Soft Power

Soft power is an academic concept that has migrated to the front pages of newspapers and been used by top leaders in China, Indonesia, Europe, and elsewhere. However, wide usage has sometimes meant misuse of the concept as a synonym for anything other than military force.[1] Moreover, because soft power has appeared to be an alternative to raw power politics, it is often embraced by ethically minded scholars and policymakers. But soft power is a descriptive, rather than a normative, concept. Like any form of power, it can be wielded for good or bad purposes. Hitler, Stalin, and Mao all possessed a great deal of soft power in the eyes of their acolytes, but that did not make it good. It is not necessarily better to twist minds than to twist arms.[2]

Skeptics have dismissed soft power as "one of those beautiful academic ideas that failed a lot of foreign policy tests" and argued that "armies weren't stopped by even the deepest cultural affinity."[3] Though the concept of soft power is recent, the behavior it denotes is as old as human history. It is implicit in Lao-tzu's comment that a leader is best not when people obey his commands, but when they barely know he exists. In eighteenth-century Europe, the spread of French language and culture enhanced French power. In 1762,

when Frederick the Great of Prussia was on the brink of defeat, he was saved by his personal soft power when "Czarina Elizabeth died and was succeeded by her son Peter, who idolized the soldier-king . . . and ordered home the Russian armies."[4] During the American Civil War, some British statesmen considered supporting the South, but despite their obvious commercial and strategic interests, British elites were constrained by popular opposition to slavery and attraction to the cause of the North. Before World War I, when the United States wrestled with the choice of going to war with Germany or Britain, "Germany's primary disadvantage in 1914 was not its record in American opinion, but the absence of a record. So little existed to counteract the natural pull toward Britain . . . which dominated the channels of transatlantic communication."[5] Contrary to the skeptics, soft power has often had very real effects in history, including on the movement of armies.

Because it is a form of power, only a truncated and impoverished version of realism ignores soft power.[6] Traditional realists did not. In 1939, noted British realist E. H. Carr described international power in three categories: military power, economic power, and power over opinion. As we have seen, much of this subtlety was lost by contemporary neorealists in their desire to make power measurable for their structural judgments.[7] They committed what might be called "the concrete fallacy."[8] Power was reduced to measurable, tangible resources. It was something that could be dropped on your foot or on cities, rather than something that might change your mind about wanting to drop anything in the first place.

As Machiavelli, the ultimate realist, described five centuries ago, it may be better for a prince to be feared than loved, but the prince is in greatest danger when he is hated. There is no contradiction between realism and soft power. Soft power is not a form of idealism or liberalism. It is simply a form of power, one way of getting desired outcomes. Legitimacy is a power reality. Competitive struggles over legitimacy are part of enhancing or depriving actors of soft power, and this is particularly true in the information age of the twenty-first century.

Not just states are involved. Corporations, institutions, NGOs, and transnational terrorist networks often have soft power of their own. Even individual celebrities are able to use their soft power "by making ideas, palatable, acceptable, colorful. Or as the singer Bono put it . . . his function is to bring applause when people get it right, and make their lives a misery when they don't."[9] In 2007, in the run-up to the Beijing Olympics, Steven Spielberg sent an open letter to President Hu Jintao asking China to use its influence to push Sudan to accept a UN peacekeeping force in Darfur. "China soon dispatched Mr. Zhai to Darfur, a turnaround that served as a classic study of how a pressure campaign, aimed to strike Beijing in a vulnerable spot at a vulnerable time, could accomplish what years of diplomacy could not."[10]

Incorporating soft power into a government strategy is more difficult than may first appear. For one thing, success in terms of outcomes is more in the control of the target than is often the case with hard power. A second problem is that the results often take a long time, and most politicians and publics are impatient to see a prompt return on their investments. Third, the instruments of soft power are not fully under the control of governments. Although governments control policy, culture and values are embedded in civil societies. Soft power may appear less risky than economic or military power, but it is often hard to use, easy to lose, and costly to reestablish.

Soft power depends upon credibility, and when governments are perceived as manipulative and information is seen as propaganda, credibility is destroyed. One critic argues that if governments eschew imposition or manipulation, they are not really exercising soft power, but mere dialogue.[11] Even though governments face a difficult task in maintaining credibility, this criticism underestimates the importance of pull, rather than push, in soft power interactions. The best propaganda is not propaganda.

Of course, it is important not to exaggerate the impact of soft (or any other form of) power. There are some situations where soft power provides very little leverage. It is difficult, for example, to

see how soft power would solve the dispute over North Korea's nuclear weapons. Some critics make the mistake of assuming that because soft power is often insufficient, it is not a form of power. But that problem is true of all forms of power. Nevertheless, when a government is concerned about structural milieu goals or general value objectives, such as promotion of democracy, human rights, and freedom, it is often the case that soft power turns out to be superior to hard power. And in a century marked by global information and a diffusion of power to nonstate actors, soft power will become an increasingly important part of smart power strategies.

SOURCES OF SOFT POWER

The soft power of a country rests heavily on three basic resources: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when others see them as legitimate and having moral authority). The parenthetical conditions are the key in determining whether potential soft power resources translate into the behavior of attraction that can influence others toward favorable outcomes. With soft power, what the target thinks is particularly important, and the targets matter as much as the agents. Attraction and persuasion are socially constructed. Soft power is a dance that requires partners.

In some contexts, culture can be an important power resource. "Culture" is the pattern of social behaviors by which groups transmit knowledge and values, and it exists at multiple levels.[12] Some aspects of human culture are universal, some are national, and others are particular to social classes or small groups. Culture is never static, and different cultures interact in different ways. More research needs to be done on the connection between culture and power behavior. For example, can Western cultural attraction reduce current extremist appeals in some Muslim societies today? Some see an unbridgeable cultural divide. But consider the Islamic

state of Iran. Western music and videos are anathema to the ruling mullahs, but attractive to many of the younger generation.

Sometimes, a third party helps with cultural intermediation. In China, many American and Japanese cultural ideas are proving more attractive when they arrive via South Korea. As a university student puts it in discussing television shows, "American dramas also show the same kind of lifestyle. We know that South Korea and America have similar political systems and economies. But it is easier to accept the lifestyle from South Koreans because they are culturally closer to us. We feel we can live like them in a few years."[13]

But direct cultural contacts can also be important. As the son of China's foreign minister described Chinese students in the United States: "Our experiences made us see that there are alternative ways for China to develop and for us to lead our personal lives. Being in the United States made us realize that things in China can be different."[14] Over time, cultures influence each other. For example, the American University in Beirut originally enhanced American soft power in Lebanon, but studies show that it later enhanced Lebanon's soft power in America.[15]

Culture, values, and policies are not the only resources that produce soft power. As we saw in the last chapter, economic resources can also produce soft as well as hard power behavior. They can be used to attract as well as coerce. Sometimes in real-world situations, it is difficult to distinguish what part of an economic relationship is composed of hard power and what is made up of soft power. European leaders describe the desire by other countries to accede to the European Union as a sign of Europe's soft power.[16] It is impressive, for example, that former communist countries in Central Europe oriented their expectations and revised their laws to comply with Brussels's framework. Turkey has made changes in its human rights policies and laws on similar grounds. But how much are the changes the result of the economic inducement of market access, and how much is the result of attraction to Europe's successful economic and political system? The situation is one of mixed motives,

and different actors in a country may see the mix in different ways. Journalists and historians must trace particular processes in detail to disentangle causation.

A number of observers see China's soft power increasing in Asia and other parts of the developing world, particularly after the 2008 global financial crisis that started in the United States.[17] According to the *People's Daily*, "Soft power has become a key word. . . . There is great potential for the development of China's soft power."[18] In parts of the developing world, the so-called Beijing Consensus on authoritarian government plus a successful market economy has become more popular than the previously dominant Washington Consensus of liberal market economics with democratic government. But to what extent are Venezuelans and Zimbabweans attracted to the Beijing Consensus, admire China's doubling of its gross domestic product over a decade, or are induced by the prospect of access to a large and growing market? Moreover, even if the authoritarian growth model produces soft power for China in authoritarian countries, it does not produce attraction in democratic countries. What attracts in Caracas may repel in Paris.[19]

We also saw that military resources can sometimes contribute to soft power. Dictators often cultivate myths of invincibility to structure expectations and attract others to join their bandwagon. Some people are generally attracted to strength. As Osama bin Laden has said, people are attracted to a strong horse rather than a weak horse. A well-run military can be a source of attraction, and military-to-military cooperation and training programs can establish transnational networks that enhance a country's soft power. At the same time, misuse of military resources can undercut soft power. Indifference to just-war principles of discrimination and proportionality can destroy legitimacy. The efficiency of the initial American military invasion of Iraq in 2003 may have created admiration in the eyes of some Iraqis and others, but that soft power was undercut by the subsequent inefficiency of the occupation and the scenes of mistreatment of prisoners. In contrast, the United States, China,

Brazil, and others all increased their soft power by using military resources for earthquake relief in Haiti in 2010.

SOFT POWER AND AMERICAN HEGEMONY

Some analysts see soft power in the twenty-first century as a form of cultural imperialism and argue that American culture has created a hegemonic liberal dialogue.[20] Global politics involves "verbal fighting" among competing narratives, and these analysts argue that the ability of the United States to frame global politics after 9/11 as a "global war on terror" channeled arguments and actions into an American framework.[21] But to describe American dominance over contemporary communications as coercive is an odd use of the word "coercion." As Steven Lukes argues, there are rational and nonrational modes by which the third face of power operates and empowering and disempowering ways by which agents influence targets' formulation of their preferences and self-interest. Although not always easy, we can distinguish indoctrination from free choice in most instances.[22]

American values are not universal in some absolute sense, but many are similar to the values of others in an information age where more people want participation and freedom of expression. When values are widely shared, they can provide a basis for soft power that works in multiple directions, both to and from the United States. Americans may benefit but simultaneously find themselves constrained to live up to values shared by others if the United States wishes to remain attractive. Given the political diversity and institutional fragmentation of global relations, those who believe in an American hegemony over discourse have a difficult case to make. Many countries and groups have different values. Otherwise, there would be far more uniformity of views than now exists in global affairs. Local cultures continue to command loyalty because "people are involved in networks of status and caste, and they pursue religious and communal markers of identity."[23]

To put the question of American soft power hegemony in perspective, it helps to look at China. There is no lack of Chinese interest in the idea of "soft power." A Singaporean analyst argues that "soft power is central to China's strategic vision and underlines its sensitivity to external perceptions."[24] Since the early 1990s, hundreds of essays and scholarly articles have been published in the People's Republic of China on soft power. The term has also entered China's official language. In his keynote speech to the Seventeenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) on October 15, 2007, President Hu Jintao stated that the CPC must "enhance culture as part of the soft power of our country . . . a factor of growing significance in the competition in overall national strength."[25]

China has always had an attractive traditional culture, but now it is entering the realm of global popular culture as well. A total of 1.4 million Chinese students studied abroad between 1978 and 2008, and in 2009, 220,000 foreign students enrolled in Chinese universities. Chinese officials expect the number to increase to 500,000 by 2020.[26] China has created several hundred Confucius Institutes around the world to teach its language and culture, and while the Voice of America was cutting its Chinese broadcasts from nineteen to fourteen hours a day, China Radio International was increasing its broadcasts in English to twenty-four hours a day.[27] In 2009–2010, China invested $8.9 billion in "external publicity work," including a twenty-four-hour Xinhua cable news channel designed to imitate Al Jazeera.[28]

China has also adjusted its diplomacy. In the early 1990s, it was wary of multilateral arrangements and was at cross-purposes with many of its neighbors. Subsequently, it joined the World Trade Organization, contributed more than 3,000 troops to serve in UN peacekeeping operations, became more helpful on nonproliferation diplomacy (including hosting the six-power talks on North Korea), settled territorial disputes with neighbors, and joined a variety of regional organizations of which the East Asian summit is only the

latest example. This new diplomacy helped to alleviate fears and reduce the likelihood of other countries allying to balance a rising power.[29] According to one study, "The Chinese style emphasized symbolic relationships, high-profile gestures, such as rebuilding the Cambodian Parliament or Mozambique Foreign Affairs Ministry."[30] But there are limits to Chinese as well as American soft power.

In 2006, China used the anniversary of the naval explorations of its great Ming Dynasty admiral Zheng He to create a narrative that justified its modern naval expansion into the Indian Ocean, but that did not produce soft power in India, where suspicions of Chinese naval ambitions led to a climate of mistrust.[31] Similarly, China tried to enhance its soft power by the successful staging of the 2008 Olympics, but shortly afterward its domestic crackdown in Tibet, in Xianjiang, and on activists like Liu Xiaobo (who later received the Nobel Peace Prize) undercut the country's soft power gains. In 2009, Beijing announced plans to spend billions of dollars to develop global media giants to compete with Bloomberg, Time Warner, and Viacom "to use soft power rather than military might to win friends abroad."[32] But China's efforts were hindered by its domestic political censorship. For all the efforts to turn Xinhua and China Central Television into competitors for CNN and the BBC, "there is no international audience for the brittle propaganda." India's Bollywood films command far greater international audiences than do Chinese films. "When Zhang Yimou, the acclaimed director, was asked recently why his films were always set in the past, he said that films about contemporary China would be neutered by the censors."[33]

Thus, it is not surprising that a poll taken in Asia late in 2008 found China's soft power less than that of the United States, and concluded that "China's charm offensive has thus far been ineffective."[34] This was confirmed by a 2010 BBC poll of twenty-eight countries that showed a net positive image of China only in Pakistan and Africa, whereas in Asia, the Americas, and Europe the modal opinion was neutral to poor.[35] Great powers try to use culture and narrative to create soft power that promotes their advantage, but it

is not always an easy sell if the words and symbols are inconsistent with domestic realities.

Soft power can be used for both zero-sum and positive-sum interactions. As we have seen, it is a mistake to think of power—the ability to affect others to obtain preferred outcomes—simply as "power over" rather than "power with" others. Some observers have expressed alarm over the potential increase in Chinese soft power. Whether this will be a problem for other countries or not will depend on the way the power is used. If China uses its soft power to manipulate the politics of Asia to exclude the United States, its strategy will cause friction, but to the extent that China adopts the attitude of a rising "responsible stakeholder" in international affairs, its combination of hard and soft power can make a positive contribution.

China is far from America's or Europe's equal in soft power, but it would be foolish to ignore the gains China is making. Fortunately, these gains can be good for China and also good for the rest of the world. Soft power need not be a zero-sum game in which one country's gain is necessarily another country's loss. If China and the United States, for example, both become more attractive in each other's eyes, the prospects of damaging conflicts will be reduced. If the rise of China's soft power reduces the likelihood of conflict, it can be part of a positive-sum relationship.

SOFT POWER BEHAVIORS: AGENDA-SETTING, ATTRACTION, AND PERSUASION

Thus far we have focused on soft power resources, but soft power fits with all three faces or aspects of power behavior discussed in Chapter 1.

For example, suppose a school principal does not want a teenager to smoke. Under the first face of power, the principal could threaten the student with fines or expulsion to change her desire to smoke (hard power) or spend hours persuading her to change her existing

TABLE 4.1 Three Faces of Power Behavior

FIRST FACE
(DAHL: INDUCING OTHERS TO DO
WHAT THEY OTHERWISE WOULD NOT DO)

Hard: A uses force/payment to change B's existing strategies.
Soft: A uses attraction/persuasion to change B's existing preferences.

SECOND FACE
(BACHRACH AND BARATZ: FRAMING AND SETTING AGENDA)

Hard: A uses force/pay to truncate B's agenda (whether B likes it or
    not).
Soft: A uses attraction or institutions so that B sees the agenda as
    legitimate.

THIRD FACE
(LUKES: SHAPING OTHERS' PREFERENCES)

Hard: A uses force/pay to shape B's preferences ("Stockholm
    syndrome").
Soft: A uses attraction and/or institutions to shape B's initial
    preferences.

preference about smoking (soft power). Under the second dimension, the principal could ban cigarette vending machines (a hard aspect of agenda-setting) or use public service advertisements about cancer and yellow teeth to create a climate in which smoking becomes unpopular and unthinkable (soft power). Under the third dimension of power behavior, the principal could hold a school assembly in which students discuss smoking and vow not to smoke (soft power) or go further and threaten to ostracize the minority who smoke (hard power). In other words, the principal can use her hard power to stop students from smoking or use the soft power of framing, persuasion, and attraction. The success of her soft power efforts will depend upon her ability to attract and create credibility and trust.

Attraction is more complex than it first appears. It can refer to drawing attention—whether positive or negative—as well as creating

alluring or positive magnetic effects. Like magnetism or gravitational pull, attention may be welcome or unwelcome, depending on the context. Lawyers refer to some things as an "attractive nuisance." If attraction is asymmetrical and leads to a hard power response, it produces vulnerability rather than power. For example, India was attractive to Britain in the nineteenth century, and that led to colonial subjugation, rather than soft power, for India.[36] Moreover, attention is often asymmetrical. The bigger the problem is, the more attention it is likely to attract. A smaller or weaker party can gain tactically from its greater focus compared to the larger or stronger party—witness the United States and Canada or China and Vietnam. But this type of attraction is not soft power. Soft power relies on positive attraction in the sense of "alluring."

What generates positive attraction? Psychologists tell us we like those who are similar to us or with whom we share group membership, and we are also attracted by physical characteristics as well as shared attitudes.[37] At the level of states, Alexander Vuving usefully suggests three clusters of qualities of the agent and action that are central to attraction: benignity, competence, and beauty (charisma). "Benignity" is an aspect of how an agent relates to others. Being perceived as benign tends to generate sympathy, trust, credibility, and acquiescence. "Brilliance" or "competence" refers to how an agent does things, and it produces admiration, respect, and emulation. "Beauty" or "charisma" is an aspect of an agent's relation to ideals, values, and vision, and it tends to produce inspiration and adherence.[38] These clusters of qualities are crucial for converting resources (such as culture, values, and policies) into power behavior.

Without such perceived qualities, a given resource may produce indifference or even revulsion—the opposite of soft power. The production of soft power by attraction depends upon both the qualities of the agent and how they are perceived by the target. What produces attraction for one target may produce revulsion for another. When an actor or action is perceived as malign, manipulative, incompetent, or ugly, it is likely to produce revulsion. Thus, a given

cultural artifact, such as a Hollywood movie that portrays liberated women acting independently, may produce positive attraction in Rio but revulsion in Riyadh. An aid program that is seen as manipulative may undercut soft power, and a slick television production that is perceived as pure propaganda may produce revulsion.

Persuasion is closely related to attraction. It is the use of argument to influence the beliefs and actions of others without the threat of force or promise of payment. Persuasion almost always involves some degree of manipulation, with some points being emphasized and others neglected. Dishonest persuasion may go so far as to involve fraud. In persuasion, rational argument appealing to facts, beliefs about causality, and normative premises are mixed with the framing of issues in attractive ways and the use of emotional appeals.[39] That is why attraction, trust, and persuasion are closely related. Some rational arguments are self-executing. An elegant proof in pure math can convince on its own internal merit even if propounded by an enemy. But most arguments involve assertions about facts, values, and framing that depend upon some degree of attraction and trust that the source is credible. Take, for instance, the anecdote about the French nuclear sale to Pakistan at the beginning of this book. The American argument appealed to common interests in nonproliferation shared by France and the United States, but without some attraction between the French and American governments and trust that the Americans were not lying and that the intelligence was accurate, the effort at persuasion would have failed.

In turn, framing of an agenda is closely related to persuasion.[40] An attractively framed argument seen as legitimate by the target is more likely to be persuasive. Moreover, much persuasion is indirect, mediated through mass audiences rather than elites. Perceptions of legitimacy can also involve third-party audiences. Indirect attempts at persuasion often involve efforts to persuade third parties with emotional appeals and narratives rather than pure logic. Narratives are particularly important in framing issues in persuasive ways so

that some "facts" become important and others fall by the wayside. Yet if a narrative is too transparently manipulative and discounted as propaganda, it loses persuasive power. Again, it is not just the influence effort by the agent, but also the perceptions by the targets that are critical for the creation of soft power.

HOW SOFT POWER WORKS

Sometimes attraction and the resulting soft power it engenders require little effort. As we saw earlier, the effects of an actor's values can be like the light shining from "a city on the hill." This attraction by example is the passive approach to soft power. At other times, an actor makes active efforts to create attraction and soft power by a variety of programs, such as public diplomacy, broadcasting, exchanges, and assistance. There are, then, two models of how soft power affects its targets: direct and indirect. In the direct form, leaders may be attracted and persuaded by the benignity, competence, or charisma of other leaders—witness the example of Czar Peter and Frederick the Great cited previously or an account of the persuasive effect of President Obama's arguments leading to an increase in donations at a G-20 meeting.[41] Elite relations and networks often play an important role. More common, however, is a two-step model in which publics and third parties are influenced, and they in turn affect the leaders of other countries. In this case, soft power has an important indirect effect by creating an enabling environment for decisions. Alternatively, if an actor or action is perceived as repulsive, it creates a disabling environment.

Judging the causal effects of soft power varies with each model. In the first model, judging direct causation requires careful process-tracing of the sort that good historians or journalists do, with all the difficulties of sorting out multiple causes. In the second model, judging indirect causation also requires careful process-tracing because multiple causal factors are involved, but here public opinion polls and careful content analysis can help provide a first estimate

FIGURE 4.1 Soft Power: Direct and Indirect Causal Models

MODEL 1
DIRECT EFFECTS
Resources → government elites → attraction →
elite decision and outcome

MODEL 2
INDIRECT EFFECTS
Resources → publics → attract/repel →
enabling or disabling environment → elite decision

of the existence of an enabling or a disabling environment. Even though polls can measure the existence and trends in potential soft power resources, they are only a first approximation for behavioral change in terms of outcomes. Correlations, such as a study of 143 pairs of countries that found a greater incidence of terrorism where polls showed people of one country disapproving of the leadership of another country, are suggestive but do not prove causation.[42] Where opinion is strong and consistent over time, it can have an effect, but the impact of public opinion in comparison to other variables can be determined only by careful process-tracing. This is often difficult to catch in the short term and is sometimes best judged by historians able to sort causes well after the events.

Some skeptics discount polls completely. They argue that "the fact that the state controls public opinion rather than being controlled by it in the realm of foreign policy is a fact that undermines the logic of soft power."[43] This argument is wrong, however, because it ignores direct effects, matters of degree, types of goals, and interactions with other causes. Moreover, public opinion sometimes acts as a constraint on authoritarian leaders, and in many authoritarian states where internal dissent is muted, international opprobrium has an effect. Even if it is true that many governments in many contexts are only weakly constrained by public opinion, it does not follow that soft power is irrelevant.

Regarding specific goals, sometimes there is a one-step model with direct effects on policymakers that does not go through public opinion. Student and leadership exchanges are a good example. Forty-six current and 165 former heads of government are products of U.S. higher education. Not all of the nearly 750,000 foreign students who come to the United States annually are attracted to the country, but a large majority are. "Research has consistently shown that exchange students return home with a more positive view of the country in which they studied and the people with whom they interacted," and foreign-educated students are more likely to promote democracy in their home country if they are educated in democratic countries.[44] Moreover, such programs can have beneficial "ripple effects" on indirect participants.[45] The results can be dramatic. For example, Mikhail Gorbachev's embrace of perestroika and glasnost was influenced by ideas learned in the United States by Alexander Yakovlev decades earlier. And even though the end of the Cold War involved multiple causes, there is ample testimony by former Soviet elites about how ideas interacted with their economic decline. As former Soviet official Georgi Shaknazarov puts it, "Gorbachev, me, all of us were double thinkers."[46]

Even with the two-step model, public opinion often affects elites by creating an enabling or a disabling environment for specific policy initiatives. For example, in regard to Iraq in 2003, Turkish officials were constrained by public and parliamentary opinion and unable to allow the American Fourth Infantry Division to cross their country. The Bush administration's lack of soft power hurt its hard power. Similarly, Mexican president Vicente Fox wished to accommodate George W. Bush by supporting a second UN resolution authorizing invasion, but he was constrained by public opinion. When being pro-American is a political kiss of death, public opinion has an effect on policy that the skeptics' simple proposition does not capture. Even Britain, a close ally, when reacting to Bush administration intelligence standards decided that "we still have to work with them, but we work with them in a rather different fashion."[47]

It is often easier to see causation in these negative cases where a "veto" is relatively easy to identify. In positive cases, the impact of soft power among multiple variables is more difficult to isolate and prove. One study suggests three necessary conditions for effective state use of soft power via the second model of public opinion: communicating to an intended target in a functioning marketplace of ideas, persuading the target to change its attitude on a political issue, and ensuring the new attitude influences political outcomes.[48] Analyzing each of these steps is helpful in addressing the efforts of a government to change another government's policy through soft power. However, it misses not only the first model of direct effect but also another dimension of the second model: creating an enabling environment through long-term attraction. Such a climate may be the product of civil society and nonstate actors, often seen as more credible, rather than direct governmental efforts. Instead of focusing solely on government agents and targeted efforts to change specific policies, we must also consider the city on a hill effect and attraction by example. To the extent that one society is attractive to another, it can create an enabling environment for general milieu goals as well as specific elite decisions.

Here the target of soft power *is* broad public opinion and cultural attitudes. Most historians who have studied the period agree that in addition to troops and money, American power to promote such goals in postwar Europe was strongly affected by culture and ideas. Even though governmental programs such as the Marshall Plan were important, historians of the period stress the impact of nonstate actors as well. "American corporate and advertising executives, as well as the heads of Hollywood studios, were selling not only their products but also America's culture and values, the secrets of its success, to the rest of the world."[49] As one Norwegian scholar argues, "Federalism, democracy, and open markets represented core American values. This is what America exported." That made it much easier to maintain what he calls an "empire by invitation."[50]

Such general goals remain important today. For example, many acts of terrorism are less designed to overthrow a particular government

than to create a climate of polarization in which an extremist narrative can spread to wider parts of the Muslim world. An interesting study of the impact of the American University in Beirut and the American University in Cairo, both nongovernmental, found that they were successful in promoting their own (and indirectly American government) milieu goals of liberal, secular, private education despite perilous times in their host societies, but they did not contribute to acceptance of the specific goals of unpopular American foreign policies.[51]

The passive city on the hill effect of soft power should not be exaggerated, however, particularly in its impact on specific short-term goals. European soft power had an important impact on achieving the long-term milieu goals of democratization of Central Europe after the Cold War, but when Europeans went to the 2009 Copenhagen climate summit, the soft power of their superior domestic example on climate was not effective. "Europe's strategy was to press others to match its own concessions on carbon emissions. But the EU barely existed at the talks" because its lofty aspirations were too far from the limited bargains being struck by other countries.[52]

An interesting "natural experiment" can be seen in the 2008 election of Barack Obama, which helped to dispel negative stereotypes of a closed American political system based solely on money and family dynasties. In 2009, polls showed an impressive "revival of America's global image in many parts of the world reflecting confidence in the new president."[53] One poll-based assessment of brand values even suggested the Obama effect was worth $2 trillion in brand equity.[54] By 2010, the popularity of the United States had risen in Europe, Russia, and China but had declined in Egypt,[55] and in areas such as Pakistan and the Palestinian territories where American policies were unpopular, "ratings of Obama were only marginally better than the abysmal ratings accorded to Bush."[56] And on particular policy requests made by Obama in his first year, such as more allied troops for Afghanistan or the willingness of other countries to accept detainees released from the Guantánamo prison, the

results were better, but only modestly so, than those that had been achieved by Bush. In other words, the Obama effect was positive, but of limited magnitude in the short term.

Not only do actors try to influence each other directly and indirectly through soft power; they also compete to deprive each other of attractiveness and legitimacy, thus creating a disabling environment either in public opinion in the other country and/or in the eyes of relevant third parties. For example, after the U.S. Senate passed a $30 million bill to document and publicize human rights violations in Iran, the Iranian parliament created a $20 million fund to expose human rights violations in the United States.[57] Sometimes leaders are prepared to ignore the opinion of third parties (somewhat misleadingly labeled "world public opinion"), but at other times their concerns about diplomatic isolation can inhibit their actions.

In 2008, after invading Georgia, Russia carefully controlled its domestic media, but seemed ill prepared to press its case internationally. Georgian president Mikhail Saakasvili used his fluency in English to dominate coverage in the rest of the world. "The Kremlin's reluctance to muster support for its position with the same intensity that it sent tanks into Georgia offers an insight into its worldview."[58] Russian military power dominated, but Russia was not as adept in wielding soft power to consolidate its military victory.

As we have seen, there are a wide variety of basic resources that can be converted into soft power by skillful conversion strategies. Basic resources include culture, values, legitimate policies, a positive domestic model, a successful economy, and a competent military. Sometimes these resources are specially shaped for soft power purposes. Such shaped resources include national intelligence services, information agencies, diplomacy, public diplomacy, exchange programs, assistance programs, training programs, and various other measures. Shaped resources provide a wide variety of policy tools, but whether they produce positive or negative responses in the targets (and thus preferred outcomes) depends upon the context, the

FIGURE 4.2 Conversion of Soft Power Resources to Behavior (outcomes)

Resources (CULTURE, etc.)
↓
Policy tools (QUALITIES)
↓
Conversion skills
↓
Target response (POS./NEG.)
↓
Outcome (SPECIFIC OR GENERAL)

target, and the qualities of the power-conversion strategies. This conversion process is illustrated in Figure 4.2.

To convert soft power resources and tools into outcomes requires the critical ability to create in the target perceptions of such qualities as benignity, competence, and charisma. The perception may be false (as in the effect of some propaganda), but what matters is whether the target believes it and responds positively or negatively.

WIELDING SOFT POWER THROUGH PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

As we have seen, soft power is difficult for governments to wield. Sustained attraction—being a city on a hill—requires consistency of practice with values. Going further to project attraction, frame agendas, and persuade others is even more difficult. As we have seen, the causal paths are often indirect, the effects often take time to ripen, some of the general goals to which soft power is directed are diffuse, and governments are rarely in full control of all the instruments. In Chapters 2 and 3, we saw some of the potential but also the difficulties of using military and economic resources to create soft power. That is equally true of efforts to create soft power through the instruments of public diplomacy. The policy difficulty is compounded by the plethora of available information, the im-

portance of networks, and changing leadership styles in democratic societies. But the fact that creating soft power through public diplomacy is often difficult does not mean that it is unimportant.

To be credible in a century where power is diffusing from states to nonstate actors, government efforts to project soft power will have to accept that power is less hierarchical in an information age and that social networks have become more important. To succeed in a networked world requires leaders to think in terms of attraction and co-option rather than command. Leaders need to think of themselves as being in a circle rather than atop a mountain. That means that two-way communications are more effective than commands. As a young Czech participant at a Salzburg seminar observed, "This is the best propaganda because it's not propaganda."[59]

Soft power is generated only in part by what the government does through its policies and public diplomacy. The generation of soft power is also affected in positive (and negative) ways by a host of nonstate actors within and outside a country. Those actors affect both the general public and governing elites in other countries and create an enabling or a disabling environment for government policies. As mentioned earlier, in some cases, soft power will enhance the probability of other elites adopting policies that allow us to achieve our preferred outcomes. In other cases, where being seen as friendly to the U.S. administration is seen as a local political kiss of death, the decline or absence of soft power will prevent Americans from obtaining particular goals. But even in such instances, the interactions of civil societies and nonstate actors may help to further general milieu goals such as democracy, liberty, and development.

Classical diplomacy, sometimes called "cabinet diplomacy," involved messages sent from one ruler to another, often in confidential communications. In terms of the first model in Figure 4.3, government A communicated directly with government B. But governments also found it useful to communicate with the publics of other countries in an effort to influence other governments through the indirect model in Figure 4.3. That indirect form of

FIGURE 4.3 Two Models of Diplomacy
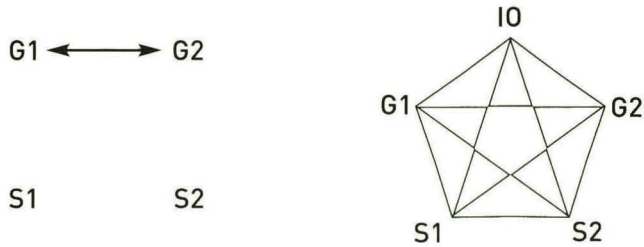
Key: G = government; S = society; IO = international organization.

diplomacy became known as public diplomacy. Efforts to affect the publics of other countries have long roots. After the French Revolution, the new French government sent agents to America to try to directly affect public opinion. In the late nineteenth century, after France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, the French government created the Alliance Française to popularize its culture and restore national prestige. During World War I, the American government organized tours and persuaded Hollywood to make films that portrayed the United States in a positive light.[60]

With the new technology of radio, broadcasting became the dominant model of public diplomacy in the 1920s. The BBC was founded in 1922, and the totalitarian governments perfected the form of propaganda broadcasts and films in the 1930s. Broadcasting remains important to this day, but in the age of the Internet and inexpensive air travel, and with the development of intergovernmental and transnational organizations, the diffusion of power away from states has made public diplomacy more complex. The lines of communication are no longer a straight bar between two governments, but more like a star that includes lines among governments, publics, societies, and nongovernmental organizations.

In such a world, actors other than governments are well placed to use soft power. Government A will try to influence the public in

society B, but transnational organizations in society B will also wage information campaigns to influence government A as well as government B. They use campaigns of naming and shaming to influence other governments as well as to put pressure on other nongovernmental actors such as large corporations. Sometimes they will also work through intergovernmental organizations. The result is a new set of mixed coalitions of governmental, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental actors each using public diplomacy for its own goals. For example, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines allied smaller governments, such as Canada and Norway, along with networks created by an activist in Vermont, and the public fame of Princess Diana to defeat the strongest bureaucracy (the Pentagon) in the world's only superpower.

Governments trying to utilize public diplomacy to wield soft power face new problems. Promoting attractive images of one's country is not new, but the conditions for trying to create soft power have changed dramatically in recent years. For one thing, nearly half the countries in the world are now democracies. In such circumstances, diplomacy aimed at public opinion can become as important to outcomes as the traditional classified diplomatic communications among leaders. Information creates power, and today a much larger part of the world's population has access to that power. Technological advances have led to a dramatic reduction in the cost of processing and transmitting information. The result is an explosion of information, and that has produced a "paradox of plenty."[61] Plentiful information leads to scarcity of attention. When people are overwhelmed with the volume of information confronting them, they have difficulty knowing what to focus on. Attention, rather than information, becomes the scarce resource, and those who can distinguish valuable information from background clutter gain power. Cue-givers become more in demand, and this is a source of power for those who can tell us where to focus our attention.

Among editors and cue-givers, credibility is the crucial resource and an important source of soft power. Reputation becomes even

more important than in the past, and political struggles occur over the creation and destruction of credibility. Governments compete for credibility not only with other governments, but also with a broad range of alternatives, including news media, corporations, NGOs, intergovernmental organizations, and networks of scientific communities.

Politics has become a contest of competitive credibility. The world of traditional power politics is typically about whose military or economy wins. As noted earlier, politics in an information age "may ultimately be about whose story wins."[62] Narratives become the currency of soft power. Governments compete with each other and with other organizations to enhance their own credibility and weaken that of their opponents. Witness the struggle between Serbia and NATO to frame the interpretation of events in 2000 in which broadcasts and the Internet played a key role, or consider the contest between the government and protesters after the Iranian elections in 2009 in which the Internet and Twitter played important roles in transnational communication.

Information that appears to be propaganda may not only be scorned, but it may also turn out to be counterproductive if it undermines a country's reputation for credibility. Exaggerated claims about Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction and ties to Al Qaeda may have helped mobilize domestic support for the Iraq War, but the subsequent disclosure of the exaggeration dealt a costly blow to British and American credibility. Under the new conditions more than ever, a soft sell may prove more effective than a hard sell. The relative independence of the BBC, sometimes to the consternation of British governments, has paid dividends in credibility as indicated by an account of how President Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania spends his day: "He rises at dawn, listens to the BBC World Service, than scans the Tanzanian press."[63]

Skeptics who treat the term "public diplomacy" as a mere euphemism for propaganda miss this point. Simple propaganda is counterproductive as public diplomacy. Nor is public diplomacy merely

public relations campaigns. Conveying information and selling a positive image are part of it, but public diplomacy also involves building long-term relationships that create an enabling environment for government policies.[64]

The mix of direct government information to long-term cultural relationships varies with three concentric circles or stages of public diplomacy, and all three are important.[65] The first and most immediate circle is daily communications, which involves explaining the context of domestic and foreign policy decisions. The first stage must also involve preparation for dealing with crises. In today's information age, many actors will rush in to fill any vacuum in information that might occur after an event. A rapid response capability in public diplomacy means that false charges or misleading information can be answered immediately. This circle is measured in terms of hours, days, and weeks.

The second stage or concentric circle is strategic communication, which develops a set of simple themes much as a political or advertising campaign does. Whereas the first dimension is measured in hours and days, the second occurs over weeks, months, and even years. Special events such as the Shanghai Exposition of 2010 or the World Cup in South Africa fit this description. President Jacob Zuma justified the expenditures on the World Cup as "the greatest marketing opportunity of our time."[66] A public diplomacy campaign plans symbolic events and communications to reinforce central themes or to advance a particular government policy. Special themes focus on particular policy initiatives. For example, when the Reagan administration decided to implement NATO's two-track decision of deploying missiles while negotiating to remove existing Soviet intermediate range missiles, the Soviet Union responded with a concerted campaign to influence European opinion and make the deployment impossible. As former secretary of state George Shultz later concluded, "I don't think we could have pulled it off if it hadn't been for a very active program of public diplomacy. Because the Soviets were very active all through 1983 . . . with peace

movements and all kinds of efforts to dissuade our friends in Europe from deploying."[67]

The third and broadest circle or stage of public diplomacy is the development of lasting relationships with key individuals over many years or even decades through scholarships, exchanges, training, seminars, conferences, and access to media channels. Over time, about 700,000 people have participated in American cultural and academic exchanges, and these exchanges helped to educate such world leaders as Anwar Sadat, Helmut Schmidt, and Margaret Thatcher. Other countries have similar programs. For example, Japan has developed an exchange program bringing 6,000 young foreigners each year from forty countries to teach their languages in Japanese schools, with an alumni association to maintain the bonds of friendship that are developed.[68] These programs develop what Edward R. Murrow once called the crucial "last three feet"— face-to-face communications that are a two-way process characterized by the enhanced credibility that reciprocity creates.

Each of these three stages of public diplomacy plays an important role in helping governments to create an attractive image of a country that can improve its prospects for obtaining its desired outcomes. But even the best advertising cannot sell an unpopular product. A communications strategy cannot work if it cuts against the grain of policy. Actions speak louder than words, and public diplomacy that appears to be mere window dressing for hard power projection is unlikely to succeed. The treatment of prisoners at Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo in a manner inconsistent with American values led to perceptions of hypocrisy that could not be reversed by broadcasting pictures of Muslims living well in America. In fact, the slick production values of the American satellite television station Al Hurrah did not make it competitive in the Middle East, where it was widely regarded as an instrument of government propaganda. All too often, policymakers treat public diplomacy as a bandage that can be applied after damage is done by other instruments. For example, when one advocate of bombing Iran was asked

whether attacking Iran might cause the opposition there to coalesce around the regime, he said that wouldn't be a problem because all that would be needed to avoid such an outcome was an accompanying public diplomacy campaign.[69]

Under the new conditions of the information age, more than ever the soft sell proves more effective than the hard sell. Without underlying national credibility, the instruments of public diplomacy cannot translate cultural resources into the soft power of attraction. The effectiveness of public diplomacy is measured by minds changed (as shown in interviews or polls), not dollars spent or slick production packages produced. When the U.S. Congress asked Secretary of Defense Gates about the 2010 budget for strategic communications, "no one could say because there was no central communication. The first answer came back at $1 billion, but that was later changed to $626 million." Many of these operations "in the past had been in the purview of the State Department's public diplomacy section."[70]

Critics worry that the overmilitarization of foreign policy undercuts credibility. One complains that "tasking the military with strategic communications . . . is somewhat akin to asking an aid worker to direct an air strike, or a diplomat to run a field hospital." Others argue that what is needed is a new public diplomacy "on steroids" staffed by diplomats trained in new media, cross-cultural communications, granular local knowledge, and networks of contacts with underrepresented groups.[71]

The centralized mass media approach to public diplomacy still plays an important role. Governments need to correct daily misrepresentations of their policies as well as try to convey a longer-term strategic message. The main strength of the mass media approach is its audience reach and ability to generate public awareness and set the agenda. But the inability to influence how the message is perceived in different cultural settings is its weak point. The sender knows what she says, but not always what the target(s) hears. Cultural barriers are apt to distort what is heard.

Networked communications, in contrast, can take advantage of two-way communications and peer-to-peer relations to overcome cultural differences. Rather than a central design and broadcast of a message across cultural boundaries, "networks *first* establish the structure and dynamics for effective communications channels, *then* members collaborate to craft the message. Because the message or story is co-created across cultures, it is not culture-bound. . . . Rather than being a barrier or impediment, culture is incorporated into network dynamics."[72] This type of decentralization and flexibility is difficult for governments to accomplish, given their central accountability structures.

The greater flexibility of NGOs in using networks has given rise to what some call "the new public diplomacy," which is "no longer confined to messaging, promotion campaigns, or even direct governmental contacts with foreign publics serving foreign policy purposes. It is also about building relationships with civil society actors in other countries and about facilitating networks between non-governmental parties at home and abroad."[73] In this approach to public diplomacy, government policy is aimed at promoting and participating in, rather than controlling, such networks across borders. Indeed, too much government control or even the appearance thereof can undercut the credibility that such networks are designed to engender. The evolution of public diplomacy from one-way communications to a two-way dialogue model treats publics as peer-to-peer cocreators of meaning and communication.[74]

For governments to succeed in the networked world of the new public diplomacy, they are going to have to learn to relinquish a good deal of their control, and this runs the risk that nongovernmental civil society actors are often not aligned in their goals with government policies or even objectives. Governments can take advantage of new technologies of social networking with employees licensed to use Facebook and Twitter.[75] They may even use a loose rein, but they rarely are willing to allow free rein when one node of a network has an official label. In democracies, for example, it is too

easy for opposition parliamentarians to score points about disloyal or ineffective foreign ministry employees failing to protect the national message and national interest. The same criticisms are leveled at home-domiciled nongovernmental actors, particularly if they have access to government facilities or support.

The domestic political problem of the new public diplomacy is real, but the international effects can be beneficial. The presence of dissent and self-criticism is likely to enhance the credibility of messages, as well as create a degree of attraction to the society that is willing to tolerate dissent. Criticism of government policies can be awkward for a government, but it can also cast a society in a more attractive light and thus help to create soft power. The paradox of using public diplomacy to generate soft power in a global information age is that decentralization and diminished control may be central to the creation of soft power.

As public diplomacy is done more *by* publics, governments find themselves caught in a dilemma about control. Unruly citizens like the Florida pastor who threatened to burn the Koran in 2010 can destroy soft power. But difficult though the new public diplomacy may be for democracies, it is likely to be even more difficult for the international relations of autocracies such as China. As one observer notes, if "real soft power comes from a society, not from government, China's government continues to muzzle many of its most creative and diverse elements, while China's human rights record, its political system, economic strength, and growing military power all continue to negatively afflict its image abroad."[76] Wielding soft power is important, but it is not always easy, particularly in a cyberage.