposition, activity, and capabilities of military forces still ranks high in importance because military force is still perceived as the final arbiter of disagreements. More to the point, concerns that military force may be used still figure prominently in what states do.

The growing interdependence of the world does not necessarily establish greater harmony. It does, however, make military force a matter of interest to audiences outside the local theater. The direct use of military force no longer calls up the specter of escalation to global nuclear holocaust, but it remains a costly and dangerous activity. The Gulf War raised the price of oil worldwide. Russian military operations in Chechnya have influenced the political actions of Muslims from North Africa to Indonesia. The armed conflict in Bosnia colors the character and future of NATO and the United Nations. Military force tears the fabric of new interrelationships and conditions the political and economic behavior of nearly all nations. These considerations suggest a general framework within which the emerging military capabilities of the United States can be linked to its foreign policy.

The concept of deterrence undergirding the emerging American military system of systems envisions a military strong enough to thwart any foreign military action without incurring a commensurate military risk or cost. Those who contemplate a military clash with the United States will have to face the prospect that it will be able to halt and reverse any hostile action, with low risk to U.S. forces. The United States will not necessarily be able to deter or coerce every adversary. Deterrence and coercion depend on an imbalance of will as well as capabilities, and when a conflict involves interests absolutely vital to an adversary but peripheral to the United States, an opponent may not yield short of a complete American victory in battle. Still, the relationship between willpower and capabilities is reciprocal. Superior battlefield awareness cannot reduce the risk of casualties to zero, but it can keep that risk low enough to maintain the American public's support for the use of force. The ability to inflict high military costs in the early phases of a conflict can undermine an adversary's will, unity, and hope that it can prevail. Because the United States will be able to dominate in battle, it has to be prepared for efforts to test or undermine its resolve off the battlefield with terror and propaganda. But military force can deter the use of those instruments as well.

THE INFORMATION UMBRELLA

THE INFORMATION technologies driving America's emerging military capabilities may change classic deterrence theory. Threatening to use military force is not something Americans will do automatically or easily and has always had some undesirable side effects. In an era in which soft power increasingly influences international affairs, threats and the image of arrogance and

belligerence that tends to go with them undercut an image of reason, democracy, and open dialogue.

America's emerging military capabilities--particularly those that provide much more real-time understanding of what is taking place in a large geographical area--can help blunt this paradox. They offer, for example, far greater pre-crisis transparency. If the United States is willing to share this transparency, it will be better able to build opposing coalitions before aggression has occurred. But the effect may be more general, for all nations now operate in an ambiguous world, a context that is not entirely benign or soothing.

In this setting, the emerging U.S. capabilities suggest leverage with friends similar to what extended nuclear deterrence once offered. The nuclear umbrella provided a cooperative structure, linking the United States in a mutually beneficial way to a wide range of friends, allies, and neutral nations. It was a logical response to the central issue of international relations--the threat of Soviet aggression. Now the central issue is ambiguity about the type and degree of threats, and the basis for cooperation is the capacity to clarify and cut through that ambiguity.

The set of fuzzy guidelines and meanings the Cold War once provided has been replaced by a deeper ambiguity regarding international events. Because nearly all nations viewed the international system through Cold War lenses, they shared much the same understanding. To nations throughout the world, the character and complexities of a civil war in the Balkans would have been far less important than the fact of disruption there because the event itself could have triggered a military confrontation between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Details on the clashes between Chinese and Soviet border guards did not really matter; what counted was that a split had appeared in one of the world's great coalitions. Now the details of events seem to count more. With the organizing framework of the Cold War gone, the implications are harder to categorize, and aff nations want to know more about what is happening and why to help them decide how much it matters and what they should do about it. Coalition leadership for the foreseeable future will proceed less from the military capacity to crush any opponent and more from the ability quickly to reduce the ambiguity of violent situations) to respond flexibly, and to use force, where necessary, with precision and accuracy.

The core of these capabilities--dominant situational knowledge--is fungible and divisible. The United States can share all or part of its knowledge with whomever it chooses. Sharing would empower recipients to make better decisions in a less-than-benign world, and should they decide to fight, they could achieve the same kind of military dominance as the United States.

These capabilities point to what might be called an information umbrella. Like extended nuclear deterrence, they could form the foundation for a mutually beneficial relationship. The United States would provide situational awareness, particularly regarding military matters of interest to other nations. Other nations, because they could share this information about an event or crisis, would be more inclined to work with the United States.

The beginnings of such a relationship already exist. They were born in the Falklands conflict and are being developed today in the Balkans. At present, the United States provides the bulk of the situational awareness available to the Implementation Force, the U.N. Protection Force, NaTO members, and other nations involved in or concerned with the conflict there. It is possible to envision a similar central information role for the United States in other crises or potential military confrontations, from clarifying developments in the Spratly Islands to cutting through the ambiguity and confusion surrounding humanitarian operations in Cambodia and Rwanda. Accurate, real-time, situational awareness is the key to reaching agreement within coalitions on what to do and is essential to the effective use of military forces, whatever their roles and missions. As its capacity to provide this kind of information increases, America will increasingly be viewed as the natural coalition leader, not just because it happens to be the strongest but because it can provide the most important input for good decisions and effective action for other coalition members. Just as nuclear dominance was the key to coalition leadership in the old era, information dominance will be the key in the information age.

All this implies selectively sharing U. S. dominant battlespace knowledge, advanced C41, and precision force. Old-era thinking might recoil from such a prospect, and it would have to overcome long-established prejudices against being open and generous with what might broadly be called intelligence. In the past, two presumptions supported this reluctance: first, that providing too much of the best information risked disclosing and perhaps even losing the sources and methods used in obtaining it, and second, that sharing information would disclose what the United States did not know and reduce its status as a superpower.

These assumptions are now even more questionable than before. The United States is no longer in a zero-sum game that makes any disclosure of capabilities a potential loss for itself and a gain for an implacable opponent. The character of this growing prowess is different. For one thing, the disparity between the United States and other nations is quite marked. U.S. investment in ISR--particularly the high-leverage space-based aspects of this set of systems--encourage exceeds that of all other nations combined, and America leads by a considerable margin in C41 and precision force as well. It has already begun, systematically, to assemble the new system of systems and is well down the revolutionary path, while most nations have not yet even realized a revolution in military affairs is under way.

Some other nations could match what the United States will achieve, albeit not as early. The revolution is driven by technologies available worldwide. Digitization, computer processing, precise global positioning, and systems integration--the technological bases on which the rest of the new capabilities depend-are available to any nation with the money and the will to use them systematically to improve military capabilities. Exploiting these technologies can be expensive. But more important, there is no particular incentive for those nations to seek the system of systems the United States is building--so long as they believe they are not threatened by it. This is the emerging symbiosis among nations, for whether another nation decides to make a race out of the information revolution depends on how the United States uses its lead. If America does not share its knowledge, it will add incentives to match it. Selectively sharing these abilities is therefore not only the route of coalition leadership but the key to maintaining U. S. military superiority.

THE SOFT SIDE OF INFORMATION POWER

The information age has revolutionized not only military affairs but the instruments of soft power and the opportunities to apply them.

One of the ironies of the twentieth century is that Marxist theorists, as well as their critics, such as George Orwell, correctly noted that technological developments can profoundly shape societies and governments, but both groups misconstrued how. Technological and economic change have for the most part proved to be pluralizing forces conducive to the formation of free markets rather than repressive forces enhancing centralized power.

One of the driving factors in the remarkable change in the Soviet Union was that Mikhail Gorbachev and other Soviet leaders understood that the Soviet economy could not advance from the extensive, or industrial, to the intensive, or postindustrial, stage of development unless they loosened constraints on everything from computers to xerox machines--technologies that can also disseminate diverse political ideas. China tried to resist this tide, attempting to limit the use of fax machines after the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, in which they were a key means of communication between protesters and the outside world, but the effort failed. Now not only fax machines but satellite dishes have proliferated in China, and the government itself has begun wiring Internet connections and plans to install the equivalent of an entire Baby Bell's worth of telephone lines each year.

This new political and technological landscape is ready-made for the United States to capitalize on its formidable tools of soft power, to project the appeal of its ideals, ideology, culture, economic model, and social and political institutions, and to take advantage of its international business and telecommunications networks. American popular culture, with its libertarian and egalitarian currents, dominates film, television, and electronic communications. American higher education draws some 450,000 foreign students each year. Not all aspects of American culture are attractive, of course, particularly to conservative Muslims. Nonetheless, American leadership in the information revolution has generally increased global awareness of and openness to American ideas and values.

In this information-rich environment, those responsible for four vital tasks can draw on America's comparative advantage in information and soft power resources. These tasks are aiding democratic transitions in the remaining communist and authoritarian states, preventing backsliding in new and fragile democracies, preempting and resolving regional conflicts, and addressing the threats of terrorism, international crime, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and damage to the global environment. Each requires close coordination of the military and diplomatic components of America's foreign policy.

Engaging Undemocratic States and Aiding Democratic Transitions

Numerous undemocratic regimes survived the Cold War, including not only communist states such as China and Cuba but a variety of unelected governments formed by authoritarians or dominant social, ethnic, religious, or familial groups. Ominously, some of these governments have attempted to acquire nuclear weapons, among them Libya, Iran, Iraq, and North Korea. U.S. policies toward these countries are tailored to their respective circumstances and international behavior. The United States should continue selectively to engage those states, such as China, that show promise of joining the international community, while working to contain those regimes, like Iraq's, that offer no such hope. Whether seeking to engage or isolate undemocratic regimes, in every case the United States should engage the people, keeping them informed on world events and helping them prepare to build democratic market societies when the opportunity arises.

Organizations such as the U.S. Information Agency are vital to the task of aiding democratic transitions. Again China is instructive. USIA'S international broadcasting arm, the Voice of America, has in the last few years become the primary news source for 6o percent of the educated Chinese. America's increasing technical ability to communicate with the public in foreign countries, literally over the heads of their rulers via satellite, provides a great opportunity to foster democracy. It is ironic to find Congress debating whether to dismantle USIA just when its potential is greatly expanding.

Protecting New Democracies

Democratic states have emerged from the communist Soviet bloc and authoritarian regimes in other regions, such as Latin America, where for the first time every country but Cuba has an elected government. A major task for the United States is preventing their reversion to authoritarianism. Protecting and enlarging the community of market democracies serves U.S. security, political, and economic interests. Capitalist democracies are better trading partners and rarely fight one another.

An important program here is the International Military Education and Training program. Begun in the 1950s, IMET has trained more than half a million high-level foreign officers in American military methods and democratic civil-military relations. With the end of the Cold War, the program has been expanded to deal with the needs of new democracies and emphasizes training civilians to oversee military organizations and budgets. With an annual budget less than $50 million, IMET is quite cost-effective. Two similar Defense Department efforts are the Marshall Center in Garmisch, Germany, and the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Hawaii, which train both military and civilian students and promote contacts among the parliaments, executives, and military organizations of new democracies.

Preventing and Resolving Regional Conflicts

Communal conflicts, or conflicts over competing ethnic, religious, or national identities, often escalate as a result of propaganda campaigns by demagogic leaders, particularly those who want to divert attention from their own failings, establish their nationalist credentials, or seize power. Yet in developing countries, telephones, television, and other forms of telecommunication are rapidly growing, creating an opening for information campaigns by USIA and other agencies to undermine the artificial resolve and unity created by ethno-nationalist propaganda. At times, U.S. military technology may be used to suppress or jam broadcasts that incite violence, while USIA can provide unbiased reportage and expose false reports. U.S. air strikes on Serb communications facilities, for example, had the added benefit of making the transmission of Serbian propaganda more difficult.

The negotiation of the Bosnian peace agreement at Dayton, Ohio, last fall illustrated a diplomatic dimension of information power. The United States succeeded in getting an agreement where for years other negotiating parties had failed in part because of its

superior information assets. The ability to monitor the actions of all parties in the field helped provide confidence that the agreement could be verified, while detailed maps of Bosnia reduced potential misunderstandings. The American-designed three-dimensional virtual reality maps also undoubtedly helped the negotiating parties in drawing cease-fire lines and resolving whether vehicles traveling various roads could be targeted with direct-fire weapons, and generally demonstrated the capacity of U.S. troops to understand the terrain in Bosnia as well as or better than any of the local military groups.

Information campaigns to expose propaganda earlier in the Rwandan conflict might have mitigated the tragedy. Rwanda has only 14,000 phones but some 500,000 radios. A few simple measures, such as suppressing extremist Hutu radio broadcasts that called for attacks on civilians, or broadcasting Voice of America (VOA) reports that exposed the true actions and goals of those who sought to hijack the government and incite genocide, might have contained or averted the killing.

Such cases point to the need for closer coordination between the USI and the Department of Defense in identifying hateful radio or television transmissions that are inciting violence and in taking steps to suppress them and provide better information. In some instances the United States might share intelligence with parties to a dispute to reassure them that the other side is not preparing an offensive or cheating on arms control or other agreements.

Crime, Terrorism, Proliferation, and the Environment

The fourth task is to focus U.S. information technology on international terrorism, international crime, drug smuggling, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the global environment. The director of the CIA, John M. Deutch, has focused his agency's efforts on the first four of these, while the State Department's new Office of Global Affairs has taken the lead on global environmental issues. Information has always been the best means of preventing and countering terrorist attacks, and the United States can bring the same kind of information processing capabilities to bear abroad that the FBI used domestically to capture and convict the terrorists who bombed the World Trade Center. On international crime and drug smuggling, various U.S. agencies, including the CIA, FBI, Defense Intelligence Agency, and Department of Defense, have begun working more closely with one another and their foreign counterparts to pool their information and resources. Such efforts can help the United States defeat adversaries on and off the battlefield.

The United States has used its information resources to uncover North Korea's nuclear weapons program and negotiate a detailed agreement for its dismantlement, to discover Russian and Chinese nuclear cooperation with Iran quickly and discourage it, to bolster U.N. inspections of Iraqi nuclear facilities, and to help safeguard enriched uranium supplies throughout the former Soviet republics. And mounting evidence on environmental dangers such as global warming and ozone depletion, much of it gathered and disseminated by American scientists and U.S. government agencies, has helped other states understand these problems and can now begin to point the way to cost-effective remedies.

THE MARKET WILL NOT SUFFICE

Many of the efforts in these four overarching tasks have been ignored or disdained by some who have clung to narrow Cold War notions of U.S. security and of the roles of various agencies in pursuing it. Some in Congress, for example, have been reluctant to support any defense spending that does not directly involve U.S. combat troops and equipment. However, defense by other means is relatively inexpensive. Programs like the Partnership for Peace, USIA, IMET, the Marshall Center, the Asia-Pacific Center, the military-to-military dialogues sponsored by the U.S. unified command, and the Defense Ministerial of the Americas constitute only a tiny fraction of the defense budget. Although it is impossible to quantify these programs' contributions, we are convinced they are highly cost-effective in serving U.S. security needs. Similarly, USIA's achievements, like those of IMET and other instruments of soft power, should be more appreciated. USIA's seminal contribution of keeping the idea of democracy alive in the Soviet bloc during the Cold War could be a mere prologue.

Some argue that the slow, diffuse, and subtle process of winning hearts and minds can be met by nongovernmental news organizations. These organizations, as well as the millions of private individuals who communicate with friends and colleagues abroad, have done much to disseminate news and information globally. Yet the U.S. government should not abdicate the agenda-setting function to the media because the market and private individuals cannot fulfill all the information needs of American foreign policy. The Voice of America, for example, broadcasts in 48 languages and has an audience tens of millions greater than CNN, which broadcasts only in English. The station's role in China illustrates the problem of market failure: one of the reasons it is the leading source of news for educated Chinese is that Rupert Murdoch ended his broadcasting of the BBC World Service Television News in China, reportedly to win a commercial concession from the Chinese communist government. In addition, VOA can broadcast in languages such as Serbo-Croatian, which are spoken in a geographic area too small to be more than a commercial niche market but crucial for foreign policy. Nonetheless, current budget cuts could force VOA to drop its broadcasting in as many as 20 languages.

The market will not find a private means to suppress radio broadcasts like those of the perpetrators of genocide in Rwanda. There is no economic incentive for breaking through foreign efforts to jam broadcasts or compiling detailed reports on communal violence in the 30 or so ongoing conflicts that rarely make the front page. Left to itself, the market is likely to continue to have a highly uneven pattern of access to the Internet. Of the 15,000 networks on the global Internet in early 1994, only 42 were in Muslim countries, and 29 Of these were in Turkey and Indonesia. In response, USIA and the U.S. Agency for International Development have worked to improve global access to the Internet.

THE COMING AMERICAN CENTURY

The premature end of what Time magazine founder Henry Luce termed the American century has been declared more than once by disciples of decline. In truth, the 21st century, not the twentieth, will turn out to be the period of America's greatest preeminence. Information is the new coin of the international realm, and the United States is better positioned than any other country to multiply the potency of its hard and soft power resources through information. This does not mean that the United States can act unilaterally,

much less coercively, to achieve its international goals. The beauty of information as a power resource is that, while it can enhance the effectiveness of raw military power, it ineluctably democratizes societies. The communist and authoritarian regimes that hoped to maintain their centralized authority while still reaping the economic and military benefits of information technologies discovered they had signed a Faustian bargain.

The United States can increase the effectiveness of its military forces and make the world safe for soft power, America's inherent comparative advantage. Yet a strategy based on America's information advantage and soft power has some prerequisites. The necessary defense technologies and programs, ISR, C41, and precision force, must be adequately funded. This does not require a bigger defense budget, but it does mean the Defense Department, which is inclined to accelerate and expand these capabilities, should be granted flexibility in setting funding priorities within its budgetary top line. Congressional imposition of programs opposed by the military and civilian leaders in the Defense Department--such as the requirement to buy more B-2 aircraft at a cost of billions of dollars--detract from that flexibility and retard the military leverage that can be gained by completing the revolution in military affairs. Channels to parlay these new military capabilities into alliances and coalitions must be supported: military-to-military contacts, IMET, and the Marshall and Asia-Pacific Centers. Information is often a public good, but it is not a free one. Constraints on the sharing of system-of-systems capabilities and the selective transfer of intelligence, imagery, and the entire range of America's growing ISR capabilities should be loosened.

Diplomatic and public broadcasting channels through which information resources and advantages can be applied must be maintained. The USIA, VOA and other information agencies need adequate funding. The Cold War legislation authorizing the USIA, which has changed little since the early 1950s, draws too sharp a line in barring USIA from disseminating information domestically. For example, while USIA should continue to be prohibited from targeting its programs at domestic audiences, Congress has discouraged USIA even from advertising its Internet sites in journals that reach domestic as well as foreign audiences. Congress should instead actively support USIA'S efforts to exploit new technologies, including the agency's new Electronic Media Team, which is working to set up World Wide Web home pages on democratization and the creation and functioning of free markets.

The final and most fundamental requirement is the preservation of the kind of nation that is at the heart of America's soft power appeal. In recent years this most valuable foreign policy asset has been endangered by the growing international perception of America as a society riven by crime, violence, drug abuse, racial tension, family breakdown, fiscal irresponsibility, political gridlock, and increasingly acrimonious political discourse in which extreme points of view make the biggest headlines. America's foreign and domestic policies are inextricably intertwined. A healthy democracy at home, made accessible around the world through modern communications, can foster the enlargement of the peaceful community of democracies, which is ultimately the best guarantee of a secure, free, and prosperous world.

(1) "Soft power" is the ability to achieve desired outcomes in international affairs through attraction rather than coercion. It works by convincing others to follow, or getting them to agree to, norms and institutions that produce the desired behavior. Soft power can rest on the appeal of one's ideas or the ability to set the agenda in ways that shape the preferences of others. If a state can make its power legitimate in the perception of others and establish international institutions that encourage them to channel or limit their activities, it may not need to expend as many of its costly traditional economic or military resources. See Joseph S. Nye, Jr., Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power, BasicBooks, 1990.

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