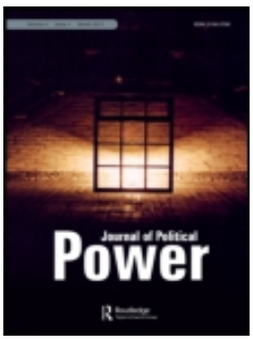

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Revising the soft power concept: what are the means and mechanisms of soft power?

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The power of attraction (soft power), as developed by Joseph Nye, has been increasingly discussed in international relations literature and policy, yet soft power has not been fully utilized because of under-specified tools and mechanisms by which soft power influences international actors. This article revises the concept of soft power by generating a continuum of power based on the tools useful for implementing different degrees of soft or hard power. In addition, the article describes two mechanisms through which soft power influences international actors, beginning the call for exploration of other such mechanisms. Reconceptualizing soft power in terms of objects that are controlled and utilized by policy-makers, such as agenda-setting and framing, provides us with more useful analytical variables to understand international relations and to provide policy recommendations.

Keywords: soft power; concept validity; agenda-setting; framing; foreign policy

Introduction

Power has been part of international relations studies since the earliest political writings of Thucydides (1954) and Machiavelli (1935), and it remains perhaps among the most important and least understood concepts in international relations (Baldwin 2002, p. 177). At a basic level, power is the ability for one actor to influence the actions of another actor that would not have occurred otherwise (Dahl 1957). Types of power have appeared in various writings throughout international relations, including in the earliest realist writings, where attempts were made to discount the importance of norms, morality, and world opinion as forms of power (Morgenthau 1948, pp. 235–280, Carr 1956). Soft power has been added to the list of forms of power for international actors more recently (Nye 1990), but the concept's validity has not yet been fully explored in scholarly literature.

This article seeks to revise Nye's concept of soft power to identify the practical means and mechanisms by which soft power works to influence international relations. The article proceeds to first summarize and describe the primary defining aspects of soft power and its current operationalization. Second, the article argues for a revised conceptualization of soft power based on resources used and a continuum of power types rather than a dichotomy. Third, the article identifies two possible mechanisms through which the softest powers (rhetoric and attraction) influence other actors via the creation of a dominant discourse or international norms. The article

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provides a more nuanced and clearly conceptualized definition of soft power that promotes empirical research and more useful soft power foreign policies.

Soft power

Nye's soft power, on the most basic level, is defined as the ability to attract others so that they want what you want (Nye 2004, p. 6). The ability to attract another is the ability to change the other's preferences over their choices, such that one's own preferred outcome becomes the other's preferred outcome. Nye describes soft power as:

> … the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies. When our policies are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others, our soft power is enhanced. (2004, p. x)

Soft power is different from hard power because there is no coercive force present to induce the opponent to adopt one's own preferences. One way hard power can be defined is based on the use of carrots or sticks, such that one must coerce or influence the other based on material items (Keohane and Nye 1989, chap. 9). In contrast, scholars define soft power using a variety of resources. Some scholars discuss the use of information (Armistead 2004), philanthropy (Jenkins, 2007), or diplomacy (Kurlantzick 2007) as a form of soft power. In addition to these, one could potentially equate rhetoric, persuasion, and agenda-setting into the soft power category. The conceptual stretching (see Collier and Mahon 1993) of soft power has generated a catchword for any form of influence not using military command, which reduces the usefulness of the concept in analytical and policy research.

Redefining soft power

The stark contrast between hard and soft power masks the numerous ways current scholars have defined soft power. In addition, this dichotomy masks the potential for using hard power resources to implement soft power and vice versa. The differences between harder and softer forms of power are less clear and more nuanced than one might believe relying solely on the two categories as a power typology. Instead, it is useful to dissect the typology and generate a definition of power utilizing both the soft and hard power concepts while also creating a bit more flexibility in the ways different resources may fit the definition and the relationship between softer and harder powers.

The section below describes a new conceptualization of soft power resting on the availability of clear resources and the possibility of using those resources to influence the payoffs (preferences) for other states, thereby influencing outcomes. This influence does not need to be from the use of hard power or force but by using other resources such as the media and institutions. This moves away from the simple reification of the hard/soft power dichotomy and allows greater examination of what makes softer powers soft and what makes harder powers hard.

Making the dichotomous continuous

At the first level of concept formation, we must examine the two poles or opposites (Goertz 2005, chap. 2). In Nye's case, the negative pole is defined by command

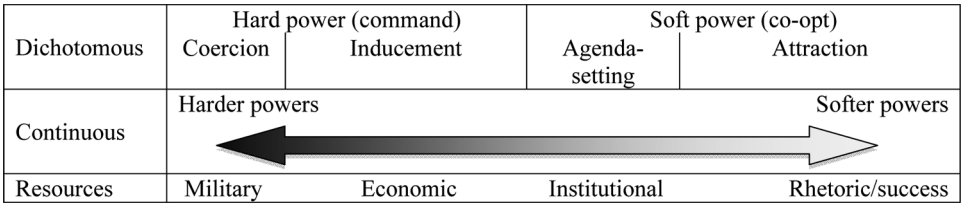

Figure 1. Dichotomous and continuous power.

power, while the positive pole is defined by co-opting power. Figure 1 illustrates the basic conceptual definition (see Nye 2004, p. 8). As is evident from this diagram, however, the empirical components derived from the concepts soft and hard power do not naturally arrange dichotomously.

Different types of actions or behaviors are softer or harder depending on their location within the diagram. For example, the use of agenda-setting power, examined in numerous domestic political studies and international relations studies (Livingston 1992, Gubin 1995, Birkland 1997, Drake 2001, Kingdon 2003, Carpenter 2007, Joachim 2007, Mazarr 2007), fits somewhere between coercion and attraction. Agenda-setting does not clearly fit the concept of attraction power, yet it fits more with a non-military use of power in international relations.

We can reconceptualize the concept at the most basic level beginning with the concept of power and developing a spectrum of power forms from the hardest form to the softest form ideal types.[1] This small change in the conceptualization of soft power allows a more dynamic concept and the comparison between several types of behaviors on a relative basis for *softness* or *hardness*. These ideal types also allow for Nye's power as attractiveness power to constitute one of the softest forms of power.

It is also important to understand what makes the negative pole harder than the positive pole. Many times, typologies such as this one, neglect the underlying variation by reifying the types themselves (Bennett and Elman 2005). Rather than simply transforming the reification of a dichotomy to the reification of more categories, we must understand the underlying variation across categories.

When examining the two ideal types, we can assume that the left-most ideal type is one where one actor can end the life of another actor. In the ideal, this is the hardest form of power because the actor wielding the power reduces the payoff of all but two choices of the target to zero. In other words, the choices available to the target reduce to two because any choice other than the one desired by the actor with the power will result in death. The basic attribute associated with hard power is physical coercion. The ability to physically manipulate another actor is the most common way to use hard power to change the behavior of another actor.

In the right-most pole, the softest power reflects those powers that use non-physical means to influence the actions of others. The most non-physical means one can imagine involves the use of morals or ideas. In one sense, a commonly internalized and accepted norm receives no attention from any actors and requires no discussion (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). This type of norm or cultural practice resembles an ideal type of non-physical power over the actions of others.

Once we understand the ways in which soft power and hard power vary, we can identify possible behaviors and resources that are more likely to provide harder or softer influence over outcomes. The following section discusses four categories or

ideal types within the continuum of power types, as well as the behavior and resources associated with each type of power. This provides a basis from which future scholars can examine the effects of soft power in international relations outcomes.

Command and military resources

Military resources as a form of hard power need very little explanation. Military resources can limit the available choices to an opponent in international relations by creating an ultimatum in an extreme case. For example, leading up to the Iraq invasion, the Bush administration reportedly offered the Iraqi government two choices: turn over Hussein or face invasion by US troops. The quintessential example of force-limiting choice occurred many years ago in Thucydides account of the Melian dialogue with the Athenians. In this situation, the Melians were given a choice of acquiescing to the demands of the Athenians or face death in a war (Thucydides 1954). Again, the example serves to illustrate the limiting of choices to the desires of those who hold the ability to use force and cause destruction of the other.

Economic forms of power

Economic resources, just like military resources, have a relatively long history as a form of power in international relations. Actors can withhold financial goods (sanctions) or provide financial resources as aid (rewards) to change the payoffs of the target. Both are widely used in international affairs, such as in the example of preventing nuclear weapons proliferation. In some cases, states are provided with rewards to stop their nuclear weapons program, as was the case with Sweden and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), while in other cases, sanctions are used to change the payoffs for states, like the initial US policies toward Iraq and Iran.

Financial incentives, sanctions or rewards, alter the payoffs of the target country by affecting their ability to survive in the international system or to maintain power as leaders with domestic support. Without capital resources, states and leaders have more difficulty generating security, food, and other resources necessary to maintain their position in the international system. Because capital is generally required to produce components necessary for well-being, such as energy, food, and military resources, capital can influence the ability of leaders to maintain power. Thus, linking capital resources to the choices available influences the payoffs, making some choices more attractive than others.

Economic resources differ from military resources primarily because they exist partly in reality and partly with a constructed value. Much of the financial resources used to influence other nations do not have any intrinsic value except that one can exchange the money for physical items when necessary. Other financial resources maintain some physical characteristics, such as precious metals or other resources. These physical resources, generally included in the category of monetary instruments, have physical value because of their use as a medium of exchange and demand in industry.

Agenda-setting and institutional control

Agenda-setting power, within institutional norms or hardened rules, is not traditionally discussed in international politics as a form of influence over outcomes outside of

the regime and institutional approaches. Few scholars studying domestic institutional politics (such as Congressional politics) would deny the importance of agenda-setting, though many international relations scholars pay little formal or systematic attention to the topic. Traditionally, the second face of power illustrates manipulation over the agenda and influence over other actors (Bachrach and Baratz 1962). Under some perspectives, agenda-setting power does not belong with soft power because of the clear creation of winners and losers and conflict of interests among actors rather than a co-option of interests (Gallarotti 2010). The section below demonstrates the applicability of agenda-setting as a form of soft power.

Control of agendas as a form of power stems from a rich set of research by game theorists and public choice scholars describing the economics of decision-making in American politics, primarily in Congress. This tradition begins with Arrow's (1963) impossibility theorem, which states under most conditions where a group attempts to decide on three or more alternatives, there is no optimal result. In other words, for many decisions there is no social optimal outcome given three or more choices for a group of decision-makers. Arrow's impossibility theorem does not imply that no social outcome is possible, just that no socially optimal, or natural, outcome is possible, i.e., no outcome will provide a better social result than alternative outcomes (Riker 1986, Ordeshook and Schwartz 1987). Because there is no natural or socially optimal solution to most voting situations with multiple choices, institutional rules become important to generate the social outcome. These rules include voting rights, the number of necessary votes to pass an item, and how voting takes place (the agenda) (McKelvey 1976, Shepsle 1979, Austen-Smith 1987, Rogowski 1999, p. 124). Therefore, control over the agenda or influence over the formation of the rules of governance (whether formalized or as norms) can provide power to produce a favorable outcome. In other words, '[defining] the alternatives is the supreme instrument of power' (Schattschneider 1975, p. 66).

Agenda-setting power, as described above, does not entail the forceful manipulation of another actor. Instead, the practice of using the agenda requires knowledge of the agenda system and some estimation of the preference orderings of others who take part in voting or other institutional decision-making processes. In this way, the use of agendas to influence outcomes looks more like an art (Riker 1986). Agenda-setting power is not as hard as military force because it does not reduce preferences and choices completely. It requires a mix of resources including some institutionally granted power to set the agenda as well as some softer information and rhetorical resources to gain a good understanding of other participants' preference ordering.

Agenda-setting power by France and Germany helped create right-leaning institutions with limited social programs during EU development (Warleigh 2004). After the end of WWII, the US was able to generate institutional and international norms and rules that limited the ability of other states to pursue some alternative choices (Ikenberry 2001). The ability to set the institutional rules or control the agenda may reside with the already militarily powerful states (Mearsheimer 1994), with institutions (Young 1998), or with non-governmental international actors (Haas 1992, Keck and Sikkink 1998).

Within the international relations literature, agenda formation is 'one of the least studied and least understood processes of international politics' (Livingston 1992, p. 313). Studies in international environmental politics sometimes discuss agendas as part of single case studies (see, e.g., Weiss and Jacobson 1998, Porter *et al.* 2000).

Other scholars often refer to issue definition or agenda formation as part of the general process for creating international institutions or regimes as the first step in the policy cycle (Krasner 1983, Keohane and Nye 1989, p. 255, Young 1989, 1998, chap. 1, Hasenclever *et al.* 1997). Despite this limited attention, scholars in international relations do not have a strong consensus or understanding of agenda formation (Zurn 1998, Mitchell 2002), or even a clearly defined concept of the international agenda (Rothman 2009).

Framing and rhetoric

Framing and the use of rhetoric are the closest resources to the right-most side of the continuum, making them resources for the softest powers. Examinations of discourse generally belong to the constructivist research program, of which the neo-classical constructivist perspective gives space for both constructed and non-constructed factors (Ruggie 1998). The neo-classical constructivist perspective uses constructivism as part of the tools necessary to understand intersubjective meanings and how meanings affect outcomes, such as normative or analytical framing (discussed below). Under this perspective, individuals act within a rule-governed environment where resources are scarce and competition exists among self-interested participants (Kratochwil 1989, chap. 1). Actors can persuade other actors of the importance of meaning of rules as these actors communicate (Kratochwil 1989, Risse 2000).

There are two types of framing relevant to soft power that may influence outcomes in international relations: normative framing and analytical framing. Normative framing consists of identifying an issue at a moral or emotional level, suggesting that attending to the issue is the *right thing to do*. Analytical framing involves the creation of a causal story, arranging and connecting the causes and consequences uniquely. For example, in the case of moral framing, one might suggest that preventing child labor in the world is the right thing to do because children are often unable to defend or speak for themselves in opposition to authority. A change in analytical framing occurred after failed states became an important cause of the creation of terrorist groups, whereas previously most failed states were ignored because of their lack of effects on more powerful states. Both of these types of framing involve the non-physical influence on others.

Normative framing. Normative framing can appear as appealing to morals or to emotions. Moral framing can affect the behavior of a second actor because the frame can affect the context within which actors look at specific issues. Framing a particular choice as morally right or wrong influences the availability of choices to the other actor, given that the other actor adopts this framing.

Recently, arguments based on moral framing have become more common in international relations literature. For example, some issues may be described as moral imperatives, such as the issue of banning landmine use in wars to increase attention to these issues (Cameron *et al.* 1998). Other arguments in international relations are based solely on the introduction of moral norms that make an act unthinkable, as was the case for using nuclear weapons (Tannenwald 1999). Although research does not yet reveal when moral framing is possible and effective at making an issue salient, further research may examine these questions in more detail. In addition to discourse, emotional framing often also utilizes other media, such as images and sounds to

appeal to an individual's emotions. Greenpeace frequently uses images and videos to change the viewer's feelings about whaling and sealing to change the view of the choice to kill whales for food and science (Greenpeace 2006).

One research program that has relied on fear between groups involves the study of ethnic conflict. Ethnic conflict involves at least two groups defined by their ethnic differences rather than by class or nationality. Fear between groups is often cited as one of several causes in the development of ethnic conflict (Lake and Rothchild 1998). In addition, some leaders manipulate histories, images, and myths to spur fear between groups (sometimes also creating the ethnic divisions) (Posen 1993, Kaufman 2001).[2] Fear is also used in order to describe the way in which the media can change perceptions of citizen understanding of issues (Altheide 2002). Therefore, using discourse to add emotional elements to particular issue alternatives can influence the alternatives available to states.

Analytical framing. Generating a causal story involves descriptions of the harm or difficulty and attributions of blame or responsibility for the harm (Stone 1989, p. 282). By establishing an analytical frame in terms of the causes and effects of a problem, the frame can bring some actors into discussion because they become either victims or perpetrators or establish costs and benefits for states. For example, when discussing the causes of failed states, one could focus on causes such as geography and globalization or small arms diffusion and domestic anarchy (Rotberg 2004). Analytical framing can also increase costs for states, for instance, the costs of being a 'failed state' can be increased further if the frame is changed to include the creation of 'terrorist groups', who are perceived to arise as a consequence of state failure.

These analytical frames might be generated by victim states, perpetrating states, or by other actors in the international system with their own purposes (Stone 1989). The victims of harm generally try to create a causal story that places blame on another group and defines the actions of the other group as intentional (Stone 1989). The target state, however, attempts either to shift blame to another group or to define the cause in terms of unintended consequences or an accident of nature (Stone 1989). In this way, the target attempts to remove blame from itself, in the best case, and in the worst case, establish negligence without intention. The outcome of these frames influences the ability of states in the international system to make certain choices. Once a discourse describes a state as a perpetrator rather than a by-stander,[3] the value of the status quo alternative declines.

There are two primary reasons that causation can be subject to such manipulation: uncertainty and equifinality. Uncertainty is endemic in scientific research because causality cannot be directly observed or proven, but simply inferred (Brady and Seawright 2004). This inherent uncertainty allows for individuals to create multiple interpretations of the evidence or to use only information that supports their particular view (Jasanoff 1995). In addition, equifinality occurs when there are multiple causal pathways (multiple sufficient conditions) to an outcome (Goertz and Mahoney 2005). With the existence of multiple causal pathways, issues can be framed in multiple ways, which alters the available alternatives. In addition, even without multiple causal pathways, multiple causes allow actors to focus on a particular set of causes over others, which can influence the costs and states involved with the issue.

Mechanisms of soft power influence

The first part of this article discussed redefining soft power in terms of a continuum and with reference to the resources available that give different forms of power influence over international actors. A second important part to understanding the influence of softer power in international relations involves the mechanisms through which influence occurs. Essentially, this amounts to creating a theory of how softer forms of power cause changes in actors' preferences. The discussion below describes two mechanisms for the influence of soft power in terms of norm diffusion and discourse dominance.

Attraction through norm diffusion

One part of soft power undeveloped involves the mechanisms through which one actor is attracted to act in accordance with another actor's wishes. In other words, when are cultural practices, policies, or political ideas attractive to another nation? If the mechanisms by which attraction takes place depend heavily on other factors, some of which are outside the control of policy-makers, then enhancing softer power may not always be possible.

One possible mechanism for attraction occurs through the copying of successful policies or the diffusion of common practices. In order for one country to be attracted to US culture, policy practices, or political ideals, they must be successful or benefit those in other countries. Even if we move beyond material needs, such as improvements in the economy or welfare, these policies must be attractive to others in the sense that it makes them feel good. For example, if a policy for increasing women's rights or freedoms in the US is attractive to people in a country abroad, this policy improves the welfare of individuals or it provides a normative feeling that they are doing something *right* as opposed to doing something that is a moral or ethical wrong.

It is easiest to see this by looking at a few examples of situations where Nye has described the attraction that took place in the past. In these examples, attraction usually occurred coupled with the success of a particular policy or idea in the US. When a particular policy or culture is unsuccessful, this policy is not attractive to others in the international system, and thus other countries do not copy the policy.

After the end of WWII, the US and allies provided substantial sums to rebuild Europe after widespread devastation during the war. Nye explains that although the military and economic benefits to Europe were powerful in promoting democratization, so were popular culture and ideas (2004, p. 48). It is very likely that the ideas spreading throughout Europe, such as principles of freedom, liberty, modernity, and the style of US financial structures, helped democratization move forward. However, we cannot separate the fact that at the time, the US had demonstrated to the world that it was the largest, most powerful, and most successful country. Under these circumstances, it would seem strange to suggest that any countries with the ability to do so would *not* adopt similar ideologies as existed in the US.

During the Cold War, Soviet scientists were exposed to the system in the US during many cultural exchanges. When they returned to the Soviet Union, they brought ideas from the USA with them, Nye suggests, and eventually helped to liberalize the Soviet Union (2004, p. 45). Again, it is difficult to disentangle the fact that part of the reason that these scientists came to the US to study was precisely because

the universities and education system in the US were highly successful. Nye suggests that sporting events can have an influence on another country's citizens as a form of soft power as well (2004, p. 47). Once again, it is difficult to separate the fact that the actions of US sports teams broadcast around the world (such as basketball and baseball) are also the most successful in the US. It is not very controversial to note that the US consistently ranks at the top for these sports at the Olympics and other world events.

The important point illustrated by the above examples is that success in a particular culture or policy area increases the attractiveness of that policy or culture abroad. The above examples do not suggest that soft power and attraction is the sole cause of changes in behavior.

As a negative example, we can look at areas in which the US is not successful and determine to what extent these policies or cultural aspects are attractive to other countries in the world. Soccer, for example, is not one of the US strongest sports, and rarely does the US team enter the final rounds of the World Cup. One of the US sports not accepted by Europeans and others around the World is the coverage of US soccer teams. Similarly, US climate change policy, the rejection of the International Criminal Court, rejection of the Landmine Convention, and other issues do not increase US influence in foreign countries.

Similarly, the general failure of policies in the first Iraq war to stem Hussein's aggression, the failure of the US policy of state-building in the second Iraq war and in Afghanistan has driven other countries away from US foreign policy culture. The Pew Global Attitudes Project shows a marked decline in support for the US in British, French, German, Spanish, and other countries since 2002 (PewResearchCenter 2010). These favorability ratings increased in 2009 and 2010. Although it is difficult to suggest a single cause of these changes, one might attribute the changes to the most dominant international policy of the time for the US – the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, neither of which was highly successful. After Obama's election and the movement to remove troops and end conflict in Iraq, these ratings increased. It is unlikely that these changes are due simply to the difference between the Democrat president and the Republican president because favorable ratings occurred in 2000 and 2002 for many countries before the decline. The Bush administration's desire to spread democracy through force has not been attractive to other populations. Coinciding with unfavorable attention toward these policies by western Europe and others is the fact that the US foreign policies in the Middle East region have generally been unsuccessful at achieving policy goals.

Thus, failure in culture or policy produces a negative attraction toward those policies and cultures, but success in policies and culture creates the attraction that Nye speaks of as soft power. The fact that attraction depends on success suggests a mechanism of norm diffusion based on a competitive model. Countries emulate the US culture or policy practices abroad because of an innate attraction based on success.

Norm diffusion as attraction

Norms are customs of behavior based on one's identity given a particular social environment where actors follow a 'logic of appropriateness' (March and Olsen 2004). Rather than acting based on a rational calculation, actors behave through consider-

ations of what is *normal or right*. A norm can exist at several levels of analysis, such as the international system, the state, or at local levels within a state or group of people or actors that share a particular identity. One example of an international norm prevents the use of nuclear weapons in conflict (Tannenwald 1999). Other norms can exist at group level. In some smaller groups of people throughout the world, norms have developed to solve collective action and free-rider problems (Ostrom 1990). Norms do not always need to be what we would consider today as morally good. Generally, within the context of a particular norm, however, actors who participate in that norm feel that their actions are normal. Slavery was a norm in the southern states in the USA before the Civil War, but few people would consider such a norm as morally good today.

Norms can become diffused through various groups of individuals, such as epistemic communities (Haas 1992) or transnational advocacy networks (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Epistemic communities, individuals who share a common identity around the scientific method (Haas 1992), may diffuse norms across state boundaries. For example, if a particular norm exists within the US among scientists, this norm may become part of the Soviet scientific practice through the interaction between American and Soviet scientists. Norms can become diffused through a process of teaching and learning as well as successful demonstration of the operation of the norm (Acharya 2004). Successful demonstration of the operation of the norm increases the prestige, credibility, and acceptance of those who implement the norms. Credibility, Nye suggests, is one of the most important resources of soft power, yet without explaining how one becomes credible with regard to their particular soft power, this assertion provides little advantage. The discussion above, however, provides a basis from which individuals gain credibility – the success of an implemented norm.

The diffusion of norms primarily involves whether or not a particular norm is successful at achieving an outcome desired by the party who can choose whether to accept or reject such a norm. As Nye also suggests, information and soft power in the form of culture and other attributes is filtered by the recipient (Nye 2004). Because countries filter norms and information they receive from others, they copy and adopt norms in beneficial ways. In the case of the scientists from the Soviet Union, the most likely reason they accepted the freedom-norms provided in the USA was that the US scientists were highly successful in their competitive and free market system of exchange of ideas. When the Soviet scientists saw the success of the American system in this field and the applicability of this system to their own success back in the Soviet Union, they felt a need to promote ideas learned. This provides one potential mechanism through which ideas and policies might translate into effective attractive soft power.

This type of diffusion process somewhat resembles an evolutionary process, whereby success is copied by other groups so that they may also be successful. The evolutionary mechanism is a useful metaphor to understand norm diffusion because of its emphasis on fitness (success), learning, innovation, and the process occurring over time (Axelrod 1986, Thompson 2001). Essentially, at any given time, in the world system, there are a variety of policies, cultures, and other sources of soft power as Nye has defined it. For example, Hollywood is not the only movie production facility in the world. There are competitors, such as India's film industry or other independent filmmakers, who have their own venues for awards and distribution. There are a variety of cultures and political systems, such as capitalism, communism, protectionism, authoritarianism, and theocracy. Within the international system, these different

cultures and norms for how one makes movies or behaves in the international system are competing against other similar norms.

There is significant room for innovation when adapting norms or culture as well. The Asian Tigers adopted a new form of capitalist intervention, and China has created a hybrid quasi-capitalist state. There are also elements of success and failure in the international system, where successful norms of behavior replace less beneficial ones. This is evident in the case of communism as opposed to capitalist norms. Almost all communist countries in the world have taken up capitalism in some form because of the benefits which capitalist norms provide those states over planned-economic norms. Likewise, democracy has spread to various countries throughout the world, just as theocracy has throughout the Middle East. These norms disperse across states and the world because they are successful in allowing the state to gain prestige, power, money, or another desire.

The above discussion demonstrates one potential mechanism for the perpetuation of soft power via the diffusion of norms. This generally rests on the successfulness of the policy or idea to accomplish the goals – not only of the state wielding soft power, but also the potential success of the target state. Because norm diffusion occurs through competing norms until one becomes clearly dominant against all others, there is less control over the process by each state. States will pursue policies they believe are successful for their goals, and if those policies are successful, the policy will become attractive to others seeking similar goals and most likely adopted by them. The state and policy-makers have less control over this process because they cannot control the alternative norms that appear to compete against their own. In addition, states will attempt to make their policies or culture successful regardless of what other norms are competing, so it is not clear that states can always use potential soft power resources. Once a policy becomes perceived as ineffective or unsuccessful in international politics, states would rather reject such a policy rendering the soft power resource obsolete.

Rhetoric and discourse control

A second potential mechanism of soft power emerges through rhetoric and discourse domination. Scholarship on the dominance of discourse has begun to emerge as a critique of general international relations theory (Checkel 1998), a critique of gender-based discourse (Boyle *et al.* 2001), global discourse on environmental issues (Epstein 2008), and others. Changing a discourse can alter the frame – the relationship between an observer and the observed – generating differing perspectives and policy proposals (Snow and Benford 1988, Benford and Snow 2000).

Altering the dominant discourse can create blame for a particular international issue, which may cause the blamed actor to take action rather than remain neutral (see Sprinz and Vaahtoranta 1994, Keck and Sikkink 1998). Naming and shaming is commonly used by non-state actors to influence state behavior using rhetoric and symbols (e.g. Hafner-Burton 2008).

After altering a particular discourse and creating a dominant discourse through the use of symbols and rhetoric provided through traditional or new media outlets can make it difficult for states to act contrary to what is *normal* (see Keck and Sikkink 1998). Actors may use a number of visual actions, rhetorical actions, protests, and other factors to capture the attention of the media and change the way the world discusses a particular issue (Kalland 2009). In addition to media content,

focusing events or black-swans (Kingdon 2003, pp. 94–95, Taleb 2007) linked with a particular discourse can help propel the discourse into the mainstream dominant position.

Strategically utilizing rhetoric or creating new rhetoric and symbols of a particular discourse allows actors to influence world politics through soft power. This mechanism of soft power influence also potentially creates winners and losers, so that those who can access media outlets may dominate those who cannot. Thus, some may equate this with some form of control in the hard power. In today's new media, however, it is becoming more common for individuals to capture the attention of a large audience without prior access to traditional media outlets. The domination of discourse and rhetoric, therefore, illustrates a second possible mechanism for soft power influence over other actors.

Conclusion

This article redefined the power of attraction as a form of soft power in a continuous spectrum and equated the different forms of power with resources for implementing such power in international politics. Rather than defining power based on the two types of power typology, different forms of power maintain places on a continuum from the softest forms of attraction to the hardest form of physical control over another. Attraction develops primarily through rhetoric and resources such as agenda-setting control, economic resources, and finally military resources as one moves to harder powers. In addition to discussing the characteristics of resources underlying the typology, the article also described two mechanisms through which the power of attraction influences other actors. These two mechanisms include the use of rhetoric or discourse and the diffusion of norms. Through rhetoric, symbols, and other actions, individuals may change the dominant discourse or frame, altering the context for decision-making. By producing successful policies and ideas, actors copy and reproduce successful ideas and policies thus diffusing norms across state boundaries.

The discussion in this article does not imply when different forms of power are more likely to be useful or effective in international politics. Harder power, as is noted by the Melian dialogue, is not always successful in achieving the most desired outcome. The Athenians offered the alternative to acquiesce primarily because they would rather not have fought. Despite the availability of harder power, they could not achieve their most desired outcome of not fighting. Likewise, softer power resources may have a large effect on outcomes by making one alternative more attractive than another. In whaling, for example, NGOs have dominated the discussion thus creating an alternative discourse despite the economic power of countries such as Japan (Kalland 2009). Research on the use of different forms of power and when they become effective needs further empirical testing. Given the more developed conceptualization of softer and harder forms of power above, developing empirical studies of the usefulness of various forms of power becomes tenable.

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Notes

1. A similar definition is introduced by Wagner (2005), but Wagner focuses on India's shifting foreign policy strategy rather than explicating this soft power concept.
2. Other scholars have further expanded on the origins of this fear within theories of human evolution and group selection (Thayer 2004).
3. See Sprinz and Vaahtoranta (1994) for more on state-interest driven policy without reference to frames.

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