January 2014

“Smart Power: Definitions, Importance, and Effectiveness”

Giulio M. Gallarotti

Wesleyan University, ggallarotti@wesleyan.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://wesscholar.wesleyan.edu/div2facpubs

Part of the International Relations Commons, and the Political Theory Commons

Recommended Citation

Gallarotti, Giulio M., “‘Smart Power: Definitions, Importance, and Effectiveness’” (2014). Division II Faculty Publications. 163.
https://wesscholar.wesleyan.edu/div2facpubs/163

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Social Sciences at WesScholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Division II Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of WesScholar. For more information, please contact nmealey@wesleyan.edu, jmlozanowski@wesleyan.edu.
Smart Power: Definitions, Importance, and Effectiveness

Giulio M. Gallarotti

*Journal of Strategic Studies*, special issue on “Smart Power and the Military” edited by Alan Chong (forthcoming)

Introduction

The concept of soft power and the corollary concept of smart power (i.e., the use of both hard and soft power to attain foreign policy objectives) have generated significant attention in scholarly, policy and popular discourses on power. Both President Barrack Obama, and Hillary Clinton in her confirmation hearing as Secretary of State explicitly used the term in talking about an optimal U.S. foreign policy. The scholarly attention to the concepts has risen conterminously. Yet with all this scholarly attention, the concepts have evolved little

---

1 A version of this paper was presented at a conference on “Smart Power: Transforming Militaries for 21st Century Missions,” Goh Keng Swee Command and Staff College, Singapore, 18-19 October 2012. The article draws on analyses in: Giulio Gallarotti, *Cosmopolitan Power in International Politics: A Synthesis of Realism, Neoliberalism and Constructivism* (New York: Cambridge University Press 2010); Giulio Gallarotti, *The Power Curse* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Press 2010), and Giulio Gallarotti, “Soft Power: What it is, Why it’s Important, and the Conditions Under Which it Can Be Effectively Used,” *Journal of Political Power*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2011, pp. 25-47. The author would like to thank the participants of the conference, especially the editor of this special issue Alan Chong and Bernard Loo, and referees of the Journal of Strategic Studies for suggestions on revisions.


theoretically, and their historical applications have been limited and far from rigorously executed. In essence, the analyses of soft and smart power have developed little beyond what their critics would refer to as ‘soft theory’, and in both cases the theoretical development is less than ‘smart’. Furthermore, there has been insufficient attention to how changes in world politics have affected the importance of smart power. Finally, little has been said about the decision-making conditions required for leaders to value and effectively use smart power. This article attempts to address all three deficiencies by: (1) articulating a more systematic understanding of the processes of smart power; (2) explaining how changes in world politics have raised the value of smart power relative to hard power alone; (3) showing how the dynamics of smart power and their consequences played out the historical context of American foreign policy under the George W. Bush administration, and finally (4) proposing several prescriptions that will

encourage decision-makers to value and effectively use smart power strategies in their foreign policies.

Understanding smart power is especially important in a world that is changing at a historically unprecedented pace and generating tumultuous outcomes as a consequence. In fact, the greatest transformation of human life has occurred over the last 100 years. This break-neck wave of change has generated a world system where the speed and magnitude of outcomes confront nations with ever-greater threats and opportunities. This has created a far more ‘hazy power space’ than has heretofore been embraced by scholars and decision-makers. As a consequence, national power has become transformed in ways that have made it far more difficult to gauge and consequently manage, and this necessitates new approaches to studying power and its changing role in world politics. Nations will still rely primarily on their principal power resources to confront these outcomes and changes, yet the study of international power is still quite underdeveloped relative to its importance in international politics. The conventional visions of state power are poorly suited to understanding the modern cosmopolitan world system where there is a pronounced need for a more compatible or cosmopolitan theory of power in world politics.

In providing a more systematic analysis of smart power, this article is divided into six sections. The first offers definitions of the component parts of smart power: hard and soft power. The second explains the growing importance of soft and smart power in modern world affairs,

5 Baldwin, “Power and International relation”; Berenkoetter and Williams, *Power in World Politics*.
and concomitantly sheds light on the rationale for greater attention to the use of smart power in international politics. The third section offers a more systematic analysis of the relationship between hard and soft power. The fourth section analyzes smart power in the context of American foreign policy under the George W. Bush administration. The fifth section proposes prescriptions for the effective employment of smart power policies. The final section offers concluding remarks.

1. Smart Power: Defining Component Parts – Hard and Soft Power

The traditional vision of power that has prevailed among scholars of international politics mirrors the historical dominance of Realist theories. Based on their interpretations of anarchy derived from a Hobbesian state of nature, these theories have tended to embrace a concept of hard power, oriented around the idea of nations using ‘material resources’ to achieve greater influence. Indeed, one such Realist, Kenneth Waltz, contends, “In international politics force serves, not only as the ultima ratio, but indeed as the first and constant one.” According to this theoretical perspective power is defined materially: “size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability and competence.” State

---

7 Barnett and Duvall, “Power in International Relations,” p. 40; Brian C. Schmidt, “Realist Conceptions of Power,” in Felix Berenskoetter and M. J. Williams (eds.), Power in World Politics (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 43–63. The analysis here is state-centric: it is concerned with how a state can influence another state. While the components of hard and soft power reveal extensive elements of civil society (i.e., industry lobbyists, development NGOs), each category is conceptualized as manifesting itself in influence at the level of the state.

8 Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Politics (Reading: Addison Wesley, 1979), p. 113.

9 Ibid., p. 131. See also, Robert Gilpin, War and Change in World Politics (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 13; John J. Mearsheimer, The Tragedy of Great Power Politics (New York: Norton, 2001), p. 55. Realists accept that power can also derive from some intangible sources—such as competence (i.e., leadership, policy, decision-making)—and also embrace the utility of threat or other types of coercive posturing. However, these intangibles ultimately rely on actual material capabilities to be effective.
power in the final analysis is dependent on this ‘muscle’ or ability to coerce—a military-industrial complex that can be used to threaten or marshal force in pursuit of its national goals. Tangible power resources can be employed manifestly or symbolically to coerce other actors into submission or compliance; they are therefore more certain to provide protection (whether defensive or offensive in nature). Intangible (i.e., soft) sources of power, on the other hand, can offer no such guarantees that an act of aggression can either be confronted or perpetrated to eliminate or protect against a menacing actor.

Table 1. Foundations of Soft Power

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>International Sources</th>
<th>Domestic Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respect for international laws, norms, and institutions</td>
<td>Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamental reliance on multilateralism, and disposition against excessive unilateralism</td>
<td>* Pronounced Social Cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for international treaties and alliance commitments</td>
<td>* Elevated Quality of Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to sacrifice short-run national interests in order to contribute toward the</td>
<td>* Freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collective good</td>
<td>* Sufficient Opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal foreign economic policies</td>
<td>* Tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Alluring Lifestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Cultural Status (religious, racial, ethnic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Political Institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Constitutionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Liberalism/Pluralism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Well Functioning Government Bureaucracy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other paradigms (Neoliberalism and Constructivism) have challenged the scholarly primacy of Realism, and concomitantly introduced alternative visions of power oriented more around soft power. Unlike the vision of Realists based on coercion, these alternative visions have highlighted the influence that derives from a more intangible and enlightened source: a positive
image in world affairs that makes a nation attractive to other nations.\textsuperscript{10} This positive image derives from both international and domestic sources (see Table 1).

Under international sources, nations must demonstrate a respect for and adherence to international law, norms, and institutions. Nations must seek to reduce the risk of alienation and consequent marginalization, and hence tend to favor multilateral over unilateral postures in the promotion of their foreign policies. This desire to reduce alienation and marginalization further drives a willingness to respect international treaties and honor alliance commitments. The preference for multilateralism indicates, furthermore, a willingness to sacrifice short-run particularistic interests in order to contribute toward substantive collaborative schemes that address important multilateral problems. Nations will garner considerable respect by foregoing short-run national objectives for the sake of the collective good. Finally, a nation must pursue policies of economic openness, since this economic openness underscores an underlying commitment to maintaining opportunities for economic growth in other nations. The greater this commitment, the more elevated will be the national image.

With respect to domestic sources of soft power, Joseph Nye notes, “How [a nation] behaves at home can enhance its image and perceived legitimacy, and that in turn can help advance its foreign policy objectives.”\textsuperscript{11} Domestic sources can be broadly categorized under two rubrics: the power inherent in culture and in political institutions. Political institutions must be founded on principles of democracy, pluralism, liberalism, and constitutionalism. Indeed, it will

\textsuperscript{10} While tangibility is generally a defining difference between hard and soft power, it is not always so. See discussion below.
\textsuperscript{11} Nye, \textit{Soft Power}, pp. 56-57.
be oriented around the political empowerment of civil society and reducing political gaps.\(^{12}\)

Culturally, soft power is created by social cohesion, an elevated quality of life, freedom, abundant opportunities for individuals, tolerance, cultural prominence (i.e., religious or ethnic) and the alluring characteristics of a lifestyle that garners great admiration and even emulation.\(^{13}\)

Indeed, numerous observers have underscored the power emanating from an admired culture.\(^{14}\)

This positive image generates respect and admiration, which in turn render such nations more attractive in the eyes of other nations. The attraction can be so strong that other nations may even attempt to emulate the policies and actions of soft power nations. Attraction enhances the influence of soft power nations as other nations will more readily defer to their wishes on international issues, and conversely avoid confrontations. Hence, decisions about issues affecting the soft power nations will be bounded within a more favorable range of options for the soft power nations. In a similar vein, emulation creates a system of nations that comport themselves in terms of actions, policies and goals in a manner consistent with the interests of the role-model nations. In these ways, soft power ultimately configures the context within which other nations make decisions in ways that favor the interests of soft power nations.

The principal difference between hard and soft power can therefore be understood thusly: hard power *coerces* compliance principally through reliance on tangible power resources—more

---


\(^{13}\) Nye, *Paradoxes of American Power*, pp. 113, 114, 119, 141.

direct methods (either through their symbolic or actual use); while soft power *cultivates* it through policies, qualities, and actions that make nations attractive to other nations—more indirect and non-coercive methods. In this respect, hard power exhibits a greater conflict of interests relative to soft power. Hard power contemplates nations coercing other nations to do what the latter would ordinarily otherwise not do.\(^\text{15}\) Soft power, on the other hand, conditions target nations to voluntarily do what soft power nations would like them to do, hence a greater harmony of interests.

### 2. The Growing Importance of Soft and Smart Power

Greater attention to soft and smart power itself reflects the changing landscape of international relations. While history has shown soft and smart power always to be important sources of national influence, changes in modern world politics have further raised their utility.\(^\text{16}\) Indeed the world may be evolving increasingly towards a ‘softer and smarter world’, and this has changed the potential for both soft and hard power in ways that challenge leaders in their quests to optimize national influence. In this transformed international system, soft and smart power will be crucial elements in enhancing influence over international outcomes. The world stage has become less amenable to instruments of hard power like force and threats, and more amenable to actors that are sensitized to the limitations of hard power and the opportunities of soft power created by this new global environment. In fact, it is only through an optimal diversification among soft and hard power (i.e., the smartest power) that leaders will be able to maximize national influence in this transformed world. A number of changes in world politics stand out in


\(^{16}\) Gallarotti, *The Power Curse*; Gallarotti, *Cosmopolitan Power*. 
this regard. Indeed, governments have increasingly demonstrated a growing desire to find a
proper balance among military and non-military aspects of power.17

First, the costs of threatening or actually using force among nuclear powers have
skyrocketed. The nuclear revolution has indeed been instrumental in creating a new age in which
war between major powers is almost unthinkable because the costs of war have become too
great.18 Furthermore, advanced conventional military technologies may render the costs of even
conventional war prohibitively expensive.19 As a result, the utility of soft power resources have
increased relative to the utility of hard power resources as instruments of statecraft in allowing
nations to achieve sustainable security in the long run.

Second, the growth of democracy in the world system has served to compound the
disutility of coercion and force as the actors bearing the greatest burden of such coercion and
force (the people) have political power over decision-makers, and they can generate strong
impediments to the use of force and coercion. In this respect, the process of democratic peace has
altered power relations among nations.20 Beyond the enfranchisement effect, democratic culture

17 See for example, Gallarotti, Cosmopolitan Power; Kurlantzick, Charm Offensive; Chong, Soft
Power in Global Information Space; and Derek S. Reveron, Exporting Security: International
Engagement, Security Cooperation, and the Changing Face of the U.S. Military (Washington,
18 Robert Jervis, “International Primacy: Is the Game Worth the Candle?” International Security,
vol. 17, no. 4, Spring 1993, pp. 52–67; Robert Jervis, “The Political Effects of Nuclear
Jervis, “Theories of War in an Era of Leading-Peace Power”, American Political Science Review,
20 Michael W. Doyle, Ways of War and Peace (New York: Norton, 1997); James Lee Ray,
Democracy and International Politics: An Evaluation of the Democratic Peace Proposition
(Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995); Bruce Russett and John R. Oneal,
will also drive national leaders towards the liberal principles manifest in the cannons of soft power. Hence, national leaders are much more constrained to work within softer foreign policy boundaries that limit the utility of hard power. Rather, outcomes are engineered through policies more consistent with liberal democratic legitimacy.

Third, modernization and the attendant socio-economic and political interdependence further diminishes the utility of hard power. Globalization enhances the process of social and economic interpenetration all the more. These greater links compound the interdependence among networks containing both national and transnational actors. In such an environment, strategies for optimizing national wealth and influence have shifted away from force and coercion, as these methods can generate considerable socio-economic and political costs that end up being tantamount to self-punishment in an interdependent world. This makes populations far less enamored of a ‘warrior ethic’. But even more elusive than the quest to limit the fallout from coercion and force in such an environment, is the quest to impose some specific outcomes onto targeted actors. In an interpenetrated world, targeted actors have many more avenues of escape. National and transnational actors can avoid being compelled because of their access to the international political economy. They can merely escape coercion by taking refuge in


numerous international havens. In one important respect, this modern-day ‘economic feudalism’ created by interdependence is shifting the nexus of power from the state to transnational networks.\textsuperscript{24} These forces both diminish the possibilities of political conflict and shift the epicenter of competition away from force and threat.\textsuperscript{25}

Fourth, by making modern populations more sensitive to their economic fates, this new world has compounded the influence of economics, and made economic interdependence that much more compelling as a factor that decreases the utility of hard power. With the rise of this welfare/economic orientation and the spread of democracy, national leaders have been driven more by economic imperatives and less by foreign adventurism as a source of political survival.\textsuperscript{26} This “prosperous society,” through the political vehicle of democracy, has shifted not only domestic but also foreign policy orientations. The economic welfare concern has put a premium on cooperation that can deliver economic growth and employment, and worked against hard power policies that might undercut such goals.

Finally, the growth of international organizations and regimes in the post-war period has embedded nations more firmly in networks of cooperation: in effect nations are increasingly functioning in a world of law and norms, where unilateral actions that disregard these institutions become far more costly. Such institutions have effectively raised the minimum level of civil behavior in international politics, and consequently raised the importance of soft and smart

\textsuperscript{24} Nye, \textit{Paradoxes of American Power}, p. 75.
power significantly. Consequently, the networks of cooperation have made nations far less likely to extract compliance in what are considered illegitimate ways, i.e., through coercion.\(^{27}\)


The relationship between the two components of smart power, hard and soft power, is complicated, complex and interactive: the two are neither perfect substitutes nor are they perfect complements, although they do often reinforce one another. Certainly a strong positive image can garner many more security commitments, which in turn can bolster a nation’s hard defenses. And of course, force in the form of wars of liberation (humanitarian intervention) will certainly garner a better image for the protector state. Gilpin, for example, sees much of the United States’ soft power after World War II being bolstered by a *Pax Americana* founded on American military might.\(^{28}\) Furthermore, the possession of hard power itself can make a nation a role model in a variety of ways; large military arsenals and successful military strategies can generate significant soft power by enhancing respect and admiration.\(^{29}\) But hard power cannot be used in ways that undermine that respect and admiration. In other words, they cannot be used in ways that deviate from the fundamental principles undergirding soft power (see Table 1). The employment of force can only generate soft power if it is used in the service of goals widely


\(^{29}\) Waltz, *Theory of International Relations*. There are a number of historical cases where economic hard power was also an important source of emulation, see Gallarotti, *Cosmopolitan Power*. 
perceived as consistent with such principles, such as protecting nations against aggression, peacekeeping, or liberation.\footnote{Reveron, Exporting Security demonstrates how the U.S. military has undertaken a number of foreign initiatives to address the underlying conditions that generate violence abroad. Many of these initiatives, which are undertaken jointly with NGOs and other civilian agencies, represent soft power strategies designed to enhance America’s image abroad.}

At the same time, however, it is also the case that the misguided use of one kind of power may undermine the other. Hard power carries obvious disadvantages for image if it is manifest in an aggressive-unilateralist style: threats, invasion, or imperialism. But actions that enhance soft power can be equally costly in terms of sacrificing hard power. This is the position that many American unilateralists take in their distaste for the entangling limitations on individual actions created by international agreements: e.g., global warming agreements will stunt American economic growth, Law of the Sea regulations will limit access to important resources, the International Criminal Court may compromise the effectiveness of military operations overseas.

Moreover, the distinction between hard and soft power can be somewhat arbitrary and imperfect categorically. Giving international aid for example may enhance a nation’s image, but this liquidity can be used to purchase donor exports or to pay back debts to banks in donor nations. Here, a single instrument generates both hard and soft power. Similarly, the use of aggressive military force can generate a positive image with nations who are benefiting from such an initiative: e.g., liberating Kuwait and protecting Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War (another dual effect in the use of a single power resource). Additionally, the exercise of either soft or hard power alone has complex consequences within its own specific context. The use of hard power resources can in fact diminish the hard power position of a nation in various ways. For example, military atrocities may stiffen resistance in a manner that weakens an aggressor
nation if the victims either grow to hate the aggressor or sense that such atrocities can be withstood. Also, the use of threats that are never carried out may over time diminish the influence of the nation issuing such treats. Similarly, the use of soft power resources may also adversely affect a nation’s image no matter how innocuous the actions. A clear example is the contempt that many hold for international development organizations (IMF, World Bank) because they see such institutions as promoting neo-imperialistic economic relations between North and South. In a related example, while many embrace the values of Western culture, others see them as a source of cultural imperialism and contamination.  

Another interesting interaction effect among the two kinds of power is that the use of one set of resources may either economize on or enhance the need for another set of resources. A positive image may create outcomes within such favorable boundaries for a nation that it actually reduces its need to use hard resources in order to gain compliance on important issues. For example, a reputation for loyalty may attract more allies whose own loyalty can vitiate the need to expend hard resources in order to achieve one’s foreign policy goals. Moreover, accepting restraints on one’s unilateral actions through ratifying a treaty may not adversely affect relative hard-power positions if such an action fosters similar restraints by other nations, as would be the case with arms reduction treaties. Hence, a reduction of hard power can be compensated by a soft power effect. However, intransigence to multilateralism may in fact reduce one’s hard power position even though it frees that nation from restraint. Such would occur if reactions to such intransigence resulted in a more antagonistic international system. In such cases, the intransigent

---

nation would have to compensate in other ways (both hard and soft) to restore its former position of influence.\textsuperscript{32}

It should be noted that although there is a tendency to equate hard power with tangible resources and soft power with intangible resources, their principal distinction does not depend on tangibility.\textsuperscript{33} Even for Nye, tangibility is not a strict source of differentiation among the two categories: there can be intangible applications of hard power.\textsuperscript{34} For example, a threat is intangible, but a threat is a highly coercive act.\textsuperscript{35} Furthermore, a large military force can generate attraction effects through “perceptions of invincibility”.\textsuperscript{36} Nations may show deference, even admiration, because they want to be associated with a winner.\textsuperscript{37} Similarly, soft power can be enhanced through the use of tangible resources, as tangible resources may be necessary to institute the policies and actions that deliver soft power.

But ultimately, as interconnected as the two sources of power are and thus share many qualities, the real differentiation of power is in the context of its use. In order to achieve soft power, the context of actions (whether tangible or intangible) must be a manifestation of particular principles (see Table 1). In this vein, as noted, hard power itself can be used in a manner that engenders the respect and admiration of other nations if it manifests itself in actions consistent with these principles. Hard power is not inherently pernicious. Hard power, of course, will fail or be counterproductive in enhancing influence when it is used inconsistently with these

\textsuperscript{33} Baldwin, “Power and International Relations,” and Meade, “America’s Sticky Power.”
\textsuperscript{34} Nye, \textit{Paradoxes of American Power}, p. 8; Nye, \textit{Soft Power}, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{35} Baldwin, “Power and International Relations.”
\textsuperscript{37} Note, for instance, the goodwill generated by American civil-military functions abroad: education, political stabilization, provision of public goods. See, for example, Reveron, \textit{Exporting Security}. 

15
principles. Ultimately, tangible resources can deliver both hard and soft power. But tangible resources are merely instruments and are no better or worse than the manner in which they are used.


Obama’s campaign promises and subsequent actions, which injected a vigorous amount of soft power options into an American foreign policy left over by his predecessors, reflect the frustrations generated by previous decades of a foreign policy overly grounded in the use of hard power. Bush especially eschewed a smarter path which would have made greater use of soft power instruments, in blazing a crusade against America’s threats founded on the extensive use of the nation’s military might. The Bush Doctrine that drove US foreign policy in the first decade of the 21st century was based on the neoconservative belief that American hegemony was at a peak, and that indeed the nation should use its muscle to shape the world around it according to its interests. The Doctrine stressed the use of hard power in emphasizing that America was at “war” and that “action” was required: indeed this was a “wartime national strategy.” The cornerstones of this foreign policy were the vigorous use of American hard power and a penchant to act unilaterally. It was the antithesis of soft power, and in eschewing soft power, it also failed to achieve an acceptable “smarter” balance of power that would have produced a more effective foreign policy strategy. Indeed, rather than strengthening the U.S. in the face of

\[\text{38 It is no coincidence that we have seen far more references to the ideas of soft and smart power from Obama administration personnel than we have from previous administrations. See Gallarotti, “Soft Power.”}\]

old and new threats, this policy made the U.S. more vulnerable, and hence weaker in terms of its own security. In fact, America had been quite active militarily in the 1990s as well, so the end of the Bush years marked several decades in which America indulged in hard power at the expense of “smarter” strategies that made more vigorous use of soft power to complement its use of muscle. And after those two decades of the U.S. flexing its muscles from a position of perceived primacy, the state of world affairs at the end of Bush’s tenure appeared worse with respect to American interests than it did before 1990. Politics in Latin America moved to the Left and anti-U.S. sentiment arose concomitantly. All of the U.S. posturing and coercion has put little dent into the development of WMD in North Korea, India, Pakistan and Iran. The Doha Round in trade diplomacy waffled. Peace in the Middle East has been as elusive as ever. Political instability and poverty both increased in Africa. U.S.-Soviet relations have been at a post-Cold War nadir. The new economic titans of Asia (China and Japan) have been ever more recalcitrant and independent minded. Democratic state building in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Balkans has been precariously held together through military occupation. The real price of oil has approached an all-time high, thus applying a choke-hold on the American and global economies. And finally, polls have showed that the U.S. and the Bush administration were held in very low esteem by the international community. The state of world affairs after just after Bush has been a compelling reflection of the decline in American influence during these decades, its hard power notwithstanding.40

Specifically with respect to the Bush years, an overreliance on hard power proved self-defeating for American foreign policy in promoting the administrations three major goals: limiting terrorism, promoting democracy abroad, and reducing the threat of WMD. It made these goals all the more elusive. While an interesting case could be spelled out for how overreliance on hard power during the past several decades impacted on all important American foreign objectives, we concentrate specifically on the negative consequences of overreliance on hard power for Bush’s three major foreign objectives.

**Terrorism**

With respect to terrorism, Bush’s overreliance on military solutions to destroy the terrorist threat against Americans served only to enhance the threat. There are striking parallels to the fight against terrorism under Bush and the fight against insurgency in Vietnam. In both cases, American tactics compromised the very soft power than might have undermined the ability of terrorists and insurgents to recruit new members. In both cases, fighting the war against these menaces exclusively with hard power proved counterproductive due to the negative feedback or blowback generated by coercion.\(^{41}\) In both cases, robust initiatives based on pacification strategies would have produced far better results against an enemy invulnerable to conventional military solutions.\(^ {42}\) Indeed, Iraq stands as a poignant testament to such complex dynamics. In Iraq, the invasion and occupation proved counterproductive in attending to goal of

---

\(^{41}\) Bush underscored the principal means of fighting terrorism in NSS (Whitehouse-NSS 2002, p. iv) as hard-power resources. “To defeat this threat we must make use of every tool in our arsenal—military power, better homeland defenses, law enforcement, intelligence, and vigorous efforts to cut off terrorist financing.”

\(^{42}\) Interestingly, even the military underscored the need for pacification strategies in Iraq. See “U. S. Military Index,” *Foreign Policy*, March/April:71-77, 2008.
terrorism abatement. Like Vietnam, the transfer of security functions to Iraqi forces (like Vietnamization) proceeded slowly, hence keeping the U.S. in the despised position of invading and occupational force. Aside from the resentment from outright occupation, the U.S. generated resentment from all three major political groups in Iraq.\(^{43}\) Debaathification made it an enemy of Sunnis, for Shiites the insistence against popular elections linked the U.S. with the political and religious oppression of Hussein, and the Kurds continued to be acrimonious toward the U.S. failure to deliver true political autonomy and power to the group.\(^{44}\)

This general resentment against American hard-power strategies, which fueled terrorist sentiment in Iraq (as well as in other nations), was compounded by crucial decisions regarding the management of transition to self-rule. Ali Allawi, former Iraq Minister of Defense, stated that “the entire process of planning for a post-war Iraq was mired in ineptitude, poor organization and indifference.”\(^{45}\) Both decisions to disband the army and the policy of Debaathification put into motion a process which significantly fueled the causes of terrorism and insurgency. These decisions put hundreds of thousands of people out of work: 50,000 Baathist workers and about 400,000 soldiers. The causes of terrorism and insurgency appeared especially appealing to Baathists and displaced soldiers, as they experienced both the anti-western resentment and economic hardship that made them especially impressionable in the anti-American cause, and led

\(^{43}\) The problems facing the U.S. were compounded by indirect effects with respect to Israel. Pre-emptive operations by the U.S. emboldened Israel to also act pre-emptively against erstwhile threats. Both Shiek Yassin and Hamas leader Abdel Aziz al-Ranissi were assassinated in 2004, which in turn compounded the terrorist and Palestinian problems, and set back Bush’s Road Map for Peace in the Middle East. See Hall Gardner, *American Global Strategy and the “War on Terrorism.”* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 149.


them into militia groups. Aside from fighting the perpetrators of the economic hardship, these new insurrectionist recruits found militia groups to be essential to their economic welfare. The militia groups became all the more important in Iraq given the refusal of the U.S. occupying forces to undertake police functions in the early months of the invasion. With no police, the Iraq army disbanded, and American soldiers not policing Iraqi streets; there developed a great wave of looting that made the situation in Iraq all the more menacing. Hence, aligning with militias became all the more important as they fulfilled a fundamental role of protection for displaced Iraqi soldiers/bureaucrats and their families.\(^46\) The instability was compounded by the dismissal of thousands of experienced Baathist bureaucrats who were replaced by inexperienced counterparts. The environment created was a menacing one indeed. There emerged a situation of lawlessness in which militias could obtain resources and weapons. The militias were headed by ex-soldiers who knew the art of war well. State building to restore order was set back significantly through the dismissal of many competent public servants. And to compound matters, all the displaced and deprived parties were now targeting the U.S. as the principal villain.\(^47\)

One of the rationales for invading and occupying Iraq emanated from the conviction that Iraq was a breeding ground for terrorists. In actuality, little could be farther than the truth, as Hussein himself was despised by the majority Shiite population due to his religious repression of

\(^{46}\) We see path dependence effects (i.e., non-linearities) in the evolution of the militia problem. While police functions were beefed up with the development of new Iraqi armed units, the prior existence of militias made them difficult to uproot. Hence, dealing with the militia problem was best done pre-emptively (before they came into existence).

the sect. Hence, he was a fierce enemy of terrorism.\textsuperscript{48} If anything, the replacement of Hussein by the U.S. occupying force increased the threat of anti-West terrorism in Iraq. Strictly with respect to suppressing terrorists, the U.S. would have been better served to keep Hussein in power. But even beyond Iraq, the aggressive and imperialistic crusade of the U.S. to bring about these three goals proved counter-productive in other ways. The militaristic and coercive methods used to root out terrorists even outside the Middle East further raised the cause of anti-Western militancy and alienated the governments of the target nations. Both Jervis and Betts aver that the use of U.S. power in the war against terrorism actually increased “American vulnerability.”\textsuperscript{49}

\textit{The smarter option for addressing the problem of terrorism dictated the infusion of a greater variety of soft instruments into Bush’s policy mix.} As Betts and Lambakis et. al. observe, terrorism has a multitude of tactical advantages that render it a more elusive target of conventional coercive and military strategies. In this respect, terrorism represents an asymmetric threat which occupies what Betts refers to as the “soft belly of American primacy.”\textsuperscript{50} Terrorism is rooted in civil society. Uprooting such a well-integrated and concealed phenomenon is challenging at the least. Globalization has provided it, furthermore, with a plethora of vehicles and opportunities to organize, strike and disappear. Even in the case of state-sponsored terrorism or terrorist-friendly political environments, the networks and operational logistics of the

initiatives have always proved to be well concealed within the civil societies of the host nations, as many failed attempts to uproot terrorists from such environments has consistently demonstrated (e.g., Pakistan, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia). This battlefield hardly lends itself to the weapons that have delivered military primacy to the U.S., but in fact places greater currency in soft power solutions. Furthermore, terrorism enjoys the tactical advantage of being the insurgent force in an asymmetrical war. This lowers the requirements for success (in that they win simply by not losing-i.e., maintaining some capacity to inflict harm) vis-a-vis state actors who only succeed by winning (i.e., completely rooting out terrorism). But a further advantage of inferiority in an asymmetric war is that the difficulty of winning a quick and decisive victory frustrates the domestic societies of the stronger parties, thus inhibiting the ability of the latter to effectively marshal a vigorous and sustained military effort. Furthermore, terrorists have the tactical advantage of attack, i.e., we can’t see them coming and they can make extraordinarily large impacts on nations with limited means (a small number of men who high-jacked airplanes caused 9/11, and a small number of envelopes delivered anthrax). Finally, terrorism enjoys a targeting advantage. Terrorists are difficult targets because of their elusiveness.

1 The “Terrorism Index.” 2007. Foreign Policy, September/October, 2007, pp. 60-67 suggests that policy experts envision a good many nations as being possibilities for future al Qaeda strongholds.
3 Betts, “The Soft Underbelly” draws on Kissinger’s famous statement about the war against insurgency in South Vietnam: that the insurgents win simply by surviving.
4 The frustration effect emanates from the fact that primacy raises domestic perceptions of quick and decisive victory, but as this outcome is frustrated and the costs of carrying on the war mount, societies can quickly turn against the war, and hence hamstring the war effort. On the frustration effect and asymmetric warfare, see for example Lambakis et. al., Understand Asymmetric Threats; Ivan Arreguin-Toft, How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of “Asymmetric” Conflict. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) and Martin Ewans, Conflict in Afghanistan: Studies in Asymmetric Warfare. (London: Routledge, 2005).
and limited exposure, but their targets are infinite and cannot be fully protected: power plants, bridges, airports, stadiums, waterways, skyscrapers, and people.\(^55\) Indeed, Kegley and Raymond have reminded us that America’s “preponderant power is not reducing global terrorism.”\(^56\)

In this sense, terrorism requires a different cure: smart power is the key to addressing the weaknesses of America’s soft underbelly. But it is precisely this more effective solution that has been compromised by the moral hazard of hard power solutions. From a military standpoint, the moral hazard emanating from conventional primacy has caused military operations to undermine the most effective means of promoting “sustainable security.” Fighting terrorism through coercion and conventional military strategies (large-scale interdiction, troop deployment, occupation, threats) has come at the expense of more progressive tactics. Moreover, such approaches at best have fared poorly and at worst have proved counter-productive.\(^57\) Thomas (2008) and de Wijk (2003) demonstrate that the tactical systems required to confront terrorist threats are founded on prevention, indirect methods, disaggregation and limited-scale engagement. Prevention requires civilian and military personnel working in potential trouble spots with domestic institutions and personnel to set up infrastructures for deterring or anticipating threats that might migrate internationally. This strategy highlights the benefits of indigenous constabularies that would interdict threats at the grass roots. Indirect methods would work through non-conventional military channels and through allied/partner nations that develop domestic security functions. These methods would feature pacification-type strategies that

\(^{56}\) Kegley and Raymond, *After Iraq,* p. 69.  
encouraged better governance and the socio-economic development of indigenous civil-societies. Disaggregation would stress the need to frame security strategies based on local and regional conditions. Limited engagement would stress the use of small numbers of military and civilian personnel in developing indigenous security capabilities. The main functions of these personnel would be oriented around training, advising, intelligence gathering, and paramilitary and covert operations. Such a sustainable security initiative would rely extensively on soft power in terms of implementation and success.\textsuperscript{58}

The initiative would rely fundamentally on the access of American military, diplomatic and civilian personal to potential troubled spots, as the joint-security operations would require extensive cooperation between the U.S. and foreign political entities. Local and national receptivity to such cooperation with Americans would determine the success of these joint operations. But moreover, this bilateralism needs to be complemented and integrated into a multilateral security network.\textsuperscript{59} This would rely on international regimes and international organizations to broker and participate in the security initiatives carved out by the U.S. and selected nations. This multilateralism would also be predicated on the receptivity of participating


An extensive survey of military officers has revealed a belief that America’s campaigns against Iraq and Afghanistan have not only debilitated the U.S. military conventionally, but have also served to undermine the development of more effective operations against terrorism (“U.S. Military Index”).\textsuperscript{59} Jervis, “Why the Bush Doctrine” and John Newhouse, “The Threats America Faces.” \textit{World Policy Journal}, Summer, vol. 19, 2003, pp. 21-37 underscore the difficulty of effective intelligence when acting unilaterally to solve the terrorist problem. It has become evident that the kind of information requirements to confront terrorism can never be delivered with the U.S. acting independently of target states. Reliable information can only be consistently generated from indigenous sources, hence the need for cooperation.
nations to the American overtures for sustainable security. Bush’s policies dealt a strong blow to this receptivity at both levels (Gardner 2005, p. 80). In this respect, the Bush solution to terrorism proved to be a double-edged sword in undermining sustainable security. First, it proved counter-productive in generating even greater security threats through terror. But it also undercut the soft power necessary for launching and maintaining such an initiative, both in the U.S. and abroad: allies and partner nations proved to be a coalition of the unwilling, indigenous populations have been repulsed by Americans and their initiatives for local security, and the American Congress and public showed bipartisan condemnation rather than bipartisan support.

Above and beyond the soft-power—military strategy link, the moral hazard effect of the Bush Doctrine in neglecting the soft-power consequences of hard-power strategies compromised American security at an even more fundamental level. Enhancing this soft power would have rendered many of the sustainable security initiatives less crucial because such soft power could have effectively addressed many of the root causes of terrorism. But this required a multi-faceted diplomatic campaign that would aim for regional political and economic stabilization. This would be based on a willingness to work with governments rather than beyond or above them, and would embrace multilateral engagement. The U.S. should have worked in a multilateral context, both within and outside of the Middle East, to bring about a resolution to the Palestinian problem. This would have required a normalization of relations with nations that Bush targeted as rogue states. Relations between India and Pakistan, as well as relations between North and South Korea, should have been approached in a similar way. The U.S. should have guaranteed the civil liberties of all who were being held under suspicion of terrorism both in the U.S. and

---

foreign bases. The U.S. should have improved relations with the other major regional power brokers whose domains contained most of the asymmetric threats to the U.S.: China, Russia, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. These domains also featured many of the autocratic regimes holding back liberal democratic transitions, which themselves proved to be a breeding ground for asymmetric threats. Finally the U.S. could have more vigorously provided the economic public goods to deliver many parts of the world from deprivation. All such soft-power initiatives would have addressed the problems of asymmetric threats at the grass roots. Ultimately, the grass roots approach relies on U.S. soft power creating a favorable environment in foreign civil societies (i.e., the U.S. having allies in foreign populations). The Bush Doctrine, unfortunately, generated a toxic environment.61

This soft war would be an entirely different kind of war in that it would hope to “win the hearts and minds” of populations in potentially dangerous regions. Interestingly, it has been the more radical elements, against which the U.S. has been fighting a hard war, that have frequently done a better job in conducting such a war. Throughout the Middle East and the Muslim world at large (especially Afghanistan and Pakistan), radical Islamic groups have from the 1990s on been actively engaged in providing public goods to populations in deprivation or turmoil. Often these groups have been far better than the domestic governments in these states at general relief and social activities (welfare, education, health care, food aid). The purported civic generosity on the part of Hamas, Hezbollah and al Qaeda has become legend among Muslim populations in a

number of countries. It is little wonder that recruitment into the ranks of extremist organizations has been vigorous, and has shown no signs of declining.\footnote{Lennon, \textit{The Battle for Hearts and Minds} and de Wijk, “The Limits of Military Power, p. 20.}

\textbf{WMD}

With respect to WMD, while the development of nuclear capacity may have been avoided in Iraq for the time being, there is no doubt that the aggressive and pre-emptive solutions used in Iraq have made the cause of the U.S. all the more difficult with respect to Iran. So the net effects of shutting down some nuclear R&D in Iraq may in the end generate more actual weapons systems in Iran and other Middle Eastern nations that find such systems to be the only viable means of averting a repetition of an American invasion. In this respect, the coercive strategy of eliminating WMD has in fact raised the deterrent value of such weapons for nations, hence has made the development of WMD all the more desirable.\footnote{Kegley and Raymond, \textit{After Iraq}, p. 102; Gardner, \textit{American Global Strategy}, p. 12; and Robert Jervis, “The Compulsive Empire” \textit{Foreign Policy}, July/August, 2003, pp. 82-87. Jervis (p. 86) argues that attempts to force disarmament will actually speed up proliferation. In fact, a Pew Survey “Views of a Changing World 2003” (Pew Research Center. 2003). http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=185) shows that a great many people in Muslim nations feared a U.S. invasion at the time.}

In terms of WMD, the Iran-effect has been seen elsewhere. North Korea has certainly vindicated the idea that America’s coercive policy in dealing with WMD raises the utility of such weapon systems as deterrents, but in this case it is clear that they also hold utility as bargaining chips.\footnote{Gardner, \textit{American Global Strategy}, p. 12 and Robert Jervis, “The Compulsive Empire.” Francois Heisbourg, “A Work in Progress: The Bush Doctrine and Its Consequences” in Alexander T.J. Lennon, and Camille Eiss, eds. \textit{Reshaping Rogue States}, pps. 3-18. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), p. 16 refers to this process as “precautionary proliferation.”} As the six-nation talks over North Korea’s WMD faltered in September of 2003, its chief
envoy announced that his nation intended to formally declare it had, and would test, atomic weapons as well as possessing an improved missile delivery system. But he added that such weapons programs would be stopped if Washington agreed to an ironclad nonaggression pact with North Korea. Shortly after that declaration, North Korea’s parliament expressed support for Kim Jong II’s policy of maintaining a “nuclear deterrent force” to counter a hostile U.S. While Bush perfunctorily pushed diplomacy through the Six Party Talks, he gave little leeway to negotiators, as he was antithetical to negotiating with militant autocrats like Kim Jong Il. Bush saw the deal as “blackmail.” All the while, Bush never relinquished a coercive posture in dealing with North Korea. In fact, he reinforced this orientation by ordering the JCS to prepare military operations against potential North Korean targets, some of which were suspected weapons centers (OPLAN 5030). When leaked to the press, North Korea pushed ever harder to develop WMD in hopes of building a viable deterrent against military strikes.

In undermining the more positive diplomatic relations built with North Korea under the Clinton administration, and thus increasing tension between the two nations, Bush encouraged further development of a nuclear capacity in that nation. But the Bush posture had other feedback consequences that made the quest against WMD all the more difficult. In pushing the hard line versus Kim Jong II, Bush undermined diplomatic efforts by South Korea’s Kim Dae Jung to bridge testy issues (including WMD) between the two nations on the Korean peninsula. Lack of

---

65 The Six Party talks have proved valuable in addressing the Korean problem because of the involvement of China and because of the multilateral legitimacy it brings. It may in fact be the case that these talks carry greater potential than the Security Council, which has been turned into a more confrontational direction on issues of WMD by the U.S.

66 Kim Jong Il became more sensitized to the utility of WMD against American threats by his growing perception that in fact Iraq was invaded because it had failed to build a nuclear device. Gardner, American Global Strategy, p. 153 and Kaplan, Daydream Believers, p. 74.
U.S. support undermined a foreign policy that was pitched as a focal point of Kim Dae’s political initiative for a new South Korea. In doing so, Kim suffered political setbacks that eventually led to his electoral loss to new leader Roh Moo Hyun. This hurt the U.S. cause significantly because Roh harbored significant anti-American sentiments and proved more difficult to influence. A key to U.S. hopes of limiting WMD in North Korea has been to foster better relations on the peninsula, thus reducing tensions that contributed to Kim Jong Il’s need for a deterrence capability. But with a less amenable leader in South Korea, such designs were dealt a serious blow. While in 2007 Kim Jong Il finally accepted American terms to curtail his nuclear energy program under international surveillance, Kim had nonetheless been able in the previous years void of negotiations to build enough weapons-grade plutonium to build several nuclear devices. In the end, Bush’s militant crusade to deliver America from the treats of terrorism and WMD made the threats even greater because of the negative feedback generated by America’s confrontational hard-power strategy.67

As with terrorism, the smarter option for addressing the problem of WMD dictated the infusion of a greater variety of soft instruments into Bush’s policy mix. Like terrorism, WMD, as asymmetric threats, enjoy a plethora of tactical advantages against America’s conventional security strategies. The geographic size and global presence of the U.S. creates a fairly indefensible network of targets. The freedom of American society and the level of globalization create manifold opportunities to obtain materials to build WMD, develop them through small numbers of perpetrators, hide them effectively, and deliver them with alarming speed and consequences. All of this is especially true of chemical and biological weapons. As we have seen

in the past (with anthrax and the use of such weapons in the Iran-Iraq War), very small levels of input are required to produce devastating consequences. The fact that such small levels of inputs are required to deliver such devastation makes the problem extremely difficult to root out of global civil society. Given the indefensibility of potential targets (especially agriculture and water systems) and the ease with which perpetrators can inflict damage, the U.S. is alarmingly vulnerable to such attacks. But even nuclear weapons, given technological advances, have evolved to a point where state-sponsorship is no long necessary to build and use such devastating weapons. Indeed, an especially vigorous market in missile and nuclear technology has been visible since the end of the Cold War, with the U.S. being a major player as well, albeit indirectly. Moreover, much of it is in the black market, where monitoring is non-existent.

As with terrorism, sustainable military security against WMD requires smart power solutions. Regional security communities in which the U.S. has a strongly integrated role would have to be constructed. Again, as with terrorism, the strategies of prevention, indirect methods, disaggregation and limited-scale engagement would be required for a sustainable initiate. And they would be implemented in fundamentally similar ways as in the war against terrorism. This, again, would rely on foreign receptivity to American involvement in national and local security initiatives, as well as receptivity among allied and partner nations in building multilateral

---

68 The “Terrorism Index” shows that policy experts envision numerous nations as possible sources of nuclear technology.

69 Response time to such attacks must be rapid in order to avoid extreme consequences, but many biological and chemical agents are not even detectable (Lambakis et. al., “Understanding “Asymmetric” Threats,” p. 32).

initiatives to support bilateral plans for sustainable security. And again, as with terrorism, the Bush Doctrine, in undermining this receptivity among host and potential partner nations, also undermined sustainable security possibilities against WMD. As with terrorism, reliance on hard power strategies has generated moral hazard in developing the more viable strategies enumerated above. Big war mania under the Bush regime has crowded out the more finely tailored operations required to confront such asymmetric threats.  

Moreover, as with terrorism, Bush’s coercive and confrontational style, on a global scale, undermined the very receptivity of American participation necessary to build effective regional security communities to fight such threats.  

And again, as with terrorism, above and beyond the soft power—military strategy link, the moral hazard effect of the Bush Doctrine in neglecting the soft power consequences of hard power strategies, has compromised American security at the grass roots level as well. Enhancing this soft power would render many of the sustainable security initiatives unnecessary. The strategies for confronting terrorism through the multi-faceted diplomatic campaigns enumerated above, in a quest for geo-strategic pacification outcomes (i.e., regional political and economic stabilization) would work well for WMD as well, given the asymmetric qualities they share with terrorism. Effective preventive strategies against asymmetric threats in general require favorable

---

71 The problem of WMD, as an asymmetric phenomenon, is manifest at the undercurrents of world politics (terrorist activities, concealed activities in so-called rogue states), hence effective intelligence is the very lynchpin determining the success of counter-WMD operations. Unilateral intelligence operations lack the effectiveness to derive dependable information on such activities. Indigenous sources of information are required for effective intelligence, and this requires cooperation from target and partner states. See Jervis, “Why the Bush Doctrine” and Newhouse “The Threats America Faces.”

civic environments to root out the threats, which means having foreign populations favorably disposed to U.S. interests. Only soft power can effectively deliver such environments.\textsuperscript{73}

Undermining the very need for WMD relies on multilateralism. Eliminating security threats, political instability and economic deprivation are three essential objectives for reducing the incentives to rely on WMD. These objectives could only be delivered through multilateral venues. Such venues have shown far more success in delivering such outcomes than Bush’s hard campaign. The NPT, BWC, CWC, CTBT, and the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Program for CIS nations have produced numerous positive accomplishments. Beefing up these initiatives and adding more of an economic relief dimension to them would hold far more promise than Bush’s hard power unilateral assault.\textsuperscript{74}

\textit{Promoting the Spread of Democracy}

In terms of spreading democracy, the coercion and aggressive posturing employed in marshaling the liberal crusade for democracy has taken on an air of “imperialism.”\textsuperscript{75} But rather than generating domestic political dynamics favorable to democratic evolution, these methods have generated countervailing processes that cut against such evolution. The crusade undermined

\textsuperscript{73} Halper and Clarke, America Alone, p. 281.
\textsuperscript{75} Tony Smith, A Pact with the Devil. (New York: Routledge, 2007).
the power of moderate Muslim regimes by fueling support for anti-West hardliners in politics.\textsuperscript{76}

This retarded possibilities for democratic state-building and capitalist transition within these nations. But even well before the invasion of Iraq, the hard line taken against the so-called rogue nations through menacing rhetoric and sanctions had polarized politics with the balance of power skewed to the anti-American side. So the U.S. may have eliminated or attempted to force out more autocratic regimes, but in doing so its coercive and interventionist actions sowed the seeds of discontent that undermined more democratic regimes. The height of this deleterious process was visible in Bush’s rhetorical campaign against autocratic regimes with pejorative terms such as Axis of Evil, rogue states, and outposts of tyranny; which not only alienated general populations in the target nations, but also in other autocratic nations that had erstwhile problems with the U.S. The pejorative rhetoric set into motion political shock waves that set back reformist politics in these nations. The anti-American sentiment generated by this confrontational style served to raise the level of nationalism in the target states, and consequently both the rising nationalism and anti-Americanism combined to undermine liberal transformation processes within these states, as the populations and regimes become less amenable to reform.\textsuperscript{77}

Furthermore, the poorly tailored imposition of an American vision of democracy (i.e., without sufficient sensitivity to the particular socio-political conditions in the target nations) resulted in setbacks that have been delegitimizing not only for American-style democracy but democratic

\textsuperscript{76} Indeed, in this respect, the aggressive American crusade to spread democracy backfired also because it equated indigenous democratic movements with American interference.\textsuperscript{77}


Indeed, The “Terrorism Index” poll shows that only 3% of respondents believe that Iraq will become a beacon of democracy among autocratic states. Moreover, 35% of respondents believe that the war will actually discourage Arab dictators from promoting liberal reforms.
transition in general. This problem has been compounded by a tendency to over-learn from history and equate all forms of democratic regimes with the failed attempts to impose American democracy. Tragically, the U.S. has squandered significant opportunities to promote democracy and capitalism in these nations as surveys (Inglehart and Norris and Pew) show that resounding majorities in numerous nations (even in autocratic Muslim nations) support the idea of Western-style democracy and capitalism in theory (e.g., Indonesia 64%, Jordan, 63%, Lebanon 75%). Hence, it would appear that doing nothing at all would have been superior with respect to American interests than trying to coercively impose Western style governments and economies in these nations. Indeed, Smith states that in promoting democracy through imperial aggression, the “liberal internationalism [of the U.S.] has seriously damaged its own cause.”

As with terrorism and WMD, the Bush Doctrine’s hard power approach proved counterproductive to the goal of democratic liberal regime change. And once more the smarter option for addressing this problem, as with the previous two major problems, dictated the infusion of a greater variety of soft instruments into the American foreign policy mix. Overly militarized

---

78 Interestingly, it is clear in the Iraq and Afghanistan cases that America is more intent on building pluralistic political regimes (with competing political interests) than democratic regimes per se (i.e., popular determination of the political regime). Indeed, democracy may produce outcomes that cut against U.S. interests if radical groups (e.g., Hamas) win competitive elections. The difficulty here is that pluralistic systems work well where competition is channeled into political institutions. But in these fractured societies, in which competing groups have competed through violence, pluralism is a recipe for civil war. See Gardner, American Global Strategy, pps. 164,165,189.


81 Smith, A Pact with the Devil, p. 235.

82 There have been a number of empirical studies on the effectiveness of using force to promote liberal democratic regime change. The results across their tests strongly suggest that force consistently fails miserably in bringing about regime change. The studies are well summarized and documented in Kegley and Raymond, After Iraq, pps. 117-119.
and coercive strategies for promoting regime transformation in fact set back prospects for such outcomes. Indeed, the heavy-handed approach, which generated perceptions of being victimized by “liberal imperialism,” discredited much of the ideological appeal and undermined the power of political forces attempting to consummate the change within the regimes themselves. This effectively undercut the soft power necessary for such a political transformation. Hence, by relying on these methods for promoting change, the U.S. failed to embrace the more viable means of effecting sustainable change, and in this sense hard power once again victimized the U.S. through moral hazard in neglecting viable strategies for political transformation.\textsuperscript{83}

Sustainable political change has to be indigenous, as history has shown that stable and lasting regimes cannot simply be imposed on regimes without sensitivity to prior political culture and prevailing socio-economic conditions. Sustainable change is founded on general ideological receptivity for regime change and a vigorous domestic initiative on the part of political leaders.\textsuperscript{84} Both create the requisite soft power foundations for new regimes to flourish. As with terrorism and WMD, U.S. goals for true regime change in the long-run are better effected through strategies of positive engagement. This would mean regime enhancement through diplomacy.


\textsuperscript{84} It is in this respect that analogies to the war-induced political transformation in Japan and German fail. The soft power foundations for such change were far more advanced in Germany and Japan, as compared with Iraq. The Nazi ideology was discredited while in Japan the Emperor supported reforms that had a long legacy in Japan already (from the Meji Restoration). Furthermore, both societies were highly structured and not ethnically or religiously fractured, and their military occupation was brief. In Iraq, however, the occupation has lasted and western ideas have become targets rather than models for reform. Moreover, sectarian and ethnic divisions make a stable pluralistic political system tenuous at best. See Barry Rubin, “Lessons From Iran” in Alexander T.J. Lennon, and Camille Eiss, eds. \textit{Reshaping Rogue States}, pps. 141-153. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004).
cooperation, economic partnerships, and disaggregated political engagement (local, regional, national). In effect these would essentially be strategies of “political pacification” that would both promote and reduce the burden of political and economic transformation.  

The U.S. should be more interested in state success than democracy. Failing states and failed states are the most likely breeding grounds for terrorism and tyranny. And it is far easier to strengthen states than to rebuild them after they have failed or collapsed. In this respect, the major goals of American foreign policy are best served if the focus of American is on helping forge legitimate domestic institutions that deliver political goods rather than focusing on regime orientation specifically. In fragile states, it is not external attempts at democratization that deliver a stable democracy, but rather it is political stability. This kind of stability can only be delivered multilaterally, as unilateral attempts can never generate the legitimacy needed to build legitimate institutions. Hence, the foundations of soft power initiatives are forged through political cooperation. But this cooperation must be pervasive, which is something the Bush Doctrine did not permit. Cooperation must include all relevant parties irrespective of regime types and diplomatic legacies. In this respect, it has required engagement with erstwhile enemies. Hence rapprochement has remained one of the most important but elusive requirements. The moral hazard generated by the Bush Doctrine unraveled a significant diplomatic fabric that might have

enhanced such rapprochement, and thus consequently set back the cause of state building and state rescue.86

The belief in the idea of “incorrigible rogue regimes” (i.e., that regimes are void of the indigenous progressive ideas and forces to support liberal transitions, and therefore such transitions must be imposed) is not only misleading but is also dangerous. It has in fact encouraged just the kind of “imperialistic” assaults that have set back the liberal democratic cause across many such perceived regimes. Globalization and economic progress have been instrumental in stoking these indigenous progressive forces in all political systems. All such perceived regimes have a sizable number in their populations that embrace liberal political and economic ideas, and many of them are extremely influential political actors.87 Iran, for example, has headed this list of purported incorrigible rogue regimes for some time, and has therefore remained a principal concern for those who have been pessimistic about the possibilities for indigenous reform. But Iran, in fact, has demonstrated a strong veneration for republicanism for over 100 years. Starting with the constitutional revolution of 1906, strong sentiments for liberal political institutions has remained strong in Iran. Ansari avers that in fact the past century in Iranian political history reveals a vigorous process of “organic democratization.” Iranian politics, according to Ansari, has always reflected a dynamic and pluralistic nature. Even the crucial political events that ended up producing more autocratic regimes (under the Shah and Khomeini) began as democratic upheavals. The constitutional spirit of 1906 has never died and

has in fact been compounded by the present day forces that are continually serving to modernize Iranian society. In this respect, powerful indigenous forces for change are always fighting against the development of a political gap. And these conditions are also prevalent in other such regimes which have been branded as politically arrested. Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan, Lybia, and Lebanon have been continuing to feel the pinch of a modern and materially grounded society facing economic difficulties and stagnation in a globalized world. This has led to economic, political and educational reforms in all these nations. Hence, the underpinnings of organic democratization have apparently manifested themselves across the “rogue” world.

In sum, the Bush Doctrine was anything but “smart” in selecting instruments to attain the administrations three most revered goals. The critique of this doctrine is not meant to discredit the use of hard power in attaining national goals. Indeed Bush’s muscle did accomplish much, and these accomplishments have not been highlighted here. It has been the purpose of this case study to show that while indeed muscle is essential, overreliance on muscle at the expense of softer strategies has not been an effective strategy in attaining American’s most treasured goals. Indeed some more diversified “smart” mix of strategies that made use of both hard and soft instruments would have been superior in attaining these goals. Indeed, Bush’s hard legacy has put America on a smarter path as Obama has responded to the frustrations of foreign policy

88 The economic need to deliver desirable outcomes (especially employment opportunities to the growing mass of educated young) in a globalized world has forced all modern regimes to make accommodations to political freedom and the market. Moreover, even the most autocratic regimes in the modern era have relied on an urban proletariat and bourgeoisie as important pillars of political support. See Ansari, “Continuous Regime Change.”
in previous administrations with a smarter infusion of soft power into America’s foreign relations.

5. Prescriptions for Instituting Strategies of Smart Power

Even under the acknowledgement that smart power can promote the optimization of national influence and security, harnessing the benefits of smart power will depend on decision-makers’ abilities to appreciate and exploit the benefits of diversification among hard and soft power. Decision-makers will have to be especially perspicacious in evaluating and monitoring their portfolios of power in order to fully integrate soft power into their foreign policies. History has shown that decision-makers have in fact been hesitant to employ soft power strategies even in the face of devastating failures when over-relying on hard power strategies.90 To this purpose, several decision-making practices will be crucial. But such practices will be especially difficult to institute because of common psychological tendencies and cognitive limitations among humans. Hence, decision-makers will have to be especially vigilant and enlightened in the ways they assess and monitor national influence if they are to enjoy the benefits of smart power.

Prescription 1: Theories of power must be continually questioned and power audits continually undertaken with significant sensitivity to the changing face of power in world politics. This prescription would mean constantly assessing and reassessing the effectiveness of a nation’s principal sources of influence in world affairs. Such a task is especially important in finding an optimal mix of resources to maximize a nation’s influence because the diversification

among many power sources necessitates extensive management. Power sources that perform poorly need to be re-evaluated, and possibly reconfigured or eliminated. While sources that perform well should be enhanced. Moreover, national leaders need to clearly ascertain changes in world politics and how these changes affect the risks and returns generated by differing sources of power. Changes may, in fact, cause leaders to conceptualize and rely on completely new sources of power heretofore neglected as important wedges of influence in world politics. Continuous auditing will also be a necessary vehicle for appreciating alternative power resources often neglected by conventional visions of power that put a high premium on hard power. Such a strategy is necessary for placing decision-makers in a position to avoid the natural pitfalls of overreliance of hard power. This overreliance emanates in part from the fact that hard power resources exude a hypnotic allure. They are largely tangible and therefore easily quantifiable. Moreover, a large arsenal of such tangible resources can create a kind of moral hazard effect: large stores of tangible resources may make decision-makers perceive limited vulnerability, hence they may be lax in pursuing important soft power strategies that would create an optimal smart power mix.

Prescription 2: Decision-makers must consider the manifold consequences of power-enhancing strategies. This prescription pertains especially to the problem of complexity in international politics, and suggests extensive perspicacity in clearly ascertaining the manifold consequences of national actions. International politics comprises a complex system: i.e., relations among nations are not simple, linear, predictable, nor exogenous. Feedback and indirect effects are pervasive, and such effects generate manifold consequences for any action or policy.91

In this context, power is neither exercised nor accumulated in a vacuum. Power-seeking behavior is always endogenous, and as such generates manifold consequences that feed back onto the original actions and ultimately alter the conditions within which these actions unfold. Often such consequences can create self-defeating outcomes with respect to national influence. The counter-productive outcomes that emanate from over-reliance on hard power are a direct manifestation of such complex processes.\textsuperscript{92}

Complexity has especially important consequences for smart power, since many of the benefits of soft power are in fact necessarily indirect and longer term. Consequently, the benefits of soft power are much more difficult to ascertain and evaluate. But such benefits are pervasive. Hence, soft power strategies require decision-makers to undertake a pronounced commitment to more thoroughly evaluate and scrutinize the relative effectiveness of soft power strategies. This makes a more complete inventory and assessment of national power necessary, one that in fact covers the various manifold possibilities for soft and hard power. Only then can decision-makers find the optimal combinations of hard and soft power necessary to maximize influence.

Prescription 3. Decision-makers must think in terms of net rather than nominal power. This is a corollary of Strategy 2, as complexity entails the evaluation of net effects, which are the outcomes one is left with after all the reactions to initial uses of power have occurred. This strategy is underscored because it is especially effective in breaking down a deleterious tendency among decision-makers to over-rely on hard power. No factor contributes as greatly to victimization from such over-reliance than a tendency to evaluate power in nominal terms. In accumulating power resources, decision-makers should be especially careful about assessing the

\textsuperscript{92} Gallarotti, \emph{Cosmopolitan Power} and Gallarotti, \emph{The Power Curse}. 

41
costs and consequences of acquiring and using such resources, and factoring those costs and consequences into their estimates of the nation’s overall influence in international relations. Such consequences make nominal power calculations useless at best since the use of power as an endogenous process is subject to feedback effects in complex systems.

Prescription 4. Decision-makers must judge power based on outcomes rather than resources. One of the stark lessons from case studies on power accumulation is that decision-makers appear to be especially tolerant of ongoing failures in attaining their most vital foreign objectives. Much of this is the result of the blinding effects of resource moral hazard: because their nations were endowed with significant tangible resources, setbacks in terms of outcomes did not generate the same sense of urgency and panic that might arise in the face of more modest stocks of resources. Assessing power based on resources rather than outcomes makes decision-makers especially susceptible to victimization from the over-reliance on hard power. As noted, hard power resources are more easily quantified and evaluated relative to soft power. But hard power resources enjoy an especially significant advantage relative to outcomes. It is far less difficult to agree on the size of a military arsenal, for example, than it is to agree on the meaning of certain outcomes in international relations, and how such outcomes are indicative of national influence. Hence, decision-makers may remain confident about national influence even in the face of disconfirming outcomes.

Obstacles to Smart Power Optimization

---

Prescriptions 1 and 2 will prove difficult to realize because they are inconsistent with common tendencies of human psychology and cognitive limitations. People are naturally quite hesitant to abandon pre-existing beliefs and theories. In this respect people tend to be cognitively rigid: they think paradigmatically, and their theories or paradigms of power are fairly stable and psychologically compelling over time. Moreover, people tend not to subject their theories to frequent empirical tests or critical scrutiny. Bureaucratic friction, caused by the necessity of broad consensus and long implementation time-lines will further impede such paradigmatic shifts, even if decision-makers find superior alternatives. In the case of Prescription 2, the cognitive costs of dealing with complexity are normally very high, which explains why people are guided by paradigmatic thinking in analyzing the world around them. Consequently, there will be a pronounced tendency for decision-makers to make choices using bounded rationality, which itself is based on limited information and simple models in making decisions. Such thought processes, however, tend to produce fairly shallow models of decision-making, and therefore will prove ripe for neglecting the potential of soft power and promoting victimization from over-reliance on hard power.

Prescriptions 3 and 4 will also prove to be quite challenging for decision-makers to operationalize. Since the cognitive costs of dealing with complexity are high, decision-makers will find it difficult to make policies that effectively account for the full net effects of their actions. It is much more tempting to associate levels of influence with measures of nominal power, and in this case hard power resources will dominate because these are generally tangible

---

97 Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*. 
and quantifiable.\textsuperscript{98} This is further enhanced by the asymmetries of information and human tendencies to limit cognitive costs. This will give tangible resources an advantage over outcomes as measuring sticks of influence. This tendency toward nominalism in assessing national influence will create a bias in perceptions against the limitations of hard power and against the benefits for soft power, which in turn will make optimal smart power targets that much more difficult to achieve.

With respect to outcomes, the issue of interpretation presents further problems. And this suggests an especially difficult challenge for building effective strategies that vigorously employ soft power in arriving at optimal smart power targets. Since people rely on paradigmatic thinking, they tend to interpret and assess outcomes by filtering them through pre-existing theories about international relations. Such paradigmatic filtering makes it likely that the significance and even the nature of the outcomes themselves are misinterpreted or misperceived. It is often the case that such cognitive rigidity distorts incoming information to conform to the pre-existing beliefs and theories themselves. In this respect, people tend to be more rationalizers than rational.\textsuperscript{99} Evidence that might disconfirm such paradigms or pre-existing theories may be distorted in ways that makes it less salient as a source of falsification, or even distorted to the point of being transformed into something that actually confirms such paradigms or theories. There is ample evidence in case studies of power accumulation that such cognitive rigidity distorted perceptions of outcomes in ways that limited the ability of decision-makers to institute smart policies that effectively enhanced national influence.\textsuperscript{100}

\textsuperscript{98} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{100} Gallarotti, \textit{Cosmopolitan Power} and Gallarotti, \textit{The Power Curse}. 
6. Conclusion: Optimal or Smartest Power is the Real Goal

Much of the present emphasis on smart power under the Obama administration is a reaction to a long tradition of decision-making that has neglected the benefits of soft power and over-relied on hard power. And consequently the scholarly literature on smart power has followed American policy and has been more demonstrative about emphasizing soft power than about how both hard and soft power can be optimally combined. In short the narrative has underscored reallocation but has fallen well short of sufficiently considering the goal of a more systematic identification of an optimal diversification among differing power resources. Hence, diversified strategies may be smart, but optimal strategies are the smartest. In this respect, the greatest possible influence a nation can achieve would be obtained through some optimal diversification among soft and hard power resources. While this diversification has always proved a superior strategy, it is all the more important in the world of the present and future. Indeed the changes in international politics highlighted above suggest that it is becoming a more complex and sophisticated world order (i.e., a cosmopolitan world order) in which the brut forces of hard power have diminished in their importance relative to soft power. This more cosmopolitan world requires very different strategies for optimizing influence in world politics. It requires a concomitantly sophisticated theory that can effectively accommodate such changes in articulating a theory of power. Indeed, it requires a cosmopolitan theory of power that is much more in keeping with the times. The idea of smart power would comprise a conceptual core of such a theory.
References

Alterman, Jon B., “Not in My Back Yard: Iraq’s Neighbors’ Interests” in 

Ansari, Ali M., “Continuous Regime Change From Within” in Alexander T.J. Lennon, 
and Camille Eiss, eds. Reshaping Rogue States, pp. 265-282. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 
2004).

Arreguin-Toft, Ivan, How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric 

Baldwin, David A., “Power and International Relations,” in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse and 
Beth A. Simmons (eds.), Handbook of International Relations, pp. 177-191 (London: 
Sage, 2002).

Barnet, Richard, and John Cavanagh, “The Homogenization of Global Culture,” in Jerry Mander 
and Edward Goldsmith (eds.), The Case Against the Global Economy and for a Turn 

Barnett, Michael and Raymond Duvall, “Power in International Politics,” International 

Press, 2005).

Berenkoetter, Felix, “Thinking About Power,” in Felix Berenkoetter and M.J. Williams (eds.), 


Jervis, Robert, “Understanding the Bush Doctrine.” *Political Science Quarterly,*


http://www.cnas.org/en/cms/?1924


