

## Term

# Soft Power

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## Definition

The term 'Soft Power' refers to a state's ability to shape the preferences of other states via non-coercive means. Soft Power is an indirect form of exerting power; it allows a state to achieve its objectives by attracting other states to follow its lead, admire its values, and emulate its example.<sup>1</sup>

## From Hard to Soft Power

The components of a state's "Soft Power" are its culture and values, its policies and political institutions, as "currencies" of influence over other states.

The instruments of Soft Power – through which its components are applied – comprehend leading by example, appealing to commonly accepted values and ends, diplomacy, and propaganda.

In contrast, "Hard Power" refers to a state's ability to achieve its goals by applying coercive tactics on other states. Coercive tactics correspond to inducements or threats,<sup>2</sup> which derive from a state's economic and military strength.

Traditionally, a state's "Power" refers to "the factors that enable one actor to manipulate another actor's behavior."<sup>3</sup> In the context of international relations, the concept of 'power' relates to one state's ability to promote its own national interests, to influence the international system and to win in international bargaining.<sup>4</sup>

## Background

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<sup>1</sup> See: Nye, J., **Soft Power**, (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), pp. 5-15; 30.

<sup>2</sup> 'Inducements or threats' are also known as "the carrot and stick" approach.

<sup>3</sup> See Kegley, Wittkopf, **World Politics – Trends and Transformation**, (Belmont, Thomson Wadsworth, 2006), p.33.

<sup>4</sup> "There are several ways to affect the behavior of others [to get the outcomes one wants.] You can coerce them with threats; you can induce them with payments; or you can attract and co-opt them to want what you want." Nye, **Ibid**, p.2.

Both, Hard and Soft Power, refer to a state's ability to achieve its purposes by influencing other states. However, they represent the polar extremities of the "power-spectrum"<sup>5</sup>. In each pole, a state applies different ideas, interactions and institutions regarding its foreign policy, security and economy.<sup>6</sup>

Accordingly, when a state is imbued with an image of an invincible power, its Hard Power can turn into a source of attraction for other states<sup>7</sup>; thus Hard Power's means of coercion can become a state's actual Soft Power.<sup>8</sup>

End.

<sup>5</sup> Hereby follows an illustrative table to understand the relation and differences between Hard and Soft Power:

Power	Hard			Soft		
Spectrum of Behaviors	Command	Coercion	Inducement	Agenda Setting	Attraction	Co-Opt
Most Likely Resources	Force, Sanctions, Payments, Bribes			Institutions, Values, Culture, Policies		

See Nye, J., **Ibid.**, p.8

<sup>6</sup> Wagner, C., [From Hard Power to Soft Power?](#), (**Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics**, Working Paper No.26, March 2005).

<sup>7</sup> "For example, sometimes countries may be attracted to others with command power by myths of invincibility, and command power may sometimes be used to establish institutions that later become regarded as legitimate. A strong economy not only provides resources for sanctions and payments, but can also be a source of attractiveness." See Nye, **Ibid.**, pp. 7-8

<sup>8</sup> For example, Iran is developing nuclear capacities, aiming to become a member of the "Nuclear Club". In this context, nuclear capacities provide a state with a leading global status; nuclear weapons symbolize modernity and technological advancement, a typical means of coercion thus turns into a source of attraction.