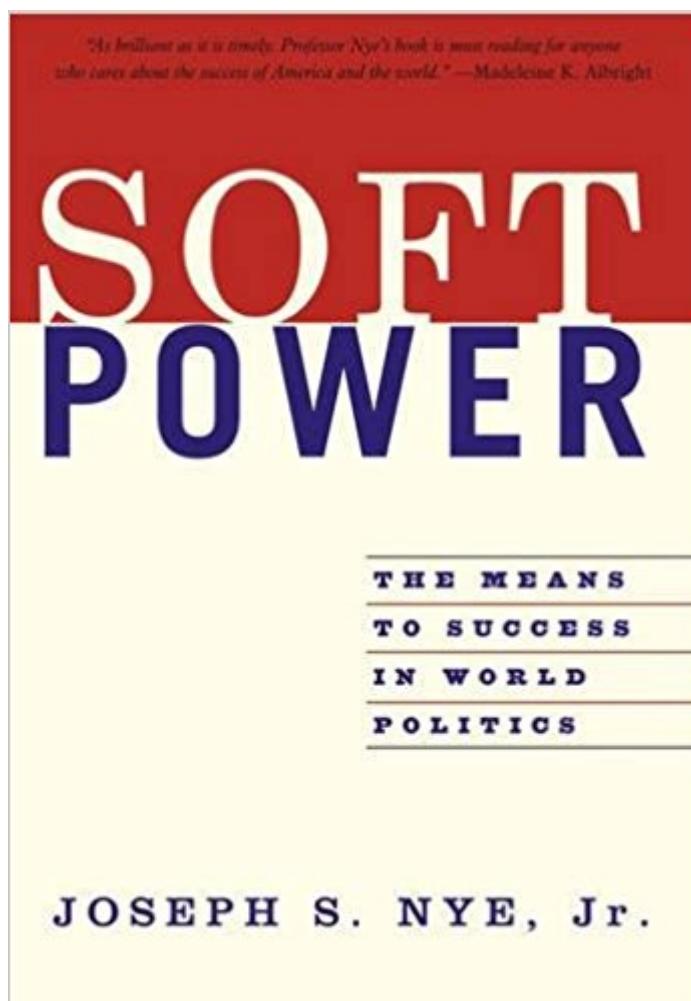


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Soft Power: The Means To Success In World Politics



Synopsis

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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Customer Reviews

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.

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

An excellent, comprehensive review of what the concept of "soft power" means in terms of national politics. This is obviously aimed at the American political class and it is a reminder that America's role in world politics cannot be reduced to machine guns and tanks. Other countries use "soft power" to promote themselves on the world stage and America should do the same. Other commentators have made the point in their customer reviews here that the concept as presented by Professor Nye is too narrow, and I totally agree. But Prof. Nye was the first one to come up with the notion, long before it occurred to anybody, and that should be recognized. It is now up to others to expand on it and use it in new ways. In the meantime, this book is a must read for anyone interested in the concept.

Soft Power, by Joseph Nye, Jr., is an interesting publication that blends together contemporary events and brief American history lessons to support his theme that America's success in its war on terrorism must rely on properly balancing two types of power. The first is hard power, which Mr. Nye

identifies as a state's ability to use economic or military might to force other nations to comply with particular sanctions or directives. Mr. Nye declares that many in our government have mistaken this power as the only wielding influence that can be used to attain victory during times of war and that the other type of power is often ignored or never acknowledged. This second type of power, whose identification has been introduced and coined by Mr. Nye, is soft power. Soft power, which arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies? is the ability of that country to persuade other nations to share its objectives or desired outcomes. At the introduction, Mr. Nye acknowledges that hard power, through force, can be used to conquer one state or, at most, a few states in the name of fighting terrorism. However, he asserts that it, alone, cannot create an international cooperation of governments to hunt down every person who serves as a threat to world peace. This latter objective, Mr. Nye proclaims, can be met by merging the coercive presence of hard power with the persuasive influences of soft power and that this combination is an effective approach to forming a coalition of nations. To draw a bold line of distinction between hard power, by itself, and the union of hard and soft power, Joseph Nye quotes Newt Gingrich, who comments that the measuring rod of success is not how many enemies are killed but, instead, how many allies are gathered. Throughout the book, Nye reinforces that the overarching goal for America to effectively enact and establish its policies is to make the ideals of the United States as attractive as possible to the rest of the world. Though this extraordinary aim might be hailed as unrealistic, at worst, or as idealistic and Jeffersonian, at best, Nye contends, notwithstanding, that this intention is being panned because opponents misread it as appearing too soft. He subsequently reaffirms that the spread of any ideal is not often dependent upon hard or soft power, exclusively, but the proper melding of the two. To support why soft power is so important, Nye states that it can be used in capacities that hard power cannot and identifies tools in which it can be put into effect. For example, broadcast capabilities and the internet can enhance communication strategies to spread democratic sentiments to other parts of the world. Also, soft power can be an aid in establishing peaceful relations among countries; for instance, programs established to send civilians such as doctors, teachers, and entertainers abroad to provide the types of services that other nations are seeking are powerful, positive overtures for democracy. Intermittently, Nye states that the effective use of hard and soft power will come to fruition if the goals are properly stated. He cites instances of key shortcomings, the most recent of which pertains to the War in Iraq. Though the United States is criticized from an international perspective for going into war without U.N. consent, Nye states that on the domestic front, there was no solidarity on why the U.S. troops had to engage in combat. He blames this lack of cohesion on the Bush team, who used a wide variety of themes that appealed to

so many different groups to the degree that no unifying consensus was ever reached. Not only does Nye criticize the Bush White House for not properly enforcing hard and soft power, he also places a notable burden of responsibility on the Clinton administration. Nye highlights that a critical mistake that weakened U.S. soft power was the decision of Clinton and Congress to cut budgets and staff for cultural diplomacy and exchanges by almost thirty percent after 1993. How might this be regarded as weakening? Nye points out that knowledge is power and by failing to maintain closer lines of communication with the states concerned, we reduce our ability to select relevant themes and modify our short-term and long-term goals so as to establish and maintain stable relations. Soft Power, overall, is a very interesting read that cites themes that argue how our U.S. government needs to invest more of its budget in the State Department in order to exercise not just hard or soft power, but smart power. For those interested in other types of power mentioned in war and politics that are synonymous with, if not identical to, hard power and soft power, another interesting book about power is Steven Brams' Theory of Moves. Brams does not use the words hard power and soft power; instead, he applies the terms threat power and moving power, both of which run on a respective, game theory parallel to the aforementioned.

College textbook. Well written.

great little book!

If you study international relations or political science, or even have an interest in it, you absolutely have to read this! I am looking forward to reading Nye's follow-up, The Future of Power.

Excellent read for better understanding the correlation in Senior Military Education and Training and Military Soft/Smart Power!

Nye introduces a very important concept to the study of international relations, but this book does not do a great job fleshing out his argument. It almost reads as if his publisher rushed him to finish the book in the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq so that it would get the most attention.

Soft power is a book that supports my thesis that "we are more alike than we are different." Our future world will no longer be a world in which "in your face" diplomacy will work. A little respect will go a long way. It will be the only way that will work with the next super power, China.

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