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The Future of Power

By Joseph S. Nye Jr.



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In the era of Kennedy and Khrushchev, power was expressed in terms of nuclear missiles, industrial capacity, numbers of men under arms, and tanks lined up ready to cross the plains of Eastern Europe. By 2010, none of these factors confer power in the same way: industrial capacity seems an almost Victorian virtue, and cyber threats are wielded by non-state actors. Politics changed, and the nature of power—defined as the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes you want—had changed dramatically. Power is not static; its story is of shifts and innovations, technologies and relationships.

Joseph Nye is a long-time analyst of power and a hands-on practitioner in government. Many of his ideas have been at the heart of recent debates over the role America should play in the world: his concept of "soft power" has been adopted by leaders from Britain to China; "smart power" has been adopted as the bumper-sticker for the Obama Administration's foreign policy. This book is the summation of his work, as relevant to general readers as to foreign policy specialists. It is a vivid narrative that delves behind the elusive faces of power to discover its enduring nature in the cyber age.



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Editorial Review

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Harvard professor Nye, who served in the state and defense departments of the Carter and Clinton administrations, respectively, was among the first to promulgate the notion of soft power and, subsequently, smart power—a concept the Obama administration seems to have fully embraced. But here Nye gives “smart power” far more depth and nuance than merely marrying force and persuasion. Rather, it involves setting clear and manageable objectives, understanding the resources available within dynamic circumstances, understanding the sensibilities of the targets of a country’s objectives, choosing among “power strategies,” and anticipating the success of those strategies. If the book sounds wonky, it is. But Nye brings specific historical examples to give life to his far-ranging understanding of power, and he realistically sets his book amid the complex dynamics of the world’s geopolitical players. Given Nye’s prominence in the diplomatic community, this volume is likely to attract considerable attention. --Alan Moores

Review

"(E)xcellent...Nye offers an illuminating distillation of the power relationships shaping a world in which the state with the best military can lose to the adversary with the better story." --The Financial Times "As power moves from west to east and from the palaces of dictators to the street, it is not just the identities of power brokers that are changing: so is the very meaning of power. No one is better placed to explain these trends than the scholar-statesman Joe Nye... The Future of Power contains important essays on both 'cyber power' and 'American decline', but what is most useful is Nye's subtle exegesis of the mechanics of more conventional forms of power." --The New Statesman "A concise, forceful statement of what Nye refers to as the liberal realist position in the US academy and in US politics... (which) paints a plausible scenario for the continuance of the US at the heart of the international system." --Times Higher Education Supplement "(W)hile the British generally take a wary attitude to international gurus, it is worth bearing in mind that what Nye... think(s) today has a habit of becoming the global consensus tomorrow. --Mary Dejevsky, The Independent"

About the Author

Joseph S. Nye, Jr. is University Distinguished Professor and former Dean of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. He has served as assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, chair of the National Intelligence Council, and a deputy under secretary of state. The author of many books, he is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the British Academy, and the American Academy of Diplomacy.

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