

**Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics – Joseph S. Nye, Jr.
Chapter 4 - Wielding Soft Power**

Governments use military power to issue threats, fight, and with a combination of skill and luck, achieve desired outcomes within a reasonable time. Economic power is often a similarly straightforward matter. Governments freeze foreign bank accounts overnight, and can distribute bribes or aid promptly, (although economic sanctions often take a long time, if ever, to produce desired outcomes). Soft power is more difficult, because many of its crucial resources are outside the control of governments, and their effects depend heavily on acceptance by the receiving audiences. Moreover, soft power resources often work indirectly by shaping the environment for policy, and sometimes take years to produce the desired outcomes.

Of course, these differences are matters of degree. Not all wars or economic actions promptly produce desired outcomes – witness the length and ultimate failure of the Vietnam War, or the fact that economic sanctions have historically produced their intended outcomes in only about a third of the cases where they were tried.ⁱ In Iraq, Saddam Hussein survived sanctions for more than a decade, and although the four-week military campaign broke his regime, it was only a first step toward achieving American objectives in Iraq. As one former military officer has observed, the mark of a great campaign is not what it destroys, but what it creates, and on that question the jury will remain out for a number of years on the Iraq War.ⁱⁱ Moreover, sometimes dissemination of information can quickly produce or prevent a desired outcome. But generally, soft-power resources are slower, more diffuse, and more cumbersome to wield than hard-power resources.

Early Efforts

The fact that soft-power resources are awkward to wield has not prevented governments from trying. Take France for example. In the 17th and 18th centuries, France promoted its culture throughout Europe. French not only became the language of diplomacy, but was even used at some foreign courts such as Prussia and Russia. During the French Revolution, France sought to appeal over the heads of governments directly to foreign populations by promoting its revolutionary ideology. After its defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, the French government sought to repair the nation's shattered prestige by promoting its language and literature through the Alliance Francaise, which was created in 1883. As the historian Richard Pells noted, "The projection of French culture abroad thus became a significant component of French diplomacy."ⁱⁱⁱ Italy, Germany, and others soon followed suit.

The outbreak of World War I saw a rapid acceleration of efforts to deploy soft power, as most of the governments established offices to propagandize their cause. The United States not only established its own office, but also during the early years before American entry into the war was a central target of other countries' efforts, as Britain and Germany competed to create favorable images in American public opinion. Noticing the counterproductive effects of German mass propaganda, Britain was more successful by focusing on American elites and using a soft sell. One early academic study of wartime propaganda reported, "The sheer radiation of aristocratic distinction was enough to warm the cockles of many a staunch Republican heart, and to evoke enthusiasm for the country which could produce such dignity, elegance and affability."^{iv}

The United States was a relative latecomer to the idea of using information and culture for the purposes of diplomacy. In 1917, President Woodrow Wilson established a Committee on Public Information, which was directed by his friend the newspaperman George Creel. Creel's task, he said, was "a vast enterprise in salesmanship, the world's greatest adventure in advertising."^v Creel insisted that his office's activities did not constitute propaganda and were merely educational and informative. But the facts belied his denials. Among other things, Creel organized tours, churned out pamphlets on "the

Gospel of Americanism,” established a government run news service, made sure that motion picture producers received wartime allotments of scarce materials, and saw to it that the films portrayed America in a positive light.^{vi} The office aroused sufficient suspicions that it was abolished shortly after the return of peace.

The advent of radio in the 1920s led many governments into the arena of foreign language broadcasting, and in the 1930s, Communists and Fascists competed to promote favorable images to foreign publics. In addition to its foreign language radio broadcasts, Nazi Germany perfected the propaganda film. In 1937, Britain’s Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, realized about the new communications, “It is perfectly true, of course, that good cultural propaganda cannot remedy the damage done by a bad foreign policy, but it is no exaggeration to say that even the best of diplomatic policies may fail if it neglects the task of interpretation and persuasion which modern conditions impose.”^{vii} By the end of the decade, the BBC, founded in 1922, was broadcasting in all major European languages as well as Arabic.

In the late 1930s, the Roosevelt Administration became convinced that “America’s security depended on its ability to speak to and to win the support of people in other countries.”^{viii} President Roosevelt was particularly concerned about German propaganda in Latin America. In 1938, the State Department established a Division of Cultural Relations, and supplemented it two years later with an Office of Inter-American Affairs under Nelson Rockefeller that actively promoted American information and culture in Latin America. In 1939, Germany beamed 7 hours of programming a week to Latin America, and the United States, about 12. By 1941, the United States was broadcasting around the clock.^{ix}

After America’s entry into the war, the government’s cultural offensive became global in scope. In 1942, Roosevelt created an Office of Wartime Information to deal in presumably accurate information, while an intelligence organization, the Office of Strategic Service, included dissemination of disinformation among its functions. Even the OWI worked to shape Hollywood into an effective propaganda tool, suggesting additions and deletions to films and denying licenses to others.^x And Hollywood executives, motivated by a mixture of patriotism and self-interest, were happy to cooperate. Well before the Cold War, “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."^{xi} Wartime soft-power resources were created partly by the government and in part independently.

Radio played a significant role. What became known as the Voice of America grew rapidly during World War II. Modeled on the BBC's approach, by 1943 it had 23 transmitters delivering news in 27 languages. After the war, with the start of the Cold War and the growth of the Soviet threat, the VOA continued to expand, but so did a debate about how much it should be a captive purveyor of government information or an independent representative of American culture. Special radios were added such as Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe, which used exiles to broadcast to the Eastern bloc. More generally, as the Cold War developed, there was a division between those who favored the slow media of cultural diplomacy – art, books, exchanges – that had a trickle down effect, and those who favored the fast information media of radio, movies and newsreels, which promised more immediate and visible “bang for the buck.”^{xii}

Throughout the Cold War, these two approaches struggled over how the government should invest in soft power. The “tough-minded” did not shy away from direct propaganda while the “tender-minded” argued that changing foreign attitudes is a gradual process that should be measured in years.^{xiii} There were also struggles over how directed and how free of government control government-supported programs should be. In the end, according to Reinhold Wagnleitner, American foreign cultural programs were “sucked into the vortex of an aggressive anti-Communist foreign policy.” For example a directive at the time stated that, our overseas libraries “have to be objective, but on the other hand, the very definition of our libraries is that they are special purpose libraries. The best we can hope to do is to achieve and maintain the illusion of objectivity.”^{xiv} There was a thin line between information and propaganda. Henry James, Jr., a State Department official, noted that the inclusion of magazines critical of the Truman administration and books on racial questions impressed readers abroad with the “credibility of the material.” Attacks by Senator Joseph McCarthy produced a brief period of hysteria and censorship, but new directives in 1953 restored more balance.^{xv}

These struggles persisted despite various reorganizations of American institutions for public diplomacy over the years. The debate over how directly or indirectly the government should try to control its instruments of soft power can never be fully resolved because both sides make valid points. For 46 years after 1953, the central institution of public diplomacy was the United States Information Agency. The Voice of America was folded into it in 1978, and in the 1980s, the Reagan Administration tried to make both institutions more directly responsive to the government's immediate objectives.^{xvi} In 1999, USIA was abolished and its functions were absorbed into the State Department, where it would be closer to policy, while VOA and other specialized stations were put under a new bipartisan entity, the Broadcasting Board of Governors. Currently, the VOA broadcasts in 53 languages to an estimated audience of 91 million people.^{xvii}

More important than the vicissitudes of reorganization was the low priority assigned to soft power in the postwar era. President Eisenhower said in retirement that he should have taken money out of the military budget to strengthen USIA, but that was not typical. "No president, with the possible exception of Dwight Eisenhower, has considered the director of USIA important. In the Cuban Missile Crisis, [USIA director Edward R.] Murrow was not involved. He coined the phrase that he wanted to be in on the takeoff, not on the crash landing."^{xviii} Even in the midst of the Cold War, France and Germany spent more in absolute terms on policy information and cultural communication functions than did the United States – in absolute terms – and Britain and Japan spent more as a percent of their budgets, .23 and .14 percent respectively, compared to the United States' .11 percent. The "leader of the free world" ranked fifth among the key Western allies in terms of government investment in soft-power resources in 1975.^{xix}

With the end of the Cold War, Americans were more interested in budget savings than in investments in soft power. From 1963 to 1993, the federal budget grew 15-fold, but the USIA budget grew only 6.5 times. USIA had over 12,000 employees at its peak in the mid-sixties, but only 9,000 in 1994 and 6,715 on the eve of its takeover by the State Department.^{xx} Soft power seemed expendable. Between 1989 and 1999, the budget of USIA, adjusted for inflation, decreased 10 percent. While government-funded radio broadcasts reached half the Soviet population every week and between 70 and 80 percent of the populace of Eastern Europe during the Cold War, at the beginning of the new

century, a mere 2 percent of Arabs heard the VOA.^{xxi} Resources for the USIA mission in Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim nation, were cut in half. From 1995 to 2001, academic and cultural exchanges dropped from 45,000 to 29,000 annually, and many accessible cultural centers and libraries were closed.^{xxii} In comparison, the BBC World Service had 150 million weekly listeners around the globe while the VOA had fewer than 100 million.^{xxiii} Soft power had become so identified with fighting the Cold War that few Americans noticed that with an information revolution occurring, soft power was becoming more rather than less important. Only after September 2001 did Americans rediscover the importance of investing in the instruments of soft power, and even then inadequately; in 2003 the Voice of America cut its English-language broadcasts by 25 percent.^{xxiv}

Public Diplomacy in an Information Age

Promoting positive images of one's country is not new, but the conditions for projecting soft power have transformed dramatically in recent years. For one thing, nearly half the countries in the world are now democracies.^{xxv} The competitive Cold War model has become less relevant as a guide for public diplomacy. While there is still a need to provide accurate information to populations in countries like Burma or Syria, where the government controls information, there is also a new need to create a favorable image in public opinion in countries like Mexico and Turkey, where parliaments can now affect decision making. When the United States sought support for the Iraq war in such countries, the administration's squandering of our soft power created a disabling rather than an enabling environment for its policies. Shaping public opinion becomes even more important where authoritarian governments have been replaced by new democracies. Even when foreign leaders are friendly, their leeway may be limited if their publics and parliaments have a negative image of the United States and its policies. In such circumstances, diplomacy aimed at public opinion can become as important to outcomes as the traditional classified diplomatic communications among leaders.

Information is power, and today a much larger part of the world's population has access to that power. Long gone are the days when "small teams of American foreign service officers drove Jeeps to the hinterlands of Latin America and other remote regions of the world to show reel-to-reel movies to isolated audiences."^{xxvi} Technological advances have led to 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."^{xxvii} Plenty of information leads to scarcity -- of attention. When people are overwhelmed with the volume of information confronting them, they have difficulty discerning what to focus on. Attention rather than information becomes the scarce resource, and those who can distinguish valuable information from background clutter gain power. Editors and cue-givers become more in demand, and this is a source of power for those who can tell us where to focus our attention.

In addition, publics have become more wary and sensitized about propaganda. 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 with a broad range of alternatives including news media, corporations, non-governmental organizations, 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. Politics in an information age "may ultimately be about whose story wins," say two RAND Corporation experts on politics and information.^{xxviii} 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 Kosovo in 1999 and the events in Serbia a year later. Prior to the demonstrations that led to the overthrow of Slobodan Milosevic in October 2000, 45 percent of Serb adults were tuned to Radio Free Europe and the Voice of America, whereas only 31 percent listened to the state controlled radio station, Radio Belgrade.^{xxix} Moreover, the domestic alternative radio station, B92, provided access to Western news,

and when the government tried to shut it down, it continued to provide such news on the Internet.^{xxx}

Reputation has always mattered in world politics, but the role of credibility becomes an even more important power resource because of the “paradox of plenty.” Information that appears to be propaganda may not only be scorned but also may turn out to be counterproductive if it undermines a country’s reputation for credibility. Exaggerated claims about the imminence of Saddam Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction and the strength of his 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, the soft sell may prove more effective than a hard sell.

The Shape of Public Diplomacy

In 1963, Edward R. Murrow, the noted broadcaster who was director of USIA in the Kennedy Administration, defined public diplomacy as interactions aimed not only at foreign governments but primarily with non-governmental individuals and organizations, and often presented a variety of private views in addition to government views.^{xxxii} As the British expert Mark Leonard has observed, skeptics who treat the term “public diplomacy” as a mere euphemism for propaganda miss the point. Simple propaganda often lacks credibility and thus is counterproductive as public diplomacy. Nor is public diplomacy merely public relations. Conveying information and selling a positive image is part of it, but public diplomacy also involves building long-term relationships that create an enabling environment for government policies.

There are three dimensions of public diplomacy; all three are important, and they require different relative proportions of direct government information and long-term cultural relationships.^{xxxiii} The first and most immediate dimension is daily communications, which involves explaining the context of domestic and foreign policy decisions. After making decisions, government officials in modern democracies usually spend a good deal of attention on what to tell the press and how to do it. But they generally focus on the domestic press – yet the foreign press corps has to be the most

important target for the first dimension of public diplomacy. Leonard warns that many governments make the mistake of explaining domestic decisions only to their internal audiences and fail to realize the effect of their actions and the explanations of their actions on the international image of their country. For example, after a series of railroad accidents, the British press scornfully described Britain as “a third world country.” Without explanation of the context, some of the foreign press repeated such phrases in their reporting, and that contributed to the image of Britain as a declining nation.

The day-to-day dimension must also involve preparation for dealing with crises and countering attacks. A rapid response capability means that false charges or misleading information can be answered immediately. For example, when Al Jazeera broadcast Osama bin Laden’s first videotape on October 7, 2001, U.S. officials initially sought to prevent both Al Jazeera and American networks from broadcasting messages from bin Laden. But in the modern information age, that is not only as frustrating as stopping the tide, but it also runs counter to the value of openness that America wants to symbolize. A better response would be to prepare to flood Al Jazeera and other networks with American voices to counter bin Laden’s hate speech. While Al Jazeera and other foreign networks are hardly free of bias, they also need content. As their Washington bureau chief invited Americans, “Please come talk to us, exploit us.”^{xxxiii}

The second dimension is strategic communication, in a set of simple themes is developed, much like what occurs in a political or advertising campaign. The campaign plans symbolic events and communications over the course of a year to reinforce the central themes, or to advance a particular government policy. Sometimes this is easier planned than done. For example, in the 1990s while the British Council heavily promoted Britain as a modern, multiethnic and creative island, another government agency, the British Tourist Authority, was busily advertising British tradition, ceremony, and history. Moreover, events can derail such branding. For example, several years of stressing the theme of Britain as a loyal member of the European Union were undone when, in 2003, Britain split with France and Germany to support the United States in the Iraq War. In the eyes of the public in many countries, this reinforced an undesirable image of Britain as America’s servant.

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. The United States themes stressed the multilateral nature of the NATO decision, encouraged European governments to take the lead when possible, and used non-governmental American participants effectively to counter Soviet arguments. Even though polls in Germany showed residual concerns about the policy, they also showed that two-thirds of the German public was pro-American. As former Secretary of State George Schultz 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."^{xxxiv}

The third stage of public diplomacy is the development of lasting relationships with key individuals over many years 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 world leaders like Anwar Sadat, Helmut Schmidt and Margaret Thatcher.^{xxxv} Charlotte Beers, the former Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy pointed out that such exchanges have involved over 200 current or former heads of state, and that half of the leaders in the coalition against terrorism were once exchange visitors. "This has got to be the best buy in government," she said.^{xxxvi} Other countries have similar programs. For example, Japan has developed an interesting exchange program bringing 6,000 young foreigners each year from 40 countries to teach their languages in Japanese schools, with an alumni association to maintain the bonds of friendship that are developed.

Each of these three dimensions of public diplomacy plays an important role in helping 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, and policies that appear as narrowly self-serving or arrogantly presented are likely to consume rather than produce soft power. At best, long-standing friendly

relationships may lead others to be slightly more tolerant in their responses. Sometimes friends will give you the benefit of the doubt or forgive more willingly.

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. Sir Michael Butler, a British diplomat who admires the U.S. explained, “If your government is perceived as self-interested, reactionary and unhelpful, it will seriously hamper your ability to get your way – as the U.S. is finding at the moment.”^{xxxvii} In 2003, former speaker of the House of Representatives Newt Gingrich attacked the State Department for failing to sell America’s policy.^{xxxviii} But selling requires paying attention to your markets, and on that dimension, the fault did not rest with the State Department. For example, Gingrich complained about America’s removal from the UN Human Rights Commission in 2001. But that was in retaliation for America’s failure to pay its UN dues (a policy that originated in Congress) and the unilateral policies of the new Bush Administration (that often originated in other executive departments against the warnings of the State Department). Senator Charles Hagel, a Nebraska Republican, noted that after 9/11 many people in Washington were suddenly talking about the need for a renewed public diplomacy to “‘get our message out’...But Madison Avenue-style packaging cannot market a contradictory or confusing message. We need to reassess the fundamentals of our diplomatic approach.... Policy and diplomacy must match, or marketing becomes a confusing and transparent barrage of mixed messages.”^{xxxix}

Effective public diplomacy is a two-way street that involves listening as well as talking. Soft power rests on some shared values. That is why exchanges are often more effective than mere broadcasting. By definition, soft power means getting others to want the same outcomes you want, and that requires an understanding of how they are hearing your messages and fine-tuning it accordingly. It is crucial to understand the target audience. Yet funding for research on foreign public opinion is woefully under funded at about \$5 million per year and has declined over the past decade.^{xl}

Preaching at foreigners is not the best way to convert them. Too often political leaders think that the problem is simply that others lack information, and that if they simply knew what we know, they will see things our way. But all information goes

through cultural filters, and declamatory statements are rarely heard as intended. Telling is far less influential than actions and symbols that show as well as tell. That is why the Bush Administration initiatives on increasing development assistance or combating HIV/AIDS are so important.

Broadcasting is important but needs to be supplemented by effective “narrow casting” via the Internet. While the Internet reaches only the elites in the many parts of the world where most people are too poor to own a telephone (much less a computer), its flexibility and low cost allows for precise targeting. It also provides a way to transfer information to countries where the government blocks traditional media. And the Internet can be used interactively and in combination with exchanges. Face-to-face communications remain the most effective, but they can be supplemented and reinforced by the Internet. For example, a combination of visits and the Internet can create both virtual and real networks of young people who want to learn about each other’s cultures. Or the United States might learn a lesson from Japan and pay young foreigners to spend a year teaching their language and culture in American schools. The alumni of these programs could then form associations that would remain connected over the Internet.

Some countries accomplish almost all of their public diplomacy through actions rather than broadcasting. Norway is a good example. It has only 5 million people, lacks an international language or transnational culture, is not a central location or hub of organizations or multinational corporate brands, and is not a member of the European Union. Nonetheless, it has developed a voice and presence out of proportion to its modest size and resources “through a ruthless prioritisation of its target audiences and its concentration on a single message – Norway as a force for peace in the world.”^{xli} The relevant activities include conflict mediation in the Middle East, Sri Lanka, and Colombia, as well as its large aid budget, and its frequent participation in peacekeeping forces. Of course, not all Norwegian actions are on message. The domestic politics of whaling sometimes strike a discordant note among environmentalists, but overall, Norway shows how a small country can exploit a diplomatic niche that enhances its image and role.

Not only do actions need to reinforce words, but it is important to remember that the same words and images that are most successful in communicating to a domestic

audience may have negative effects on a foreign audience. When President Bush used the term “axis of evil” to refer to Iraq, Iran and North Korea in his 2002 State of the Union address, it was well received domestically, but foreigners reacted against lumping together disparate diplomatic situations under a moralistic label. Similarly, while declaring a “war on terrorism” helped mobilize public and Congressional support after 9/11, many foreign publics believed that the United States was making cooperation against terrorism more difficult, particularly when the idea of a war of indefinite duration could be used to incarcerate foreign prisoners.

Even when policy and communications are “in sync”, wielding soft power resources in an information age is difficult. For one thing, as mentioned earlier, government communications are only a small fraction of the total communications among societies in an age that is awash in information. Hollywood movies that offend religious fundamentalists in other countries or activities by American missionaries that appear to devalue Islam will always be outside the control of government. Some skeptics have concluded that Americans should accept the inevitable, and let market forces take care of the presentation of its culture and image to foreigners. Why pour money into the Voice of America when CNN, MSNBC or Fox can do the work for free? But such a conclusion is too facile. Market forces portray only the profitable mass dimensions of American culture, thus reinforcing foreign images of a one-dimensional country.

Government support of high cultural exchanges has often had important effects on key foreign elites. Developing long-term relationships is not always profitable in the short term, and thus leaving simply to the market may lead to under-investment. While higher education may pay for itself, and non-profit organizations can help, many exchange programs would shrink without government support. Private companies must respond to market forces to stay in business. If there is no market for broadcasting in Serbo-Croatian or Pashtu, companies will not broadcast in those languages. And sometimes, private companies will cave in to political pressures from foreign governments if that is better for profits – witness the way Rupert Murdoch dropped the BBC, which broadcasts some material critical of China, from his satellite television broadcasts to China in the 1990s

At the same time, postmodern publics are generally skeptical of authority, and governments are often mistrusted. Thus it often behooves governments to keep in the background and to work with private actors. Some NGOs enjoy more trust than governments do, and though they are difficult to control, they can be useful channels of communication. American foundations such as Ford, the Soros Foundation, and the Carnegie Endowment and a variety of NGOs played important roles in the consolidation of democracy in Eastern Europe after the end of the Cold War. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has done more than many governments to combat infectious diseases in Africa. For countries like Britain and the United States, which enjoy significant immigrant populations, diasporas can provide culturally sensitive and linguistically skilled connections. Building relationships between political parties in different countries was pioneered by Germany where the major parties have foundations for foreign contacts that are partly supported by government funds. During the Reagan Administration, the United States followed suit when it established the National Endowment for Democracy, which provided funds for the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute as well as trade unions and chambers of commerce in order to promote democracy and civil society overseas.

American companies can also play an important role. Their representatives and brands directly touch the lives of far more people than government representatives do. Some public-spirited business people have suggested that companies develop and share sensitivity and communications training for corporate representatives before they are sent abroad. Companies can also take the lead in sponsoring specific public diplomacy projects such as “a technology company working with Sesame Workshops and a Lebanese broadcaster to co-produce an English language children’s program centered on technology, an area of American achievement that is universally admired.”^{xlii}

Another benefit to indirect public diplomacy is that it is often able to take more risks in cultural exchanges. It is sometimes domestically difficult for the government to support cutting edge art that appeals to foreign elites but offends popular tastes at home. For example, when the State Department mounted a show of modern art in 1947, it was ridiculed in the press for wasting taxpayer dollars, and even President Truman criticized it for showing the “vaporings of half-baked crazy people.”^{xliii} While governments are

often loath to loosen their control by using indirect public diplomacy, what they lose in control they can make up in credibility by partnering with private organizations.

One way to keep control while presenting the illusion of government absence is by covert funding through intelligence agencies. For example, the Central Intelligence Agency covertly supported the budgets of cultural organizations such as the Congress for Cultural Freedom in the early stages of the Cold War. Even at the time, there were misgivings. “In its starkest terms, the problem was how to use intellectual freedom as propaganda without turning it into propaganda in the process.... The political logic of this novel situation entailed the covert manipulation of liberal ideals and their proponents.”^{xliv} But secrecy works only so long as the secret can be kept, and that is difficult in an information age, particularly in a democracy like the United States with a powerful press, Congress, and no official secrets act, as Britain has. When disclosure eventually comes (as news of the CIA’s involvement in cultural exchanges came through press reports and congressional hearings in the 1970s), the price in terms of lost credibility may be very high. It is generally better to be open about funding and establish an arms-length relationship.

This does not mean that the CIA plays no role in generating soft power. On the contrary, the development of trust and long-term relationships with friendly foreign intelligence agencies, and the sharing of intelligence can have a powerful effect on other countries’ perceptions of both the United States and world events. If soft power includes shaping others’ perceptions, shared intelligence is an important soft-power resource. In such contexts, the sharing of classified information may have a direct and powerful effect on policy. Sometimes information alone, if telling and credible, can change another government’s policy, which is why the intelligence failures and the exaggeration of intelligence for political ends in the prelude to the Iraq war were so damaging to American soft power. Not only was the general credibility of the government damaged, but a highly effective channel was also weakened. Other countries will be less likely to trust or believe American intelligence reports in the future.

The military can also play an important role in the creation of soft power. In addition to the aura of power that is generated by its hard-power capabilities, the military has a broad range of officer exchanges, joint-training, and assistance programs with other

countries in peacetime. The Pentagon's international military and educational training programs include sessions on democracy and human rights along with military training. As former Secretary of Defense William Perry put it, such military-to-military contacts can constitute an aspect of "preventive defense," by developing contacts and helping to shape the outlook of foreign military officers more in line with American approaches. At various times, such contacts have provided channels of influence not available through ordinary diplomatic means. Indeed, some observers worry that America's five military regional commanders sometimes have more resources and better access than the ambassadors in the countries in their regions.^{xlv}

In wartime, military psychological operations ("psy-ops") are an important way to influence foreign behavior and even obviate outright military means. For example, an enemy outpost can be destroyed by a cruise missile or captured by ground forces -- or enemy soldiers can be convinced to desert and leave the post undefended. Psy-ops often involve deception and disinformation that is effective in war but counterproductive in peace. Equally important in the tactics of war is the management of news to reduce unfavorable perceptions. Rigid censorship is not always the answer. An aspect of soft power that the Pentagon got right in the second Gulf War has been called the "weaponization of reporters." Embedding reporters with forward military units undercut Saddam Hussein's strategy of creating international outrage by claiming that Americans were deliberately killing civilians. Unlike the first Gulf War, when CNN framed the issues, the diffusion of information technology and the rise of new outlets like Al Jazeera in the ensuing decade required a new strategy for avoiding damage to American soft power in the context of war. Whatever other issues it raised, embedding reporters in front-line units was a successful tactic under wartime conditions in an information age.

The problems with the military role in wielding soft power arise when it tries to apply wartime tactics in ambiguous situations. This is particularly tempting in the current ill-defined war on terrorism that blurs the distinction between normal civilian activities and war. In 2002, frustrated with American public diplomacy, the Pentagon developed plans for an Office of Strategic Influence that would provide news items, possibly including false ones, to foreign media organizations in an effort to influence both friendly and unfriendly countries.^{xlvi} After the plans were revealed in the press, Secretary of

Defense Rumsfeld had to quickly disavow the project. But the damage to American credibility and soft power had already been done.

Finally, it is a mistake to see public diplomacy simply in adversarial terms. Sometimes there is a competition of “my information versus your information,” but often there can be gains for both sides. German public diplomacy during the Cold War is a good example. In contrast to French public diplomacy, which sought to demonstrate independence from the United States, a key theme of German public diplomacy was to portray itself as a reliable ally in American eyes. Thus German and American policy information goals were mutually reinforcing.^{xlvi} Political leaders may share mutual and similar objectives – for example the promotion of democracy and human rights. In such circumstances, there can be joint gains from coordination of public diplomacy programs. Cooperative public diplomacy can also help take the edge off suspicions of narrow national motives.^{xlviii}

In addition, there are times when cooperation, including enhancement of the public image of multilateral institutions like NATO or the UN, can make it easier for governments to use such instruments to handle difficult tasks like peacekeeping, promoting democracy, or countering terrorism. For example, during the Cold War, American public diplomacy in Czechoslovakia was reinforced by the association of the United States with international conventions that fostered human rights.^{xliv} In 1975, the multilateral Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe legitimized discussion of human rights behind the Iron Curtain and had consequences that were unforeseen by those who signed the agreement that resulted, called the Final Act. As former CIA Director Robert Gates concluded, despite initial American resistance, “the Soviets desperately wanted the CSCE, they got it, and it laid the foundations for the end of their empire.”¹

The Special Case of the Middle East

The Middle East presents a particular challenge for American soft power and public diplomacy. Not only was it the home of the terrorists who attacked the U.S. on September 11, but the region has not adjusted well to modernization. Half the world's countries are democracies, yet none of the 22 Arab countries is democratic. Economic growth has been slow, approximately half the women are illiterate, and the region is not well integrated with the world economy. In 2003, the World Bank reported that annual income growth per head in the region averaged a mere .5 per cent from 1985-2000, while military spending was the highest in the world at 6 per cent of GDP.^{li} With a population over 300 million, the Arab countries export less to the world, excluding oil and gas, than does Finland.^{lii} The number of scientists working in Arab countries is about one-third of the global average.^{liii} There is an enormous "youth bulge" in the demographic tables, yet the region has inadequate opportunities for young people to find meaningful work. Forty-five percent of the population of the Arab world is now under the age of 14, and the population as a whole will double over the next quarter century. Unemployment hovers at 20 percent.^{liv} At the same time, the Middle East is awash with modern communications, much of it with an anti-American slant. This region presents a special challenge for public diplomacy.

During the Cold War, the United States' approach to the region was to foster stability that would prevent the spread of Soviet influence, ensure the supply of oil for the world economy and provide security for Israel, one of the rare democracies. The American strategy was management through autocratic leaders, and "Don't rock the boat." During the Reagan administration, the U.S. even supported Saddam Hussein as a counterbalance to the Islamic regime that had overthrown America's ally, the Shah of Iran. According to Ambassador Edward Walker, the president of the Middle East Institute, who has served as ambassador to several countries in the region, "While we spoke of human rights, economic development, democracy and the rule of law, our policies and the distribution of our resources did not reflect our rhetoric. We neither challenged the governments in the region to change nor offered incentives to help stimulate change."^{lv}

After 9/11, the Bush Administration launched an ambitious new approach. Drawing on the analogy of the Cold War and the American role in the transformation of

Europe, the administration decided that the United States should commit to a long-term transformation of the Middle East. The removal of Saddam Hussein was only a first step. National Security Advisor Condoleeza Rice argued that “much as a democratic Germany became a linchpin of a new Europe that is today whole, free and at peace, so a transformed Iraq can become a key element in a very different Middle East in which the ideologies of hate will not flourish.”^{lvi} But the exercise of hard power in the four-week campaign that toppled Saddam Hussein was the easy part. Germany and Japan were postwar success stories, but both were relatively homogeneous societies with significant middle classes and no organized resistance to American occupation. Moreover, Iraq’s possession of oil is a mixed blessing, since few oil-based economies have proven hospitable for liberal democracy. And democratization after World War II took years and was greatly assisted by American soft power. The long-run strategy for the transformation of Iraq and the Middle East will not succeed without a similar role for American (and others’) soft power.

The Cold War analogy is useful in suggesting the need for a long-term strategy, but it can also mislead. Soft power depends on willing receivers, and the cultural differences between the U.S. and Europe were not as great as those between the U.S. and the Middle East. Thus Europe was more susceptible to American soft-power resources. On the other hand, cultural differences did not prevent democracy from taking root in Japan or South Korea, albeit with a four-decade lag in the latter case. And democracy works in other Muslim countries such as Turkey and Bangladesh. The cultural barriers are far from insurmountable.

Democracy is more than mere voting, which can lead to “one man, one vote, once” if done too hastily. Since the autocratic regimes in the Middle East have destroyed their liberal opposition, radical Islamists often represent the only alternative dissent in many countries. The radical Islamists feed on resistance to corrupt regimes, opposition to American policies, and popular fears of modernization. They portray liberal democracy as corruption, sex and violence, and American films and television sometimes reinforce that portrait. At the same time, modernization also produces education, jobs, more opportunities, and better health care. Fortunately, polls show that the majority of the populations in the region desire the benefits of trade, communications and globalization.

American technology is widely admired. Given this ambivalence among the moderates in the Arab cultures, there is still a chance of isolating the extremists.

Democracy cannot be imposed by force. The key to success will lie in policies that open regional economies, reduce bureaucratic controls, speed economic growth, improve educational systems, and encourage the types of gradual political changes that are taking place in small countries like Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait and Morocco. The development of intellectuals, social groups, and eventually countries that demonstrate that liberal democracy can be consistent with local cultures could have beneficial effects similar to the ways that Japan and Korea demonstrated that democracy can be combined with indigenous values in Asia. But that takes time, as well as skillful application of American (and other) soft-power resources.

Soon after 9/11, many Americans were transfixed by the question “Why do they hate us?” But the answer was that many Arabs did not hate us. Many feared, misunderstood, and opposed American policies, but nonetheless admired some aspects of American culture. Moreover, they share many values such as family, religious belief, and desire for democracy. The grounds for soft power exist, but the world’s leading communications country has proven surprisingly maladroit in exploiting those opportunities. For example, a major effort to produce television advertisements that showed American Muslims being well treated at home had little effect. According to critics, the ground had not been well prepared by polls and focus groups, and many people in the region were more concerned with what they saw as the deficiencies of American policies rather than American domestic conditions. The problematic result has been “a public diplomacy that accentuates image over substance.”^{lvii} As Danielle Pletka of the American Enterprise Institute put it, “We are seen as propping up these lousy governments. No amount of Britney Spears will counter the anti-Western teachings that many youths in closed societies grow up with.”^{lviii}

In 2003, a bipartisan advisory group on public diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim world found that the United States was spending only \$150 million on public diplomacy in Muslim majority countries, including \$25 million on outreach programs. They concluded, “To say that financial resources are inadequate to the task is a gross understatement.”^{lix} In addition to a new White House director of public diplomacy, they

recommended building libraries and information centers, translating more Western books into Arabic, increasing scholarships and visiting fellowships, upgrading the American internet presence, and training more Arabic speakers and public relations specialists.

Like all public diplomacy, effective public diplomacy in the region will have three dimensions. The United States will have to become more agile in first dimension, quick response and explanation of current events. New broadcasting units like Radio Sawa, which broadcasts in Arabic and intersperses news with popular music, is a step in the right direction, but the Americans will also have to work more effectively with Arab news media such as Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya. The second dimension, development of a few strategic themes, will have to include better explanations of American policies in addition to branding America as a democratic nation. For example, the charge that American policies are indifferent to the destruction of Muslim lives can be addressed head on by pointing to American interventions that saved Muslim lives in Bosnia and Kosovo, as well as assistance to Muslim countries to foster development and combat AIDS. As Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs William Burns pointed out, democratic change must be embedded in “ a wider positive agenda for the for the region, alongside rebuilding Iraq, achieving the President’s two-state vision for Israelis and Palestinians; and modernizing Arab economies.”^{lx}

Most important, however, will be the development of a long-term strategy of cultural and educational exchanges that develop a richer and more open civil society in Middle Eastern countries. The most effective spokesmen for the United States are not Americans but indigenous surrogates who understand America’s virtues as well as our faults. A fascinating example of this is taking place right now between Los Angeles and Teheran as the Iranian diaspora has been broadcasting a privately sponsored television program into Iran to encourage reform in that country.^{lxi}

Much of the work of developing an open civil society can be promoted by corporations, foundations, universities and other non-profit organizations, as well as by governments. Companies and foundations can offer technology to help modernize Arab educational systems and take them beyond rote learning. American universities can establish more exchange programs for students and faculty. Foundations can support the development of institutions of American studies in Arab countries, or programs that

enhance the professionalism of journalists. Governments can support the teaching of English language, and finance student exchanges. In short, there are many strands to an effective long-term strategy for creating soft-power resources and promoting conditions for the development of democracy. But, as I argued earlier, none will be effective unless the style and substance of American policies are consistent with the larger democratic message.

The Future of American Public Diplomacy

Americans rediscovered the need for public diplomacy after September 11, but we have still not adjusted to the complexities of wielding soft power in an information age. Some people now regard the abolition of USIA as a mistake, but there is no consensus about recreating it as opposed to reorganizing its functions that were dispersed within the State Department.^{lxii} The Broadcasting Board of Governors oversees the VOA as well as a number of specialized stations that focus on particular countries. A number of useful steps have been taken, such as the establishment of Radio Sawa and Radio Farda, which broadcasts to Iran. An Office of Global Communication has been created in the White House. But much more is needed.

Perhaps most striking is the low priority and paucity of resources devoted to producing soft power. The combined cost of the State Department's public diplomacy programs and U.S. international broadcasting comes to a little over a billion dollars, or about 4 percent of the nation's international affairs budget, about 3 percent of the intelligence budget, and .29 percent of the military budget. If we spent one per cent of the military budget on public diplomacy – what Newton Minnow calls “one dollar to launch ideas for every \$100 we invest to launch bombs” – it would mean almost a quadrupling of the existing budget.^{lxiii} The United States still invests far less in soft-power resources than do other major countries, as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 - Comparative Investments in Soft and Hard Power^{lxiv}

	Public Diplomacy	Defense	Year
United States	\$1.12B	\$347.9B	2002
France	\$1.05B	\$33.6B	2001
Great Britain	\$1.00B	\$38.4B	2002
Germany	\$218M	\$27.5B	2001
Japan	\$210M	\$40.3B	2001

Equally important is to establish more policy coherence among the dimensions of public diplomacy and to relate them to other issues. For example, despite a declining share of the market for international students, “The U.S. government seems to lack overall strategic sense of why exchange is important... In this strategic vacuum, it is difficult to counter the day-to-day obstacles that students encounter in trying to come here.”^{lxv} There is little coordination of exchange policy with visa policies. After 9/11, Americans became more fearful. As one observer noted, “while greater vigilance is certainly needed, this broad net is catching all kinds of people who are no danger whatsoever.”^{lxvi} By needlessly discouraging such people from coming to the United States, such policies undercut our soft-power resources.

Public diplomacy needs greater support in the White House. A task force on public diplomacy of the Council on Foreign Relations has urged the creation of an office to be called the Public Diplomacy Coordinating Structure in the White House, led by a presidential designee. In addition, new institutions could be created to help mobilize the private sector. This could also be accomplished by creating a non-profit entity to be called the Corporation for Public Diplomacy to organize private sector efforts.^{lxvii} A successful strategy would need to focus not merely on broadcasting American messages, but on two-way communications that engage more of the non-governmental dimensions of society.

Above all, however, Americans will have to become more aware of cultural differences. To be effective, we must become less parochial and more sensitive to foreign perceptions. President Bush's White House press conference on October 11, 2001, illustrates the nature of our problem: "I am amazed that there is such a misunderstanding of what our country is about that people would hate us... Like most Americans, I just can't believe it. Because I know how good we are, and we've got to do a better job of making our case." But the first step in making a better case is a greater understanding of how our policies appear to others and of the cultural filters that affect how they hear our messages.

American media coverage of the rest of the world declined dramatically after the end of the Cold War. Training in foreign languages lags. When we become irritated with French policy on Iraq, Congressmen rename "French fries" as "freedom fries." Fewer scholars take up Fulbright visiting lectureships. One historian noted "how distant we are from a time when American historians – driven by a curiosity about the world beyond both the academy and the United States—were able to communicate with the public about the issues, national and international, that continue to affect us all."^{xviii} To be more effective in public diplomacy in an information age, we need to change attitudes at home as well as abroad. To put it bluntly, to communicate more effectively, Americans need to listen. Wielding soft power is far less unilateral than employing hard power, and we have yet to learn that lesson.

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