



Soft Power: The Means To Success In World Politics

By Joseph S. Nye Jr.

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Joseph Nye coined the term "soft power" in the late 1980s. It is now used frequently—and often incorrectly—by political leaders, editorial writers, and academics around the world. So what is soft power? Soft power lies in the ability to attract and persuade. Whereas hard power—the ability to coerce—grows out of a country's military or economic might, soft power arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies.

Hard power remains crucial in a world of states trying to guard their independence and of non-state groups willing to turn to violence. It forms the core of the Bush administration's new national security strategy. But according to Nye, the neo-conservatives who advise the president are making a major miscalculation: They focus too heavily on using America's military power to force other nations to do our will, and they pay too little heed to our soft power. It is soft power that will help prevent terrorists from recruiting supporters from among the moderate majority. And it is soft power that will help us deal with critical global issues that require multilateral cooperation among states. That is why it is so essential that America better understands and applies our soft power. This book is our guide.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This is an indispensable book for anyone wondering what sort of changes to expect in U.S. foreign policy should the Democrats retake the White House later this year. Nye (*The Paradox of American Power*, etc.), now dean of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, was an assistant secretary of defense in the Clinton administration and is certain to be a key player in a new Democratic administration. In fact, this book could all but guarantee it. Nye's careful analysis of the shortcomings of unilateralism and reliance solely on military power in confronting the threat posed by Islamic extremists is strong, all the more so because it is virtually devoid of partisanship. He gives credit to President Bush and his neoconservative advisers in their projection of "hard" military and economic power. But he shows how what he casts as their blindness to the significance of "soft" power seriously undermines hard power. Soft power—"the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion"—is cultivated through relations with allies, economic assistance and cultural exchanges with other countries, projecting a sense that U.S. behavior corresponds with rhetorical support for democracy and human rights and, more generally, maintaining favorable public opinion and credibility abroad. The go-it-alone approach, Nye argues, has led to an unprecedented drop in support for the U.S. abroad, which leaves us scrambling to rebuild Iraq almost singlehandedly, overstretching ourselves militarily and economically. It also hampers efforts to secure the voluntary cooperation of foreign governments essential to dismantling terrorist cells spread throughout the globe. The answer, Nye says, lies in a return to the mix of soft and hard power that cemented the Western alliance and won the Cold War. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Review

"Joe Nye is one of the most astute observers of the changing nature of international politics."

About the Author

Joseph S. Nye, Jr., Dean of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, was Chairman of the National Intelligence Council and Assistant Secretary of Defense in the Clinton administration. He is the author of several books, including *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone* and *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. PublicAffairs will publish his political thriller, *The Power Game*, in Fall 2004.

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