

The London School of Economics and Political Science

Power and Its Forms: Hard, Soft, Smart

Matteo Pallaver

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## Declaration

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## Abstract

What is smart power? What kind of power is it? Is it really a new form of power? How many forms, features, and shapes does it take? How can we recognize and manage it? How do scholars describe it?

This MPhil thesis aims to answer these and other questions regarding the dimension of power with a specific focus on smart power. This is a first attempt to study smart power in the broader context of power analysis and therefore I will follow two approaches. First of all, I will contextualize smart power, touching on the debate of power as an academic and political concept. Secondly, the idea is to investigate how power manifests itself in the realms of international and social relations. To this end, I will address three “ideal” forms of power, notably hard, soft and – finally - smart power.

We already know that hard power is commonly associated in IR with realism: it is about power politics, force, and violence. Hard power is, to a certain extent, the oldest form of power; it is connected to the idea of an anarchic, untamed international system, where countries do not recognize any superior authority. Order is the result of competition for power and wars. The possession and acquisition of resources is the key to success.

Soft power is something completely different. In order to understand soft power a methodological change is required. A state, an organization or a single person can exercise power with means other than violence and force. Persuasion, example, seduction, and myth: these are the resources of soft power. It is being able to convince or persuade others to follow your example, to want what you want, rather than coercing them. Soft power is about a world in which international institutions matter, in which war is not the only way to settle conflicts and in which the ones to succeed are the most powerful, in terms of natural, economic and financial resources and are not necessarily the best equipped.

And finally, what is smart power? Where does it come from? We know that smart power is a new and to a certain extent popular concept, which was coined by Joseph

Nye in the USA and is used to describe a new way of dealing with and managing power. Nye conceptualizes smart power as something lying somewhere between hard and soft power, a sort of “third way” in the complex jungle of power relations. But Nye also stresses that smart power is something “beyond” hard and soft, a sort of new approach that fits particularly well into the realm of international relations and foreign politics. This is why we will analyse Nye’s approach in depth, as well as the US debate about smart power and the concrete use of this concept by the US administration. Finally, we will investigate why smart power is becoming popular in the EU as well. Here again, policy-makers seem confident about using this new concept as a political programme that involves institutions and policy reforms.

To sum up, my argument is that smart power is definitely a new form of power and this MPhil dissertation aims at introducing it into the academic debate, studying it from a theoretical, scientific point of view, investigating its origins, and the historical and political context in which it gained popularity and – finally – testing its possible declination in real scenarios of international politics.

## Acknowledgements

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## **First Chapter**

### **An Introduction To Power: Hard, Soft, Smart**

Research Questions

Introducing Power: Hard, Soft, Smart

Main Working Hypotheses

Advantages of and Opportunities for This New Approach

Limits and Problems of Smart Power as an Academic Concept

Structure and Methodology

Table of Contents

#### **Research Questions**

Why writing a thesis on smart power? The discipline of international relations has tended to treat power as the exclusive province of realism. Associated with this tendency, there is a widely accepted conceptualization that is viewed as the only way to understand power. The disciplinary tendency to associate power with realism and to work primarily with the realist conceptualization partly owes to the fact that rivals to realism typically distance themselves from "power" considerations. This feature has been especially visible in recent years, as neoliberal institutionalists, liberals and constructivists have attempted to demonstrate their theoretical salience by demonstrating how "power" variables are not causally consequential in their explanation of empirical outcomes. Because these rivals to realism have juxtaposed their arguments to realism's emphasis on power, they have neglected to develop how power is conceptualized and operates within their theories. The research puzzle of this MPhil dissertation can be collocated within this theoretical framework: the objective is to argue that smart power is a new form of power and that can be addressed from different angles; in the end the purpose is to clarify what smart power ultimately is and how it is defined so far in IR literature. I will show how smart power is connected with other forms of power used in IR and, finally, why and in which sense smart power is different from hard and soft power.

We know that to understand “smart power” we have to understand power. Therefore I have decided to begin this research project by introducing other different concepts, or adjectives that usually accompany the noun “power”. For instance, in international relations, the concept of power takes in a variety of connotations: we have political and economic power, civilian or military power, ideological power and religious power, normative power and legislative power to name but a few.

Consequently, the idea is to find a way of summarising all these concepts into three broad categories, which I have identified in the three forms of power, -usually deployed in the context of international relations, -notably hard power, soft power and finally smart power. In other words, the purpose of this thesis is to study hard, soft and smart power as “ideal-type<sup>1</sup> power categories”.

We know, for instance, that hard power and soft power can be applied in both the study of IR and social relations. In his latest book, Professor Joseph Nye, applies precisely these two concepts to ordinary situations in daily life, and thus, implicitly views them as ideal-type forms of power<sup>2</sup>. This is to show that concepts normally used to describe and understand the behaviour of actors at international level of states, international organisations, NGOs, multinational corporations and so on can also be very useful in understanding and describing the behaviour of individuals in the field of social relations. By “social relations” we mean the complex set of everyday interactions between people or groups in different spheres and for different purposes, both vertically and horizontally<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Ideal type, also known as pure type, is a typological term most closely associated with sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920). For Weber, the conduct of social science depends upon the construction of hypothetical concepts in the abstract. The “ideal type” is therefore a subjective element in social theory and research. An ideal type is formed from characteristics and elements of the given phenomena, but it is not meant to correspond to all of the characteristics of any one particular case. It is not meant to refer to perfect things, moral ideals nor to statistical averages but rather to stress certain elements common to most cases of the given phenomena;

<sup>2</sup> In his latest book, *The Powers to Lead*, Professor Joseph Nye argues that hard, soft and even smart power can be found not only in the realm of IR, but also in the context of the social relations of daily life. See, NYE, J., 2008, *The Powers to Lead*, Oxford University Press;

<sup>3</sup> In social science, a social relation or social interaction refers to a relationship between two, three or more individuals (e.g. a social group). Social relations, derived from an individual agency, form the basis of social structures. To this extent social relations are always the basic object of analysis for social scientists. Fundamental enquiries into the nature of social relations are to be found in the work of

The third form of power that we aim to address is called “smart power”. It is a very recent and, to a certain extent, still ill-defined concept, therefore the challenge is more complex but, at the same time, extremely fascinating. We need, in fact, to understand its meaning as an academic (and also political) concept first, then to contextualise and compare it to the other forms of power. Put another way, the challenge is to study smart power for the first time as an academic concept and to investigate whether it can be embraced by the broad category of power. Consequently, answers need to be found to some major research questions, among others:

What kind of power is smart power?

The first task is to study smart power<sup>4</sup> as a form of power and to analyse it from a theoretical point of view: what its main features are, its relation to and difference from other forms of power, and the contexts in which it can be found and applied. The objective is to focus on smart power through an approach that aims at demonstrating how it can be considered as an unusual species of the genus “power”.

To conclude, the purpose of this MPhil thesis is twofold: on the one hand, to introduce the concept of smart power, trying to grasp its potentialities and possible application in the academic world as a pure form of power, both in the field of IR and in that of social relations. The thesis also focuses on the theoretical aspect of power and attempts to understand hard and soft power in broad terms.

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the classical sociologists, for instance, in Max Weber’s theory of social action. Further categories must be established in the abstract in order to form observations and conduct social research, such as *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (lit. “Community and Society” - Ferdinand Tönnies) or “collective consciousness”;

<sup>4</sup> Smart Power is a concept coined by Professor Joseph Nye. See, NYE, J., ARMITAGE R., 2006, *A Smarter, more secure America*, CSIS Commission on Smart Power, Washington; see also, ARMITAGE, R., and NYE, J., 2008, *Implementing Smart Power: Setting An Agenda For National Security Reform*, Statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, CSIS, Washington; see also, WILSON, E., 2008, *Hard Power, Soft Power, Smart Power*, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616; NOSSEL, S., 2004, *Smart Power*, *Foreign Affairs*, 83 (2);

With regard to these two latter forms of power, notably hard power and soft power, the research questions that this project aims to answer are the following:

Where can hard and soft power be used/applied?

Are these concepts suited to the study of international relations only?

Can we consider hard and soft power as ideal-type forms of power to be applied generally in the realm of social relations?

### Introducing Power: Hard, Soft, Smart

Power is an essential element of human existence and we can find signs and manifestations of power in every dimension of social life, from interpersonal relations through economic transactions, to religious and political disputes. We know that power has a variety of forms, and features. It can be exercised with different degrees of intensity- with force and violence or, on the contrary, with kindness and politeness. We will analyse these differences in depth in chapters two and three. In this paragraph it is useful to give just a brief overview of the different forms power can assume, focusing in particular on the three “pure” forms that constitute the core of our research project.

First of all, it is worth attempting to give at least a very basic definition of power. We know that there are plenty of definitions of “power”, each of which have nuances and differences, at times even substantial. For this reason, I have decided to take what to me seems the simplest and most immediate of the definitions, that of Professor Joseph Nye, who argues that power is “the ability to influence the behaviour of others to get a desired outcome”<sup>5</sup>. Historically, power has been measured by such criteria as population size and territory, natural resources, economic strength, military force and social stability. This is, of course, a very simple - maybe too simple - definition that does not take into account the huge academic debate about power and its meaning. But for now, it is enough: we will deal with this issue in the next chapters.

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<sup>5</sup> For a definition of power and for the concepts of hard, soft and smart power see: NYE, J., 2004, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, PublicAffairs, New York; and NYE, J., 2008, *The Powers to Lead*, Oxford University Press, New York;

Hard power enables states wielding carrots and sticks to get what they want. The effectiveness of any power resource depends firstly on context and we know that the current context requires complex and global answers. The ongoing trend of change we bear witness to is challenging this old paradigm and as a consequence has made power less tangible and the use of force less effective. As pointed out by Professor Joseph Nye, Machiavelli said that for a Prince it was safer to be feared than to be loved. Today, Nye argues, it is better to be both.

Soft power is the ability to attract people to our side without coercion. Legitimacy is therefore central to soft power. If a people or a nation believes our objectives to be legitimate, we are more likely to persuade them to follow our lead without using threats and bribes. Put another way, militaries are well suited to defeating states, but they are often poor instruments to fight ideas. According to Nye, today, “victory” depends on attracting foreign populations to our side and helping them to build capable, democratic states. Soft power is essential to gaining peace. To sum up, it is easier to attract people to democracy rather than to coerce them to be democratic.

Finally, smart power is “the ability to combine hard and soft power into a winning strategy”. It involves the “strategic use of diplomacy persuasion, capacity building, and the projection of power and influence in ways that are cost-effective and have political and social legitimacy”<sup>6</sup>. Smart power means developing an integrated strategy, resource base, and tool kit to achieve some key objectives, drawing on both hard and soft power. It is an approach that not only underlines the necessity for a strong military, force but also invests heavily in alliances, partnership, and institutions at all levels to spread influence and establish legitimacy. We will address in depth the concept of smart power in the following chapters.

For this introduction it is enough to clarify that power can assume many forms can be seen, understood and judged from several points of view. Ultimately, however, power is an unavoidable element of human life and it affects every aspect of human experience.

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<sup>6</sup> See NYE, J., ARMITAGE R., 2006, A Smarter, more secure America, CSIS Commission on Smart Power, Washington;

### Main Working Hypotheses

In this paragraph I would like to highlight the main hypotheses of the research project and why I believe that the findings that I hope to collect will support them.

One main hypothesis is the following:

Can we consider smart power to be a new form of power?

As mentioned above, smart power is a very recent concept. It is thus essential to understand what we mean by the term “smart power”. Apart from personal convictions about the meaning, features, and functions of smart power, I think that the starting point should be the definition provided by Professor Joseph Nye, the father of both soft and smart power. We can attempt to develop a definition of smart power based, among other things, on a comparison between the other known forms of power; in particular we need to explain the differences between hard and soft and then between those and smart power.

Along the way, we should be able to answer some questions: Is smart power really different from hard and soft power? Has smart power any academic value? Is it a power category?

Notwithstanding such questions, it is quite clear that before answering them, we cannot avoid addressing the concept of power itself, as a social and political phenomenon.

The hypothesis mentioned above, comprises a series of sub-topics: for instance, the first one is related to the meaning of smart power in relation to the variety of contexts in which it might be applied. Here, again, the challenge is to argue that smart power can be viewed as a pure form of power. It follows that smart power is an emerging concept of international relations and that – like hard and soft – it can be used in a variety of contexts and not only in the field of foreign affairs;

In fact, like hard power and soft power, smart power can be “applied generally” in a certain sense. It is, to some extent, another ideal-type form of power. We know that smart power had its beginnings, like hard and soft power, in IR and it was applied first and foremost to explain relations between states and the behaviour of other actors at

international level. Nonetheless, smart power can also be considered a useful means to describe and understand the behaviour of people, institutions, companies, political parties etc. in different contexts and in a variety of situations, different from the realm of international relations.

A second sub-topic is related to the way in which smart power is exercised, i.e. the powers (feelings, ideas, convictions, choices, preferences etc.) behind the power. In other words, I would like to address the problem of how smart power works, how it manifests itself, how it can be recognised and finally, if and in what sense it can be considered as something different from hard or soft. In brief, smart power seems more of a process than an end and in this sense it seems close to a “rational method” with the objective of avoiding the mistakes and distortions caused by ideological convictions and political logics. Smart power then is a “de-ideologisation” and “de-politicisation” of power;

Yet there is something absurd in this: how can power that is closely related to politics be something non-political and non-ideological? What does this mean? In tackling this last issue, we will try to develop a “pattern of smart power” and we will also rely on some concrete case studies. Basically, the point to be made is that the distinctive feature of smart power is its rational usage, i.e. without the problems that derive from an approach based on ideological or political interference. Put another way, smart power can be considered an attempt to apply a rational method that results in a “winning strategy”.

The second hypothesis is the following: can we consider hard power and soft power as two ideal-type forms of power?

The thesis is that hard and soft power represent two “pure” forms of power and for this reason they can be studied and employed in different contexts and in different spheres. As I said before, one of the objectives of this research project is to show that, for instance, just as states and international institutions employ hard or soft power

strategies to resolve disputes and obtain the desired outcome, so, too, do people in order to deal with their own personal issues. Consequently, we find hard and soft power in the context of ordinary life, through social relations of any kind and in the context of IR: the challenge is, therefore, to highlight and recognise the basic elements of these two power options. In this sense the term “ideal-type forms of power” means that hard and soft power can be viewed as “pure” because they can be identified then classified by various factors. In short, we can analyse and understand the aspect of power in the behaviour of a person, social group, economic organisation, state etc. from the point of view of hard or soft power.

#### Advantages and Opportunities of this Approach

The task is not simply applying hard and soft power to the study of social relations. What is crucial is understanding how and why it is useful to apply these concepts in order to explain the behaviour of people, social groups and economic organisations - let's call them “social actors” - in contexts other than the international arena. In this sense, hard power and soft power can be de-structured and studied starting from the elements that constitute them. For instance, we know that in IR hard power relies heavily on the use of force and that this translates into the use of violence or, better, coercion at the level of social relations. In contrast, soft power is based on legitimacy, attraction, persuasion and these same elements can also be employed in the management of relations at a personal or professional level. To sum up, the objective is to understand power and its forms in broad terms and in a way that we can recognise and manage them.

What should we expect from smart power?

Smart power is the new form of power that I would like to analyse. If hard and soft power are well-known and well studied as academic subjects, this is not the case with smart power. Therefore, certain problems need to be addressed first and foremost is the problem of what smart power actually means followed by the problem of finding an



opportunity to study it. In other words, is it worth spending time studying smart power?

I think that there are at least some elements of smart power that are interesting. It is a new and trendy concept and policy-makers are now using it. In this latter sense, it is a concept more suited to the expression of public opinion than for the academic world, but we know that language helps to transform and to construct social reality, at times in order to overcome political and institutional stalemates but also to set goals and objectives<sup>7</sup>, or simply to explain a particular situation or a change in the way things are managed. This leads directly to the second point: smart power is interesting because it is not only a “descriptive concept”. It is a descriptive concept because it tells us that, for instance, we have smart power when there is a combination of hard and soft (Nye’s definition), but it is in fact more than descriptive because it represents or ought to represent a “new style”, a “new approach”, a “new method” through which power can be managed differently. I would like to deal with smart power by following this latter approach, i.e. studying it as a form of power, or, to be more precise, trying to identify its main features, components, procedures, mechanisms and effects.

Is there a rigorous definition of smart power?

Up to now, the only definition available is that of Joseph Nye’s. He asserts that smart power is a “clever combination of hard and soft power”<sup>8</sup>. Nye’s definition lacks general applicability. What this means is that it is suited for the US only and to explain the changing nature of American foreign politics only. Therefore, this is an initial definition, but my aim is to show that smart power goes beyond the US and beyond foreign policy too. The idea is to identify the basic elements of smart power that can be applied in other contexts and in a variety of different situations, for instance at European level.

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<sup>7</sup> Constructivism and Discourse Analysis thus apply. I will go back to this point in chapter 3, explaining why in some circumstances language can help political process;

<sup>8</sup> See note 3;

Smart power and its possible application outside the US. Why has it been used in the EU?

Even European commentators and policy-makers are becoming familiar with smart power. And smart power and the EU has started to become the topic of academic seminars as well<sup>9</sup>. Why? And what would it mean for the EU if a smart power strategy were drawn up? Could smart power be applied to the EU?

We know that the European Union is a unique actor in the international system. Therefore, it would be useless to take up the concept of smart power as developed by Nye for the US and apply it to the EU. On the contrary, it would be much more interesting to “Europeanise” the concept of smart power and to adapt it to the European context. There has been a lot of debate about the nature and mission of Europe in world politics<sup>10</sup>. In a nutshell, the mainstream literature usually depicts the European Union as a civilian and normative actor<sup>11</sup>, whose role is mainly to use its normative power to persuade others<sup>12</sup>. Other scholars adopt an institutional approach<sup>13</sup>; they argue that the EU has developed an institutional framework that

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<sup>9</sup> The first one was probably “Smart Power: Towards a New Transatlantic Security Consensus?”, 9 November 2009, Royal United Services Institute, RUSI;

<sup>10</sup> The second chapter will focus on the academic debates about the nature and role of Europe and I will give an account of the different approaches developed so far;

<sup>11</sup> DUCHÊNE F., “The European Community and the Uncertainties of Interdependence” in Max Kohnstmann and Wolfgang Hager, (eds.), *A Nation Writ large?*, London, 1973 and Johan Galtung, *The European Community: A Superpower in the Making?*, London, 1973. See also, DUCHÊNE F., 1972, “Europe’s role in world peace”, in R. Mayne (ed.), *Europe Tomorrow: Sixteen Europeans Look Ahead*, London: Fontana;

<sup>12</sup> See among others: MANNERS I., 2002, “Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?”, *Journal of Common market Studies*, 40:2, pp. 235-258. MANNERS I., 2004, “Normative Power Europe Reconsidered”, Paper presented to CIDEL Workshop, Oslo, accessible at <http://www.arena.uio.no/cidel/WorkshopOsloSecurity/Manners.pdf>. MANNERS I., and WHITMAN R., 1998, “Towards Identifying the International Identity of the European Union: A Framework for Analysis of the EU’s Network of Relations”, *Journal of European Integration*, 21:3, pp. 231-249.

MANNERS I., and WHITMAN R., 2003, “The Difference Engine: Constructing and Representing the International Identity of the European Union”, *Journal of European Public Policy*, June, vol. 10/3;

<sup>13</sup> HOWORTH J., 2000, “European Integration and Defence: The Ultimate Challenge?”, *Chaillot Papers*, N.43, EU-ISS, Paris. HOWORTH J., 2003, “France, Britain and the Euro-Atlantic Crisis”, *Survival*, vol. 45:4, pp. 173-192. HOWORTH J., 2005 “The Euro-Atlantic Security Dilemma: France, Britain and the ESDP”, *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, vol. 3:1, pp. 39-54. HOWORTH J., 2007, *Security and Defence Policy in the European Union*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York. See also, MENON A., 2002, “Enhancing the Effectiveness of the EU’s Foreign Defence Policies”, CEPS Policy Brief, N.29, Centre For European Policy Studies, Brussels. MENON A., 2006, “Security Policy: The Logic of Leaderlessness”, in Jack Hayward, *Leaderless Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. See

provides the appropriate means to fulfil the type of missions agreed at Petersberg<sup>14</sup>. They believe that the EU should not become a state-type actor which addresses foreign and security challenges. They argue that NATO is a crucial element for the stability and maintenance of peace and they favour strong cooperation between the Old Continent and the US. Another viewpoint of Constructivist scholars<sup>15</sup> focuses on elements such as identity and culture. They argue that in order to function effectively, the Common Foreign and Defence Policy (CFSP) must generate a common European identity and a common strategic culture. However, these same scholars stress that the process of convergence is limited and very slow and that the emergence of a genuinely trans-EU strategic culture is still a tough challenge. Finally, some neo-realists scholars adopt another approach to explain the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) and the Common Foreign and Defence Policy (CFSP). Professor Adrian Hyde-Price<sup>16</sup> argues that the European Union is not a normative and civilian power but it is acquiring some features of hard power politics. Barry Posen<sup>17</sup> goes on to state that ESDP is a project that aims to counterbalance US super power. Lindley-French<sup>18</sup> calls for a renewed concert of Europe to tackle the threats of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The problem with these approaches is that they do not provide a comprehensive analysis of the

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finally, MISSIROLI A., 2000, "CFSP, Defence and Flexibility", Chaillot Papers, N.38, EU-ISS Paris. MISSIROLI A., 2003, "Euros for ESDP: financing EU operations", Occasional Papers, N.45, EU-ISS, Paris MISSIROLI A., 2008, "Rivisitando la Strategia europea di sicurezza: oltre il 2008 e oltre la PESD", Italianeuropei, N.3, Rome;

<sup>14</sup> Humanitarian and rescue tasks; peace-keeping tasks; tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking;

<sup>15</sup> MEYER C., 2005, "Convergence Towards a European Strategic Culture? A Constructivist Framework for Explaining Changing Norms", *European Journal of International Relations*, 11:4, p. 523-549. MEYER C., 2006, *The Quest for a European Strategic Culture: Changing Norms on Security and Defence in the European Union*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. See also, CORNISH P. and EDWARDS G., 2001, "Beyond the EU/NATO Dichotomy: the beginnings of a European strategic culture", *International Affairs*, vol. 77/3;

<sup>16</sup> HYDE-PRICE A., 2006, "Normative Power Europe: a realist critique", *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13:2, pp. 217-234. HYDE-PRICE A., 2007, *European security in the twenty-first century: the challenge of multipolarity*, London: Routledge, pp. 107-113. HYDE-PRICE A., 2008, "A tragic actor? A realist perspective on ethical power Europe", *International Affairs*, vol. 84:1, pp. 29-44;

<sup>17</sup> POSEN R. B., 2004, "ESDP and the structure of world power", *The International Spectator*, 39:1, pp. 5-17. POSEN R. B., 2006, "European Union Security and Defence Policy: Response to Unipolarity?", *Security Studies*, 15:2, pp. 149-186;

<sup>18</sup> LINDLEY-FRENCH J., 2002, "In the Shade of Locarno? Why European Defence is Failing", *International Affairs*, vol. 78/4. LINDLEY-FRENCH J., 2004, "The Revolution in Security Affairs: Hard and Soft Security Dynamics in the 21st Century", *European Security*, vol. 13;

picture. Instead, they focus only on one single sector of foreign politics, and they fail to consider other key sectors that have a foreign dimension as well. In this context a smart power approach can provide an alternative framework of analysis: What has been called smart power is in fact a combination of diplomatic, economic, military, political, legal and cultural tools, and the EU is the best example in the world of balance between these different factors.

In short, though the focus on this research project is not on “the US or Europe and smart power” but “power and its forms”, there is room for manoeuvre to argue that the application of smart power has becoming increasingly attractive.

Why is smart power becoming important in international relations?

I know that it is important to understand why smart power was created in IR and why it has been gaining a growing interest within the academic world of international relations.

According to Professor E. Wilson<sup>19</sup>, this growing interest in smart power reflects two contemporary trends, one structural and long-term, the other short-term and driven mainly by the policies of the American administration. The most obvious reason to reflect seriously on smart power is because of the world widely perceived shortcomings of the policies of the US administration over the past seven years. There is widespread belief in America and around the world that the Bush administration’s national security and foreign policies have not been smart and as a result they have compromised the diplomatic and security interests of the United States, provoked unprecedented resentment around the world and greatly diminished America’s position in the world<sup>20</sup>. But the current thirst for smart power is not driven only by the good or

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<sup>19</sup> WILSON, E., 2008, *Hard Power, Soft Power, Smart Power*, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616;

<sup>20</sup> On this point see, KOHUT, A., and STOKES, B., 2006, *America against the world. How we are different and why we are disliked*. New York: Henry Holt; Pew Global Attitudes Projects. 2006, *Forging a world of liberty under law. U.S. national security in the 21st century. Final Report of the Princeton Project on National Security*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Project on National Security; HALPER, S., and CLARKE, J., 2004, *American alone: The neo-conservatives and the global order*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press;

bad choices of individual leaders. There are some long-term trends that have been provoked by a demand for a new way of conceiving and exercising state power. In a nutshell, the G-8 nations are accelerating their transformation from industrial to post-industrial economies, where power increasingly rests on a nation's capacity to create and manipulate knowledge and information<sup>21</sup>. Moreover, while armies and militaries remain important, their relative role has changed radically, in terms both of how the military conducts warfare and in the mix of military and non-military assets<sup>22</sup>. Sophisticated nations have everything from smart bombs to smart phones to smart blogs<sup>23</sup>. Therefore, any actor that aspires to enhance its position on the world stage has to build strategies around these new fundamentals of "smartness". According to the author, a final reason for the hunt for smart power today is that target populations themselves have become "smarter". With the steady spread of secondary and higher education and the availability of more media outlets, populations in Asia, Africa and Latin America have become much more affluent, more sophisticated and knowledgeable about their own societies, and less easily influenced by the exercise of soft or hard power<sup>24</sup>.

To sum up, smart power can be viewed as a paradigm to go beyond current theoretical and institutional frameworks and to properly address the challenges of the 21st century, which range from global terrorism, to climate change, from financial and economic turmoil to the promotion of democratic principles and values.

#### Limits and Problems of Smart Power as an Academic Concept

Smart power has been gaining popular success because it has been employed by politicians (first in the US and then in the EU as well) for different reasons: to explain

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<sup>21</sup> WILSON, E., 2008, *Hard Power, Soft Power, Smart Power*, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616;

<sup>22</sup> On this topic see, ARGUILLA, J., and RONFELDT, D., 1999, *The emergence of noopolitik: Toward an American information strategy*. Santa Monica, CA: National Defense Research Institute, RAND;

<sup>23</sup> BRACHMAN, J., 2006, *High-tech terror: Al-Qaeda's use of new technology*, *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, 30 (2); and THOMAS, T., 2003, *Al Qaeda and the Internet: The danger of "cyberplanning"*, *Parameters*, 33;

<sup>24</sup> WILSON, E., 2008, *Hard Power, Soft Power, Smart Power*, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616;

a particular strategy, to convince people about the importance of certain decisions, to make people think the situation is under control, to depict a “new beginning” etc.

But, we should consider another key question: is smart power an academic concept? Put another way, is it appropriate and interesting to study smart power from an academic angle? Indeed is it really worth it? My answer is, of course, positive. Nevertheless, some limits remain and there are, in fact, some major concerns.

Finding a definition is surely the first problem to be addressed. As I said before, so far there has not been a general definition of this concept. With the term “general definition” I mean a definition of general applicability, that can be used in any circumstance whenever smart power is encountered. This can be viewed as a limit: smart power regarded as a vague concept, more political than academic. This is not true: ultimately, smart power was born in the world of academia and then transposed into the public sphere for political reasons. Its first definition was developed by Professor Joseph Nye to describe the evolution of American behaviour in foreign politics. Then the concept gained popularity and was used by many policy-makers, who have seen in it many potentialities to be exploited. Nevertheless, the fact that smart power has its roots in academia suggests that it can be used as an academic topic and it can be studied through an academic approach.

The second concern is related to the fact that smart power is really a (new) form of power. Put another way, the challenge is to argue that smart power really offers something different from hard and soft, and - most importantly, it can be studied as an evolution of the concept of power. The concern is that it might be considered just another “label” or “brand” without substance. It follows that the challenge is to show that smart power is rooted in the broader sphere of power, that it has some clear and recognisable components and that these features can be found in different contexts.

Finally, there is the risk of using smart power simply as a political concept or, worse, as “something” trying to be everything at the same time. As regards the first issue, smart power, like hard and soft power, has a political component and ultimately, this cannot be studied separately from its scientific or academic substance. In this sense we know that this task can be fulfilled properly even in IR thanks to Foreign Policy

Analysis (FPA)<sup>25</sup> which has, before all else, the objective of combining these two interlinked dimensions. The second concern is the risk of using smart power as a “magic box” to explain everything and its opposite. In order to avoid this we will adopt a comparative method between the three forms of power which will help to underline major differences.

### Structure and Methodology

As regards the methodology, this thesis is based on an analysis of past and current literature on the topic of power as developed in political science and international relations and on the consequent academic debates. We will, therefore, rely heavily on the contributions of scholars from political science and IR. In particular, for the concepts of soft power and smart power we will refer almost entirely to the academic works of the American scholar Joseph Nye. All relevant sources, including public speeches and articles of policy-makers, will be discussed and presented in a critical way, highlighting different points of view and contrasting arguments.

The research project is structured in three broad parts: the first chapters will be about “power” as developed in classical political theory. It is impossible to understand hard, soft and even smart power, without a robust introduction to the literature of social power as developed by political scholars like, among others, Max Weber, George Simmel, Robert Dahl, Talcott Parsons, Ralf Dahrendorf, P. M. Blau, Lasswell and Kaplan, Felix Oppenheim, Heinrich Popitz, Steven Lukes, Anthony Giddens and Gianfranco Poggi. The idea is to study social power and its manifestation as political power. This will help to introduce the idea that power is the currency of social and

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<sup>25</sup> Foreign policy analysis (FPA) is a branch of political science dealing with theory development and empirical study regarding the processes and outcomes of foreign policy. Foreign policy analysis involves the study of how a state makes foreign policy. As it will be analysing the decision making process, FPA involves the study of both international and domestic politics. FPA also draws upon the study of diplomacy, war, intergovernmental organisations and economic sanctions, each of which are means by which a state may implement foreign policy. In academia, foreign policy analysis is most commonly taught within the disciplines of public policy within political science or political studies, and study of international relations. FPA to be considered also as a sub-field of the study of international relations which is aiming to understand the processes beyond foreign policy decision making. The most prominent scholars in this field of study are Snyder, Rosenau, and Allison;

political relations. The second section of this first part will be about power in international relations.

The second part of the research project will be about the first two “pure” or ideal-type forms of power, notably hard and soft power as “pure” forms of power.

These two concepts are usually deployed in IR and this is, ultimately, the realm in which they were coined. Nevertheless, our objective will be to analyse them as “forms of power” identifying their main features, characteristics, peculiarities and also highlighting differences and divergences. The idea is to create an “ideal-type model” for each of these two forms. To this end we will provide concrete examples of hard and soft power at work in different contexts and in different scenarios, arguing that their spectrum of application is really very broad and ranges from the management of the relations of an individual’s network to the management of issues at the level of states and international institutions.

The last part is entirely about smart power and is an attempt to introduce it as an academic category and in particular as an ideal-type form of power.

Basically, the purpose is to show that smart power is first and foremost quite different from hard and soft power; it has, in fact its own peculiarities, features and distinctive characteristics and as a consequence - secondly - it can be considered a new form of power, though a very unusual one. This is of course a very tough task to meet: and for this reason we will follow two methodological approaches. With one, we will introduce smart power following the pattern and the path developed for hard and soft, collocating it in the academic and political debate from which it originally comes from. With the other approach, we will analyse the historical roots and the political context that pushed Professor Nye to coin this concept, focusing on both the US and the EU contexts.

### Table of Contents

This thesis is divided into six chapters.



The first chapter serves as an introduction to the whole research project and highlights the main purposes and objectives, the working hypotheses, the methodology employed and the basic structure of the thesis. In this first chapter I have introduced, though very briefly, the concepts of hard and soft power and I have tried to explain the idea of studying them as pure forms of power not only in the field of international relations but also in the management of social relations. I have then devoted some paragraphs to introducing the idea of smart power, trying to highlight the main challenges and shortcomings that are embedded in the idea of studying it from an academic point of view. I have pointed out some major questions and criticisms that need to be addressed about smart power, in particular what it means and how it is different from other forms of power, its applicability as a scientific and academic concept and, finally, the likelihood that it will gain the same popularity that soft power has, both in academia and in the real world of public policy.

The second chapter is entirely about power. In particular I will give an overview of the main approaches of political and social theory that deals with the concept and nature of “social power” and one of its main components, notably “political power”. It is essential to focus on power from a theoretical point of view in order to highlight the different understanding that classical political scholars had about this fascinating concept. Moreover, the purpose is to show that power was studied in different manners and in different contexts. To this end I would like to present the contribution of prominent political and sociological thinkers as regards power and the state, elitism and power and, finally, power and its forms. I would like to start with this latter branch, which is very clear and schematic and helps to clarify why power is so important in social relations and why it is, at the same time, such a contested and debated category.

In the third chapter I would like to deal with the concept of power in international relations. After all, power is the key element in the struggle between states in the international arena. In dealing with this issue I have decided to provide an account of

one of the harshest ways of conceptualizing power in IR: realism. Realists view power as something related to the possession of material resources and capabilities. The international system is anarchic and states have no superior authority. The rules of the international game results from the struggle for “power and peace”, and war is the ultimate, though possible, means to settle conflicts.

In the fourth chapter I would like to deal with the concepts of hard power and soft power and, in particular, with their application or applicability to the sphere of social relations and to the sphere of international relations as well. In introducing hard and soft power I will rely on the literature and thoughts of Professor Joseph Nye, who is the father of both soft power and smart power. This does not mean that we will rely on his thoughts and ideas only and, most importantly, this does not mean at all that we will reproduce the American scenario that is behind the application of soft and then smart power. Nevertheless, it is important to contextualise the historical and political roots that gave birth to these two terms.

The fifth chapter deals with the concept of smart power only. First of all, I would like to introduce smart power as a form of power. It means that in this chapter I will study its origins, its main features and characteristics, how it works and I will ponder the possibility of considering it a new form of power. In order to highlight differences and peculiarities, I will compare smart power with hard and soft power, and I will also try develop a sort of “patter of smart power”, i.e. a model in which there is for the first time an attempt at producing/creating a schema of the key components of a smart power approach. As for hard and soft power, the focus will be on its application and applicability both in the realm of IR - which is the academic and political field in which it was first conceived - and in social relations as well.

Moreover, this chapter is about the political and historical context in which smart power emerged in the US and the growing importance that smart power has been gaining in international relations.

This is to show both limits and potentialities of smart power; the first limit is that sometimes, albeit infrequently, - smart power is used as a political concept more than as an academic category, especially when it is employed by politicians for political and electoral purposes. And a second shortcoming is that smart power is used in a way that means different things according to whoever is using it. It is used in the US context with one meaning and in Europe with another. Nevertheless, it is used, and our challenge will be to combine these two aspects of the concept: its academic nature with its political employment.

In the sixth chapter I will draw some conclusions. There I will address the topic of smart power in the European Union. The idea is to investigate whether smart power has become popular in the EU too and why policymakers find it fascinating to use it in official speeches and documents. Finally, I will address an open question: is there a future for smart power?

## Second Chapter

### **The concept of power**

Introduction

What is power and why is it so relevant in IR?

The Dispute about Max Weber's Definition

Methodological Concerns

Challenging Weber's Definition

Heinrich Popitz on the Institutionalisation of Political Power

Social Power

Command and Obedience

Legitimacy and its Limitations

A typology of Legitimacy

#### Introduction

It is almost impossible to write a thesis on smart power without touching on the concept of power itself. And it is even more difficult to deal with power manifested in International Relations without understanding its origins and the debates that it has engendered in classical political science theories. To a certain extent power is the central subject of political science. For this reason I have decided to dedicate an entire chapter to the concept of power from a political point of view.

How many varieties of power do we encounter? Is it possible to categorize them? And finally, is it possible to challenge our current knowledge of power?

It is not my intention, of course, to provide a final answer to all these questions, but I need to address them and in doing so I will rely on the contribution of classical political scholars, such as Max Weber, George Simmel, Robert Dahl, Talcott Parsons, Ralf Dahrendorf, P. M. Blau, Lasswell and Kaplan, Felix Oppenheim, Heinrich Popitz, Steven Lukes, Anthony Giddens and Gianfranco Poggi, among others. These authors will provide very useful patterns in the analysis of power as a political and sociological concept and, even more importantly, as a human phenomenon.

### What is Power and why is it so relevant in IR?

Power is one of the most central and yet problematic concepts in international relations. “Few problems in political science are more perplexing than the problem of social power; [...] yet, despite widespread use, power remains a slippery and problematic concept. There is little agreement upon basic definitions, individual theorists proposing their own more or less idiosyncratic terminology, and surprisingly little consideration of the implications of alternative usages”<sup>26</sup>. “That some people have more power than others is one of the most palpable facts of human existence. Because of this, the concept of power is as ancient and ubiquitous as any that social theory can boast. If these assertions needed any documentation, one could set up an endless parade of great names from Plato and Aristotle through Machiavelli and Hobbes to Pareto and Weber to demonstrate that a large number of seminal social theorists have devoted a good deal of attention to power and the phenomena associated with it; [...] if so many people at so many different times have felt the need to attach the label power, or something like it, to some Thing they believe they have observed, one is tempted to suppose that Thing must exist.”<sup>27</sup> “Power is one of the key concepts in the great Western tradition of thought about political phenomena. It is at the same time a concept on which in spite of its long history, there is, on analytical levels, a notable lack of agreement both about its specific definition and about many features of the conceptual contexts in which it should be placed”<sup>28</sup>. “On the whole, power is a disappointing concept”<sup>29</sup>. “If political power is taken as one of the central phenomena to be explained by political science, then propositions of political science will necessarily contain sentences and phrases like «the power of A is greater than the power of B», «an increase (or decrease) in the power of A», «the distribution of

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<sup>26</sup> BIERSTEDT, R., 1950, “An Analysis of Social Power”, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 15, No.

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<sup>27</sup> DAHL, A. R., 1950, “The Concept of Power”, *Behavioral Science*, Vol. II

<sup>28</sup> PARSONS, T., 1963, “On the Concept of Political Power”, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 107, No. 3

<sup>29</sup> MARCH, G. J., 1966, “The Power of Power”, in D. Easton (ed.), *Varieties of Political Theory*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall

political power», and the like»<sup>30</sup>. “From Niccolò Machiavelli and David Hume to E. H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau, power has been an important (some would say too important) variable in international political theorizing. Although some may regard power analysis as old-fashioned and outdated, recent refinements in social science thinking about power suggest the possibility of revitalizing this approach to understanding international relations”<sup>31</sup>. But why is it such a controversial concept? One reason is that, at any rate in Western cultures, those in a position of social power often find it awkward to acknowledge expressly that they indeed occupy such a position, and enjoy the advantages it brings them. In fact, whatever the definition we want to associate with power, it is sure that, having or not having power, is different; exerting or undergoing power is different. And so on. Hence, it follows that “it is much easier to experience power rather than to define it”<sup>32</sup>. These quotations show why power is an “essentially contested concept”<sup>33</sup>, though a crucial one.

But how is power actually defined? What are the main features of this controversial and, at the same time, fascinating concept? How can we recognize power? And why do some people have more power than others? And, finally, how is power exercised? What forms does it take?

Robert Dahl argues: “a Thing to which people attach many labels with subtly or grossly different meanings in many different cultures and times is probably not a Thing at all, but many Things”. Consequently, Dahl goes on, “we are not likely to produce anything like a single, consistent, coherent «Theory of Power». We are much more likely to produce a variety of theories of limited scope, each of which employs some definition of power that is useful in the context of the particular piece of research

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<sup>30</sup> SIMON, A. H., 1953, “Notes on the Observation and Measurement of Political Power”, *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 15, No. 4

<sup>31</sup> BALDWIN, A. D., 1979, “Power Analysis and World Politics: New Trends versus Old Tendencies”, *World Politics*, Vol. 31, No. 2

<sup>32</sup> POGGI, G., 1991, *The State. Its Nature, Development, and Prospects*, Stanford: Stanford University Press

<sup>33</sup> GALLIE, W. B., 1956, “Essentially Contested Concept”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series, Vol. 56

or theory but different in important respects from definitions of other studies”<sup>34</sup>. This is why, different scholars, from different disciplines, provide different definitions of power.

The phenomenon of social power necessarily entails an asymmetry between parties, which on some counts posits each other as equal, as standing on the same plane. This was also pointed out by George Simmel in his essay on the relationship he called “super-ordination and subordination”. But we should not think of it as vesting in the party a total control over the conduct of the subordinate, because it would deprive the latter of all autonomy, all subjectivity. This, in turn, would render the person unable to “act back” on the former, to place at the superordinate’s disposal energies the superordinate party does not directly possess, and on that very account seeks to deploy the subordinate to its own advantage. At the same time, in order to do this the superior must bind and constrain, thus, to an extent, deny - typically through commands - that very autonomy and subjectivity.

Here we find two other essential manifestations of power: first, where there is power there is a relation, notably a social relation, in which - second element - one issues a command, whatever the forms, the legitimacy and authority, and the other obeys, executes, complies.

On this and other accounts, very frequently those possessing power over others do not publicly avert that they do, no matter how aware they are of the advantages this brings them, and how keen they are on continuing to enjoy them. Typically, it is those under power who declare themselves to be. so They impute the possession of power to others, and more or less bitterly point to the attendant advantages denied to them. As noted by Poggi, in the Magnificat, a passage in the Gospels where the Virgin Mary’s comments on God’s gift to herself, she celebrates Him, among other things, for “deposing the powerful from their seat”.

In short, there is something invidious about social power, in two closely related meanings of “invidious”: that which evokes envy, and that which one is not keen to

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<sup>34</sup> DAHL, A. R., 1950, “ The Concept of Power”, Behavioral Science, Vol. II, p. 202

acknowledge having oneself, but is willing to attribute to others. Possibly such ambivalences attached to the expression - and indeed to the experience - of social power, contribute to making it, as noted above, “essentially contested”. In other words they account for the fact that even in the context of scientific discourse that concept itself has been so controversial.

Let’s now turn to examine some definitions of power. In the most general sense, power may refer to any kind of influence exercised by objects, individuals, or groups upon each other. As Dahl puts it in his *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* survey article, “power terms in modern social science refer to sub-sets of relations among social units in such a way that the behaviours of one or more units depend in some circumstances on the behaviour of other units”<sup>35</sup>. Or, put simply, “for the assertion A has power over B, we can substitute the assertion A’s behaviour causes B’s behaviour”<sup>36</sup>.

However, these broad and deceptively simple definitions represent a grave dilution of the concept. This is why most sociological theorists have defined power in the most restricted terms, as a specific type of relations between objects, persons and groups. The most influential definition remains that of Max Weber. Weber defines power as the “probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests”<sup>37</sup>. According to Weber, power is a zero-sum game, either you win or you lose. The point is that power is an attribute that derives from the qualities, resources and capabilities of one subject. Robert Dahl is on the same wavelength as Max Weber: in a subsequent paper, he refined his first definition of power, stating that “(my) intuitive notion of power, then, is something like this: A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do”<sup>38</sup>. Some of the most influential refinements of the Weberian concept of power definition are probably those

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<sup>35</sup> DAHL, R., 1968, “Power”, *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 12, New York: Collier-Macmillan

<sup>36</sup> SIMON A. H., 1957, *Models of Man*, New York: John Wiley

<sup>37</sup> WEBER, M., 1947, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. By A. M. Henderson and T. Parsons, Glencoe: The Free Press

<sup>38</sup> DAHL, A. R., 1950, “The Concept of Power”, *Behavioral Science*, Vol. II, pp. 202-3



of Ralf Dahrendorf and P. M. Blau. Dahrendorf, after endorsing the Weberian definition, goes on to state that power is a contingent property, a property of individuals, rather than a property of social structures. He argues that, “the important difference between power and authority consist in the fact that whereas power is essentially tied to the personality of individuals, authority is always associated with social positions or roles; [...] power is merely factual relations, authority is legitimate relations [...] we are concerned exclusively with relations of authority, for these alone are part of social structure and therefore permit the systematic derivation of group conflicts from the organization of total societies and associations within them (...) are not the product of structurally fortuitous relations of power”<sup>39</sup>.

Blau defined power as “the ability of persons or groups to impose their will on others despite resistance through deterrence either in the form of withholding regularly supplied rewards or in the form of punishment, inasmuch as the former, as well as the latter, constitute, in effect, a negative sanction”<sup>40</sup>. This definition closely resembles that of Lasswell and Kaplan in *Power and Society*, where they say that “power is the process of affecting policies of others with the help of (actual or threatened) severe deprivations for nonconformity with the policies intended”<sup>41</sup>. It seems to me that here the authors introduce the concept of violence or force as one, if not the, essential element of power relations, at least when non-compliance occurs. They stress an important element of power: you exert it when people feel threatened by you. Hence power is not an actual manifestation of superiority, rather an ever-present possibility. This point, for instance, helps to clarify how to deal with “smart power as a concept”: not just as hard force, , not just as soft, but rather as both, cleverly combined. A sort of power that is not always manifest, but always possible.

Felix E. Oppenheim, for example, does not share this approach. According to him, definitions are not true or false, but constitute stipulations specifying the use of

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<sup>39</sup> DAHRENDORF, R., 1959, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*, Stanford: Stanford University Press

<sup>40</sup> BLAU, M. P., 1967, *Exchange and Power in Social Life*, New York: John Wiley, p. 117

<sup>41</sup> LASSWELL, D. H. and KAPLAN A., 1950, *Power and Society*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 76

linguistic expression; nevertheless, according to Oppenheim “P (a power-holder) exercises power over R (a respondent) with respect to x (an action of R), means that P influences or coerces R to do x”<sup>42</sup>.

Roderick Martin has pointed out that, despite widespread use, the Weberian definition and its derivatives suffer from a number of weaknesses in addition to the operational difficulties which the element of potentiality introduces into empirical research. As Parsons has argued, the assumption of conflict and antagonism is built into the definition: A overcomes the resistance of B, implying that the interests of B are being sacrificed to the interests of A<sup>43</sup>. But this ignores the possibility that power relations may be relations of mutual convenience: power may be a resource facilitating the achievement of the goals of both A and B. A second major difficulty with the Weberian definition is that, according to Roderick Martin, it transposes a property of interactions, interrelations, into a property of actors. To clarify, Martin argues that, “instead of defining power, Weber is providing the basis for a comparison between the attributes of actors: actors are more or less powerful to the extent that the probability of obtaining compliance with their wishes increases or decreases (...) but, although power may be possessed as a capacity and is only revealed in behaviour, it is the property of a relation”<sup>44</sup>. Martin’s view is intriguing: power is certainly the result of a relationship, but you can recognize and realize the superiority of one person, organization or state even before experiencing it. Anyway, power is, by definition, a relational attribute but not, by definition, a negative relational experience.

To this end, and in an attempt to avoid defining power in terms of conflict, Parsons has suggested a completely different conceptualization, viewing power as a system resource. He argues that “power is a generalized capacity to secure the performance of binding obligations by units in a system of collective organization when obligations are legitimized with reference to their bearing on collective goals, and where in case of

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<sup>42</sup> OPPENHEIM, E. F., 1978, “Power Revisited”, *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 40, No. 3

<sup>43</sup> PARSONS, T., 1967, “On the Concept of Political Power”, in T. Parsons (ed.), *Sociological Theory and Modern Society*, New York: The Free Press

<sup>44</sup> MARTIN, R., 1971, “The Concept of Power: A Critical Defence”, *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 22, N. 3, p. 243

recalcitrance there is a presumption of enforcement by negative situational sanctions – whatever the actual agency of that enforcement”<sup>45</sup>. But, apparently, the new Parsonian definition creates, as Martin points out, “more difficulties than it resolves, for Parsons places consensus where Weber placed conflict”<sup>46</sup>. In fact, “what slips away out of sight almost completely (in Parsons’s definition) - according to Anthony Giddens – is the very fact that power (...) is exercised over someone”. Giddens goes on to argue that “by treating power as necessarily legitimate, and thus starting from the assumption of consensus of some kind between power holders and those subordinate to them, Parsons virtually ignores, quite consciously and deliberately, the necessary hierarchical character of power, and the divisions of interests which are frequently consequent upon it”<sup>47</sup>. To clarify, power does not require legitimacy to be effective. Power, Giddens notes, is simply the superiority that one person, one state, one actor exercises over another. In this sense it is negative for those subjected to it, but positive for those who successfully control it.

Finally, Systems Theory, suggests a way in which power may be re-conceived, namely as a specific form of communication flow. W. J. Buckley provides, in fact, a cybernetic rather than a mechanistic model of the social system. His reasoning is more or less the following: society comprises a system of inter-related mechanisms, organisms, and socio-cultural sub-systems, linked together by physical, energy and information flows. At the level of the social and cultural system the physical and energy components of the flow are of only marginal importance, the system being linked “almost entirely by conventionalized information exchange, with process overshadowing and rigid substantial structure such as is found at mechanistic levels”. These information flows comprise “a relationship between sets or ensembles of structured variety”. In these cybernetic terms, power may be defined, at the most

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<sup>45</sup> See PARSONS, T., 1967, “On the Concept of Political Power”, in T. Parsons (ed.), *Sociological Theory and Modern Society*, New York: The Free Press

<sup>46</sup> MARTIN, R., 1971, “The Concept of Power: A Critical Defence”, *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 22, N. 3, p. 244

<sup>47</sup> GIDDENS, A., 1968, “Power in the Recent Writings of Talcott Parsons”, *Sociology*, Vol. 2, p. 264

general level, as that type of information flow which symbolizes non-self-satisfying behaviour for the recipient”<sup>48</sup>.

To sum up, the two major threads in this discussion about power, the Weberian and the Parsonian, both suffer from major problems of definition. Martin argues that, by building the element of conflict into his definition, by seeing power solely in zero-sum terms, Max Weber disregarded the possibility of mutually convenient power relations. Moreover, by seeing power as a capacity, he transformed an attribute of a specific relation into a generalized facility, confusing form with substance. On the other hand, the Parsonian conceptualization suffers from the opposite difficulty. By defining power in terms of consensus and legitimacy Parsons defines out of existence the problems students of power have been attempting to resolve.<sup>49</sup> In the next paragraphs I will try to address some of these shortcomings, with reference to Max Weber’s influential conceptualizing of power

#### The Dispute on Max Weber’s Definition

The most significant of the controversies taking place among sociologists and political scientists in the twentieth century concern, expressly or otherwise, the definition of power (Macht) phenomenon offered at the beginning of the century by Max Weber. In one version, that definition characterises power as “the chance of a man or a group of men to realise their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action”<sup>50</sup>.

As a matter of fact, some expressed or implied elements of this definition were not widely considered as controversial. In particular, it was widely agreed that one should think of (social) power not as a substance but as a relationship - a point implied in Weber’s reference to both parties’ “participation” in a “communal action”. In other

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<sup>48</sup> See BUCKLEY, J. W., 1967, *Sociology and Modern Systems Theory*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall

<sup>49</sup> MARTIN, R., 1971, “The Concept of Power: A Critical Defence”, *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 22, N. 3, p. 245

<sup>50</sup> See WEBER, M., 1947, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. By A. M. Henderson and T. Parsons, Glencoe: The Free Press

terms, in Weber's view, power is not something to be held, so to speak, in one's hand or pocket, but as something obtaining between two parties, in such a way- as noted by Poggi - that "A may hold it vis-à-vis B, but not vis-à-vis C".

Weber's expression "chance" was seen as entailing two further plausible, closely related characteristics of power. First, power refers to a probability, not (so to speak) to a "dead cert", to the complete assurance of a given party's success. Second, power is always potential, it refers not so much to the doing of something - to the actual "production of effects", proposed by others as an alternative definition of power - but to the capacity of doing something, of producing effects if and when one chooses.

In other terms, power does not need to be exercised (by overcoming opposition or otherwise) in order to exist. Paradoxically, it was suggested, the exercise of power may, so to speak, consume it or be an exponent of it when actually brought to bear, at the risk of being found wanting, incapable of in fact "doing its number." Rather, power is at its most powerful, as it were - Poggi argues - "when those subject to it practice their subjection to it without its being actually exercised, when it operates through the power subjects' memory of past exercises of it or their imagination of future ones, when it needs to be at most symbolically represented rather than actually put into action"<sup>51</sup>.

Other aspects of Weber's definition became controversial in the post-World War Two discussion on the power concept. For instance, Weber's reference to the "will" of the party in power became an issue. It was questioned whether that reference implied intentionality<sup>52</sup>. Does the existence of a power relationship depend on the powerful party's awareness of its own preference for a given, existent or future state of things and its conscious commitment to obtain it? Does it depend on its ability to superimpose its own over the other party's will? Is the overcoming or the potential overcoming of actual or virtual resistance an essential component of the relationship? What of situations where the asymmetry between the parties is so great that the

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<sup>51</sup> POGGI, G., 1991, *The State. Its Nature, Development, and Prospects*, Stanford: Stanford University Press

<sup>52</sup> On this topic see, OPPENHEIM, E. F., 1978, "Power Revisited", *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 40, No. 3

inferior party is not even aware of having interests contrary to those of the superior party, but routinely cooperates in the attainment of them, or at any rate does not seek to hinder that attainment? Is not the superior party's ability to keep certain present or future states of things from becoming an issue between itself and the other party – its ability to control the agenda, it was said - a particularly privileged condition?

Some contributors to the debate assumed that Weber's conceptual construct was essentially acceptable - whatever the qualifications and modifications to it suggested by the answers to some questions we have mentioned. However, at the same time they - laboured to establish its boundaries by comparing-and-contrasting it with cognate concepts, such as authority (or domination), influence, force, or manipulation.

#### Methodological Concerns

In the second half of the twentieth century the concept of power, with reference to the Weberian definition of it or otherwise, was the object also of methodological arguments concerning the possibility of grounding it empirically. The discussion involved both sociologists and political scientists, especially those associated with the "behaviourist" approach, itself much inspired by sociology. It often concerned the concept of elite, besides the power concept itself - or an elaboration of it, "power structure". Attempts to put such concepts to use in empirical research, through varying methodological approaches, were conducted both at the local level (for instance by Floyd Hunter and Robert Dahl) and at the national level (for instance by C. Wright Mills). They led to interesting developments, such as the study of "interlocking directorates", carried out with reference to numerous corporations or other economic units, for example banks, or the study of "decision making" within political bodies.

What is more, assuming that power entails the ability to inflict negative sanctions on those subject to it, one can put those sanctions into some kind of ordinal sequence. The "power over life and death" which Roman law attributed to the paterfamilias, can plausibly be assumed to stand at the high end of that sequence. The sequence goes down to a rich variety of less and less blatantly damaging sanctions, such as the dismissal from employment of a worker, the blackballing of someone seeking

admission to a club, or the exposure to gossip of a member of a social circle. But it is a demanding task to subsume this ordinal arrangement of sanctions into a more sophisticated metric, comprising other aspects of the power relations, and allowing their comparison (the comparison, say, between the threat of a lockout and the threat of a strike) or for that matter to operationalise Michael Mann's useful distinction between extensive and intensive power<sup>53</sup>. In fact, some scholars who adopted high standards of methodological rigour, were deterred by the difficulty of measuring power and were led eventually to the conclusion that one might as well dispense with the concept itself.

Fortunately, few scholars took that suggestion seriously. The rest continued, more or less explicitly and consistently, to abide by the sensation that power was an indispensable concept and, pointed out the a most significant social experiences or indeed criticised, overtly or covertly, all social structures. From the late 1950s until the mid-1970s, in the protracted sociological argument over a theoretical perspective focused on "order" vs one focused on "conflict", the power concept was often invoked by students associated with the latter perspective. However, it could be employed also to challenge that alternative, arguing that order need not be grounded on normative consensus among all those involved in systematic interaction, but rather on the pressure which one part of society, the powerful part, imposed upon the other, powerless part. Even situations where significant structures were in fact embraced by a general normative consensus they could be interpreted as outcomes of particularly protracted, habitual, power inequalities, which had long gone unchallenged.

Another advantage of the emphasis on these situations was that it gave a firm conceptual grip even on social change, on situations where existent arrangements were put into question and order broke down. In its Weberian understanding, the very concept of power implied the possibility of resistance. It thus allowed the sometimes powerless but resistant part of society to gain the upper hand and succeed in

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<sup>53</sup> On this topic see MANN, M., 1986, *The Sources of Social Power: Volume 1, A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760*, Cambridge University Press and also MANN, M., 1993, *The Sources of Social Power: Volume 2, The Rise of Classes and Nation States 1760-1914*, Cambridge University Press

restructuring society to suit its own interests. Or, a group not favoured by the existent power structure could challenge it by developing alternative power sources. Finally, even within a stable power structure, its very existence gave rise to contentions over the occupancy of the favoured positions within it, and thus to further occasions for change.

#### A Challenge to Weber's Definition

Arguments of this kind, as we have seen, often appealed to Weber's authority. The debate became more intense and more significant, when the central imagery of the Weberian theory was called into question. To simplify matters, an intrinsically tough-minded view of power was challenged by a more sympathetic one.

Weberian imagery, we have suggested, emphasised the asymmetry between individuals or between groups acting in the presence of one another, and the advantages enjoyed by those located at the upper end of the asymmetry. It implied that, at any rate in a stable and consistent power relationship, whatever sources and its scope, all the power there was lay at that end - that is, the relationship was zero-sum.

Yet Weber himself had connected that relation with the involvement of both parties in "communal action". Whether Weber meant this or not, his consideration suggested to some authors that one could view the power relation, in spite of its intrinsic asymmetry, as a functional feature of that communal action; a fixture, as it were, of a shared social space, rather than something appropriated by one party and by the same token denied the other part and used to keep it at bay. A given part's power over the other could be viewed also as something both parties benefited from, as a component of their power to attain some shared end, as a collective facility.

This bold reconceptualising of power was put forward in the late fifties by Talcott Parsons<sup>54</sup>, in a belated but impressive rebuttal of a criticism often made of his theories, to the effect that these ignored the power phenomenon and the related reasons for

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<sup>54</sup> See for example Parsons's analysis of the zero-sum problem in PARSONS, T., 1967, "On the Concept of Political Power", in T. Parsons (ed.), *Sociological Theory and Modern Society*, New York: The Free Press



conflict and change. It was taken further by Niklas Luhmann<sup>55</sup>, who expressly reproached Parsons's critics, and his own, for their "bloody-minded insistence on the power asymmetry, on the distribution of power within a group". The time had come to consider the extent to which the institutionalisation of power relations empowered the group as a whole and made it more capable of pursuing collective goals. To this end, David A. Baldwin<sup>56</sup> analysed the basic social science concepts of "power" and "social exchange" in order to determine whether it was possible, even, desirable to integrate them, thus overcoming the zero-sum problem. In a nutshell, he argues that, (a) all exchange relationships can be described in terms of conventional power concepts without distorting the common-sense notions that underline such concepts; (b) most, but not necessarily all power relationships can be described in terms of exchange terminology; (c) there are some advantages to conceiving power in this way and, finally, (d) recent social exchange theorists have neither illuminated nor recognized most of these advantages.

Another approach views power as a medium through which selections made in one part of society could be transmitted to others, and thus as analogous to money. In the same way that money allows and fosters the rationalisation of economic activities in a society where it has been discovered or adopted, the development within it of power relations could strongly assist a society's pursuit of non-economic goals<sup>57</sup>.

The gain a group society derives from being the locus of power relationships deserves consideration – and perhaps primary consideration, irrespective of the way in which or the extent to which such relationship favours in the first instance one part of society rather than others. It allows society as a whole to respond more promptly and energetically to new opportunities and dangers in its environment, to promote and manage new modes of cooperation. It can be likened to a cybernetic device, monitoring the environment, collecting, storing and elaborating information, forming

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<sup>55</sup> LUHMANN, N., 1979, *Trust and Power*, Chichester: Wiley

<sup>56</sup> See BALDWIN, A. D., 1978, "Power and Social Exchange", *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 72, No. 4

<sup>57</sup> On this topic see both BALDWIN, A. D., 1971, "Money and Power", *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 33, No. 3 and PARSOSN, T., 1963, "On the Concept of Political Power", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 107, No. 3

decisions which can be more promptly and coherently implemented, to everybody's advantage. the more they are backed by sanctions available in principle exclusively to one part of society - the superior part. Put otherwise, power does not empower only those who hold it.

The fact that power can be, and (according to this argument) typically generated and accumulated on behalf of society as a whole, although managed by one part of it, is suggested by one aspect of political power in particular. As emphasised by Weber, this tendency to seek legitimacy, is in other words an attempt to generate in those subject to power a disposition to obey commands grounded on a sense of moral obligation. Yet, Parsons' own strong emphasis on legitimacy (and the attendant processes of legitimization, and its variety), while in keeping with his own strongly normative conception of the social process at large, is only to a limited extent supported by Weber's own discourse on power. Here, the ideal-typical discussion of the subjective processes presiding over the subjects' obedience points also to other forms of willingness to obey - a subject's totally non reflective, automatic habit of submission, or a subject's calculation of the advantages and disadvantages of obedience versus non-obedience and of the probability of the attendant application or non-application of sanctions. Obedience grounded on a sense of moral obligation comes in only as a third answer - yet it is one which Weber himself emphasises, by offering a particularly creative treatment of it.

Weber, in fact, treats legitimacy itself as a significant but contingent qualification of a power relation previously established on strictly factual grounds, and which can if necessary reassert and maintain itself, at any rate in the short term, even in the presence of a "crisis of legitimacy". Furthermore, in the context of 'big-time politics' - the context, that is, of international relations, where the competitive interactions between sovereign polities take place, there is not much place for legitimacy, which is instead a property of domestic political relations if nothing else. At international level, on the other hand, sheer, military might is necessarily the ultimate stake and medium of political action. And legitimacy is irrelevant to such might. Only its effectiveness counts.

Max Weber was keenly aware that political power itself, that to which the notion of legitimacy could apply, was only one form of social power, at least as we have seen in the domestic context. A programmatic sentence from one of his unfinished essays makes this clear: “Now, ‘classes’, ‘status groups,’ and ‘parties’ are phenomena of the distribution of power within a community”.

In Weber’s view, power exists between a community’s component groups if and to the extent that one of these secures exclusive or highly privileged access to and control over a critical social resource. This allows that group to lay enforceable boundaries to the activities of the other groups. It can induce them to desist from opposing or hindering the pursuit of their own interests, or indeed direct them to commit some of their own activities, willy-nilly, in that very pursuit.

The power phenomenon, then, can be differentiated conceptually by considering the social resources a group must appropriate in order to gain this degree of control over others. In Marxian language, there are three kinds of these resources: firstly, means of production (on which economic power is based, and which is the main object of relations between classes); secondly means of violence (these are the roots of political power, and parties, meant in the broadest sense, contend for the possession and employment of them). And the third resource is means of interpretation.

This last concept needs some further elaboration, for it points to the elusive domain of “the imaginary”. Michael Mann, without using the expression “means of interpretation”, convincingly argues its significance on the basis of three “anthropological” considerations. Human beings need cognitive frameworks to experience and to handle reality. They also need normative frameworks to sustain and make their cooperative activities and to moderate and settle their contentions. And in addition they need ritual and aesthetic practices to express particularly meaningful emotions and to symbolise and sustain their identities. “Ideological” power emerges to the extent that a distinctive group establishes privileged control over the social activities and cultural artefacts relating to the satisfaction of these needs, and as a result can dictate those social activities and have access to those cultural artefacts.

Mann however dissents from the above tripartite power phenomenon by giving separate conceptual status also to military power<sup>58</sup>. Other students dissent from it by explicitly or implicitly subscribing to the identification of power itself with political power.

#### Heinrich Popitz on the Institutionalisation of Political Power

A sustained argument to the effect that social power can manifest itself in different ways was developed towards the end of the twentieth century by the German sociologist Heinrich Popitz. The title of his book on this topic, *Phaenomene der Macht*, conveys this idea of variety because “Phaenomene” is a plural noun. In particular, Popitz argues that power can be acquired and managed even to the extent that, through “technical action”, some people can shape and modify to their own advantage the objective circumstances under which other people live, the constraints under which they operate.

Technical action has three essential moments. All three in the first place relate individuals to things: ‘making use of’, ‘modifying’, ‘producing’ objects. “But such subject-to-object relations always affect also those between subject and subject. This does not simply mean that technical action has social conditions and consequences. Rather, that action itself plays a role in establishing the social conditions of human beings. Behind the ‘making use’ of objects necessarily lies the question of property claims, behind the ‘modifying’ of objects a particular form of the exercise of power - and not just power over the objects themselves - and their ‘producing’ entails the differentiation of activities and thus a form of division of labour”<sup>59</sup>.

Another of Popitz’s important contributions, however, is chiefly concerned with political power, which he, with Weber, grounds in violence, particularly with its institutionalisation. He conceptualises three main aspects of this process: the “depersonalisation” of power, the “formalisation” of its exercise, and its “integration”

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<sup>58</sup> See MANN, M., 1986, *The Sources of Social Power: Volume 1, A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760*, Cambridge University Press and also MANN, M., 1993, *The Sources of Social Power: Volume 2, The Rise of Classes and Nation States 1760-1914*, Cambridge University Press

<sup>59</sup> POPITZ, H., 1992, *Phaenomene der Macht*, ed Tubingen, J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck)

(the latter meaning the increasing extent to which power gears itself to other social activities, is supported by them and contributes to them).

Popitz also outlines an ideal-typical sequence of phases in the institutionalisation of political power. The recourse to violence (or the threat of it) as a way of inducing others to compliant behaviour may go beyond its sporadic phase insofar as means of violence are made ready for repeated use, and brought to bear on recurrent situations, from which those threatened with violence cannot easily escape. Power can then move on to a norm-making phase, where it does not just induce the subjects to momentary compliance but seeks to programme and make routine their compliant activities and dispositions. Furthermore, it can be “positionalized”, that is, connected with the occupancy of distinctive social roles (the earliest of which were those of the patriarch, judge, and war leader). In the next phase, these and other such positions come to be surrounded and supported by a staff, an apparatus - a set of individuals who steadily and reliably collaborate with each position holder. The final phase sees the emergence of a state. Here the ensemble of the holders of power positions and of the related apparatus effectively claims the monopoly of three essential functions: norm-making, jurisdiction and law enforcement.

The modern state shares with a few other polities, such as the Greek poleis, the Roman republic and some medieval city-states, a particularity of great cultural significance: the polity’s norms address and seek to regulate the activities not just of those subject to its power but also of the polity itself. In all cases, this is done by means of a few recurrent practices, such as establishing a public sphere, recognising some entitlements the subjects may hold vis-à-vis the power centre itself, making the occupancy of power positions depend on certain procedural arrangements<sup>60</sup>.

The recognition that social power has different sources and takes different forms, including at least political and economic power, brings to bear a specifically sociological perspective on a phenomenon - power itself, which for centuries has been attributed primarily, or indeed exclusively to the political sphere; in fact, as Luhmann

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<sup>60</sup> On this topic see, POGGI, G., 1991, *The State. Its Nature, Development, and Prospects*, Stanford, Stanford University Press

wrote, until the advent of modernity, Western philosophers and other students of social and cultural affairs ‘thematized’ society itself chiefly in its aspect as a polity, as a “realm”, as the bounded territory whose inhabitants are perceived in the first place as suitable objects for rule.

### Social Power

As we have seen in the previous paragraphs, Weber assigns to social power a decisive role in relations between groups. This role can vary since it rests on privileged access to resources which are themselves very different in nature. They are the aforementioned means of coercion, means of production and means of interpretation. This section aims at discussing the form of social power grounded in the means of coercion: political power.

As we have already seen, political power for Weber was a theme of great importance, first and foremost from the standpoint of his personal values. His most intense concerns addressed the key theme of what could be called high politics - the competition among sovereign states over respective might, for such might is the key means to securing the nation’s most significant interests, if necessary by recourse to war.

Let’s return to the theme of social power, particularly in the form of political power. Such form is based on organized violence, that is, on some people’s capacity to awaken fear in others, to put at stake their survival and physical integrity. Weber says this expressly with reference to the state - the most important institutional expression of politics in the modern era - in the opening paragraphs of “Politics as a vocation”.

This tough-minded view should be emphasized, because in some other writings of Weber, and in those of some of his commentators and interpreters, the notion of organized violence as the core aspect of political experience is sometimes rapidly sublimated into the theme of legitimacy. Actually, Weber did deal extensively and creatively with this theme. But he reached it through a conceptual itinerary, which some secondary literature neglects. I will recapitulate it here, to suggest that

legitimacy itself lies within a broader context, and that its significance cannot be overstated.

According to Weber, a power relationship exists to the extent that, given two subjects who interact, but whose goals are in contrast with one another, one subject has a certain probability of realizing its goals notwithstanding/even in the face of opposition from the other. However, in one of the passages in which he advances this definition, Weber observes that, taken by itself, it denotes a phenomenon which is rather too widespread and relatively amorphous. So when understood, power can be held by a great variety of subjects, individual or collective. There can also be variety in when and which issues develop from it and are implemented. In a given interaction context, power understood as in such a way can shift, according to different circumstances, between one subject and another, and then vice-versa. Sometimes, it affects issues of no great social significance.

Thus, from a sociological viewpoint, it is best to pay attention to situations characterized not so much by power itself as by domination (Herrschaft: this expression is often translated as “authority”) – situations where the power relationship is relatively durable, and structures where inequalities between groups within a given society are noticeable. In a passage from an early version of “Economy and society”, Weber suggests that domination, understood thus, can take two very different forms. In the first, it operates through the commands which one party gives the other. In the second, it operates through the control which the first party exercises over the circumstances in which the second acts.

This is a significant difference. In one case a command evokes obedience. That is, whoever receives the command leaves aside consideration of his own interests and preferences, replacing it with the consideration of the content of the command, and thus of the commander’s own interests and preference. In the other case, the subordinate party acts chiefly on the basis of his own preferences; but the fact of acting in a situation where certain strategic resources are monopolized by the other party induces him to comply willy-nilly, with that party’s superiority. Political power

is the obvious example of this first configuration, the second is exemplified by economic power.

### Command and Obedience

But here we are interested in political power. Concerning this, Weber asks what are the motivations which typically induce the person who receives the command to obey. And, again, his answer does not in the first instance refer to legitimacy. Weber initially mentions two motivations of a different kind. In one case the subject obeys the command without expressly deciding to do so: obeying the command is something he has always done, because he does not even think about the possibility of doing otherwise, of disobeying. As Bagehot says, “the best security for people doing their duty is that they should know of nothing else to do”. As noted by Poggi, “very often, in the course of prehistory and history a given subject, for a slave vis-à-vis the master, a child vis-à-vis an adult, or a woman vis-à-vis a man, obedience has constituted an un-problematical, taken-for-granted aspect of a given subject’s existential position”.<sup>61</sup>

The other kind of motivation is very different. Here, the command creates a problematical situation, being issued in a situation in which the subject has her own preferences, her own ideas on how to commit her resources, which do not coincide with the content of the command. On this account, the subject is compelled, more or less self-consciously, to deliberate how to react to the command itself. She compares the advantages and disadvantages of obeying with those of not obeying, the consequences to be feared and those to be hoped for of each alternative, and takes into account the relative probabilities. It is on the basis of this calculation that the subject decides to obey or not to obey.

These two modalities of response to command - one totally routinized and unreflected the other highly reflexive - lead to a third one. Here, when obedience takes place, it does so on the basis of a sense of moral obligation, of what one might call, somewhat

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<sup>61</sup> POGGI, G., 1991, *The State. Its Nature, Development, and Prospects*, Stanford: Stanford University Press



awkwardly, a sense of the “oughtful-ness” of obedience. It is to this third modality that the notion of legitimacy applies.

### Legitimacy and its Limitations

At this point, Weber associates himself with a view often expressed in the history of Western political and social thought, at any rate in the West, a view which Rousseau has expressed particularly pointedly: “the strong are never as strong as when they can turn his strength into right and obedience into duty”<sup>62</sup>. When this happens, obedience can more easily induce a subject to put his own preferences aside, even if there is no preponderance of calculations favourable to obedience over those unfavourable. Typically, obedience motivated by a sense of moral obligation is more generous and open-ended than one based on calculations. It is therefore less costly for those who command and sometimes also psychologically less burdensome for those who obey. A political order where such motivations most frequently induce compliance with commands - let us call it a legitimate political order - can be expected to be, other things being equal, more durable, more effective, more secure than one which is not legitimate.

It is only at this point, as it were, that Weber introduces into the discussion on the advantages of legitimacy a new and creative argument- a distinctive new approach to the ancient topic of the forms of government. Without mentioning it, he elaborates on the position taken by Rousseau. It is important that in a political order that those who govern be able to advance plausible reasons which, on the one hand, justify that command and on the other, motivate those under command to a morally oriented obedience, one inspired, as we said, by a sense of its “dutifulness”. But, if this is true, Weber holds, then that first, it is important to consider what are the main, typical reasons put forth in asking for obedience (and, if all goes well, accepted in granting obedience); second, one may ask oneself, given a plurality of political orders which differ in the prevalent response to the first question, whether and how they differ with

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<sup>62</sup> ROUSSEAU, J. J., “The Social Contract' and Other Later Political Writings”, trans. Victor Gourevitch. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997

regard to other aspects too, including perhaps some which, on the face of it, do not have much to do with those reasons. In other words, polities can be usefully differentiated from one another by asking what kind of legitimacy they possess.

On the basis of these assumptions, Weber works out a whole typology of political orders, characterized by ways in which, within each, commanders typically argue, expressly or implicitly, their right to command and the duty to obey which lies upon those they command. But the typology does not stop here. Those characteristic ways are presented as constraints, as boundaries imposed on the variability in political orders, which affect further aspects of their structure and their operations.

Furthermore, as Weber understands it, legitimacy should not be considered simply as a resource of the powerful, as something which unconditionally stabilizes and enhances their power. As we shall see, every kind of legitimacy implicitly imposes certain boundaries to domination and makes it unable to undertake certain lines of action (necessary as they may be) without incurring the risk of de-legitimizing itself.

Finally, as I have suggested, the political issue which trumped all others in Weber's view, concerned the relations between sovereign states, each seeking to define and assert its own interests autonomously, if necessary even through war. Now, sovereign states neither give commands to one another, nor obey (or disobey) one another. Their reciprocal relations are based instead on the nature and the entity of their respective might, their factual ability to block or overpower the resistance or the interference of other states. Thus, when this most significant aspect of the political sphere is concerned, the question of legitimacy simply does not arise<sup>63</sup>.

#### A typology of Legitimacy

Let us consider, then, Weber's treatment of the types of legitimacy, and of the way in which they relate to other aspects of the political order. Naturally these configurations have varied a great deal historically, but once more their variety can be both reflected

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<sup>63</sup> On the topic of the legitimacy of the modern state see, POGGI, G., 1991, *The State. Its Nature, Development, and Prospects*, Stanford, Stanford University Press

and simplified by a typology. This one distinguishes and contrasts just three fundamental patterns:

Traditional legitimacy. Here, what establishes at one end the entitlement to issue commands and at the other the duty to obey them is the appeal to the intrinsic validity and goodness of that which has always been the case, a devotion to a past as far as possible remote, perhaps known only through myth, but considered as the source of every correct understanding (among other things) of the way people should behave - and if necessary be made to behave. It is duration over time which makes sacred, in the long run, a given way of conceiving reality and of constraining and orienting actions. Command is thus legitimate when it can plausibly represent itself as the reaffirmation today of obligations and duties which already existed in the past and which, in turn, were backed by the previous past and so on. Typically, whoever commands presents himself as the current representative of a long sequence of forebears who, each in his own time had exercised command over the forebears of those who are to obey today.

Charismatic legitimacy. Here we encounter a totally different situation. The commitment to tradition as the basis itself of what is true and right is challenged and subverted by extraordinary forces. These break into the present by expressing themselves through leaders endowed with the "gift of grace" (charisma). Such a gift manifests itself in unprecedented material or spiritual feats and achievements - military expeditions conducted with unprecedented energy and yielding much booty; the proclamation of new, inspiring truths and of new paths to moral justification and to salvation. The leaders capable of these feats issue imperious commands, obedience to which is required to accomplish the feats, and constitutes the homage of common people (followers, believers) to the forces the leader embodies, and which through him assert their superiority over all that is routine, everyday, traditional.

Legal-rational legitimacy. Of the two types of legitimacy considered so far, the traditional one - of course in many, extremely different variants - is the one most openly present in history. Charismatic legitimacy is a recurrent but relatively rare phenomenon, forcefully manifesting itself, as we have seen, in unexpected prophets

proclaiming “new heavens and new earths” or in formidable war leaders. Legal-rational legitimacy, in turn, appears in Weber’s treatment chiefly as a peculiarity of the modern political experience, as a component of its central political institution - the state. Here, typically, particular commands are represented - and demand obedience - as correct instances of general ones, and these in turn as specifications of even more general commands and so forth. The validity of all such commands is grounded in the fact that they have been issued according to norms which authorise certain individuals to issue them, and place various, publicly recognised constraints on the content that commands can take. Obedience thus is expected, not as homage to the superiority of particular individuals issuing commands, but as dutiful observance of a whole system of norms.

## **Third Chapter**

### **The Concept of Power in International Relations**

Introduction  
Classical Realism and Power  
Structural Realism and Power  
Disputes and Open Questions  
Power: resources, actors, events and outcomes  
Multiple Conceptions of Power  
Conceptualizing Power  
Barnett and Duvall's Taxonomy of Power

#### **Introduction**

After having analyzed the concept of power as it has been studied in classical political and sociological theory, I turn now to the study of power in another key field: that of international relations (IR). Here, again, it is quite impossible even to think about IR, both as an academic discipline and as a realm of public policy, without touching on the central concept of power. In the field of international relations, the concept of power is – rightly or wrongly – closely associated with theories of realism. This is why, in this chapter, I have decided to give voice to the most prominent realist scholars, in order to explain how they view and treat “power”.

The second objective of this chapter is to show how power is viewed and measured at the policy level. In other terms, the idea is to address some essential questions: who has power in IR? What are the sources of power in the international arena? Does power depend only on the possession of certain resources? How can we measure power in IR?

Although all of the various schools of IR theory have something to say about the nature and role of power, it is the highly influential realist school that has been most closely identified with the study of power. Realists throughout the ages have argued that power is the key determinant in the relations among separate political communities and is of crucial importance to understanding the dynamics of war and peace. Thucydides's ancient dictum that the strong do what they want and the weak

endure the consequences<sup>64</sup> is as relevant today as it was when he described Athens' treatment of the tiny island of Melos in 400 BC. For all realists, John Mearsheimer writes, "calculations about power lie at the heart of how states think about the world around them"<sup>65</sup>.

Although realist theory remains indispensable to understanding the contemporary practice of international politics, critics continue to identify a variety of problems and inconsistencies in many of its central tenets. This is especially the case concerning the manner in which realists define, measure, and utilize the concept of power. From the birth of the modern realist school to the present, critics have commented on the ambiguity of the realists' conceptualization of power. While such criticism has some merit, the fact that these critics often assume that all realists have the same understanding of power does not do justice to the complexity of realist thought. Realists are the theorists of power politics; the role of power has been, and continues to be, central to any theory of realism. But, while it is true that realists base their analysis of international politics on the role of power, there is a good deal of variation in how individual realists understand the concept<sup>66</sup>. In order to clarify the distinction between these approaches, I briefly outline three different strands of realist theory, notably classical, structural and modified<sup>67</sup>. As suggested by Brian C. Schmidt, the analysis of each of the three respective versions of realism is organized around the following questions dealing with power: a) how is power defined? b) where is power located? c) what are the effects of power and what are the prevailing patterns of behaviour that results from the struggle for power? And, finally, c) how are capabilities and influence measured?

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<sup>64</sup> On Thucydides's thought see also GRAST, D., 1989, "Thucydides and Neorealism", *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 1

<sup>65</sup> MEARSHEIMER, J., 2001, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton)

<sup>66</sup> SCHMIT, C. B., 2005, "Competing Realist Conceptions of Power", *Millennium – Journal of International Studies*, 33; 523

<sup>67</sup> See also, Tim Dunne and Brian C. Schmidt, 'Realism', in *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, eds. John Baylis and Steve Smith, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

### Classical Realism and Power

At the beginning of *Politics Among Nations*, Morgenthau proclaimed that “international politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power”. He added that “whatever the ultimate aims of international politics, power is always the immediate aim”<sup>68</sup>. Carr concurred with Morgenthau, claiming that “politics are, then, in one sense always power politics”<sup>69</sup>. And Frederick Schuman, whose popular text *International Politics* (1933) was a harbinger of the realism that Morgenthau would popularise after the Second World War, claimed that “all politics is a struggle for power, but while power is sought in domestic politics as a means towards other ends, power is sought as an end in itself in international politics”<sup>70</sup>. When it comes to providing a definition of power, Morgenthau is complex in that he appears to have endorsed both the relational and the elements of a national power approach. On the one hand, he clearly states that “when we speak of power, we mean man’s control over the minds and actions of other men”. Morgenthau defines political power as “a psychological relation between those who exercise it and those over whom it is exercised. It gives the former control over certain actions of the latter through the influence which the former exert over the latter’s minds”<sup>71</sup>. This definition clearly places Morgenthau in the relational approach to power camp. His view closely follows Max Weber’s relational definition of power as “the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests”<sup>72</sup>. By endorsing a relational conception of power, Morgenthau commits himself to demonstrating how a political actor, whether it be an individual person or a state, is able to induce a change in outcome favorable to the one who is exercising power. Morgenthau does, however,

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<sup>68</sup> See MORGENTHAU, J. H., 1954, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press)

<sup>69</sup> CARR, H. E., 1946, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919-1939: An introduction to the Study of International Relations*, New York: Harper and Row

<sup>70</sup> SCHUMAN, S. F., 1933, *International Politics: An Introduction to the Western State System*, (New York: McGraw Hill)

<sup>71</sup> MORGENTHAU, J. H., 1954, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press)

<sup>72</sup> WEBER, M., 1947, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, (New York: The Free Press)

make a sharp distinction between political power and physical force. He argues that there is a fundamental difference between threatening the use of violence to achieve a particular outcome and its actual use; the latter, for Morgenthau, represents an “abdication of political power in favour of military or pseudo-military power”<sup>73</sup>. The psychological aspect of power is lost when overt physical violence is used to influence the behaviour of another actor. Yet, on the other hand, it is equally apparent that Morgenthau also defined power in terms of the elements of a national power approach. Like other classical realists, Morgenthau equated power with the possession of identifiable and measurable resources. Morgenthau distinguished between two types of elements that contributed to the power of a nation: those that are stable and those subject to constant change. The stable elements, which were largely of a quantitative nature, included geography, natural resources (food and raw materials), industrial capacity, military preparedness, and population. Morgenthau identified four qualitative factors that have a bearing on national power: national character, national morale, the quality of government, and the quality of a nation’s diplomacy.

E. H. Carr equated international politics with power politics, but he never provided an explicit definition of power. Carr argued that power was indivisible, yet he claimed that for purposes of discussion it could be divided into three categories: military power, economic power, and power over opinion<sup>74</sup>. Yet because of the ever-present possibility of war breaking out, Carr argued that military power was the most important form of power in international politics. Carr explained that “the supreme importance of the military instrument lies in the fact that the ultima ratio of power in international relations is war”<sup>75</sup>. He admitted that the primary importance of economic power lay in its close association with the military instrument. Carr in fact concluded that military power was such an essential element in the life of the state that it served as both a means and an end in itself. In short, classical realists argue that the

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<sup>73</sup> MORGENTHAU, J. H., 1954, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press)

<sup>74</sup> According to Joseph Nye, this was the first formulation of soft power.

<sup>75</sup> CARR, H. E., 1946, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919-1939: An introduction to the Study of International Relations*, New York: Harper and Row



permanent struggle of states for power, in which the goal of every state is to maximize their own relative power, is ultimately explained by the sinful and power seeking nature of man.

Classical realists maintain that the essential continuity of politics as a permanent struggle for power stems directly from the fundamental human drive for power. In the same way, Morgenthau located the pursuit of power to the basic human drive to dominate others. One of Morgenthau's core assumptions about human nature was that all men held an insatiable "lust for power". According to Morgenthau, "man is a political animal by nature" who "is born to seek power",<sup>76</sup>.

Morgenthau argued that while all men are born to seek power, the reality is that most people find themselves to be a "slave to the power of others". He attributed the universal desire for power to two distinct human drives. The first is rooted in the drive to survive: to secure vital needs such as food, shelter, and sex. The problem here is competition and scarcity: "what the one wants for himself, the other already possesses or wants, too". Consequently, "struggle and competition ensue". The second, and more diabolical drive, is what Morgenthau termed the 'animus dominandi', the desire to dominate. Unlike the first selfish drive, the second desire for power is not associated with mere survival, but with the position of one individual in relation to another. Morgenthau reasoned that while there were limits to the physical selfishness of man, the desire for power was limitless. Morgenthau wrote that "while man's vital needs are capable of satisfaction, his lust for power would be satisfied only if the last man became an object of his domination, there being nobody above or beside him, that is, if he became like God".

Hans J. Morgenthau transfers the bedrock assumption of man's inherent lust for power to describing the behaviour of states. Because of the "ubiquity of the struggle for power in all social relations on all levels of social organization", Morgenthau concluded that "international politics is of necessity power politics". Just like

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<sup>76</sup> See MORGENTHAU J. H., 1946, *Scientific Man Versus Power Politics*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press)

individuals, he claimed, the goal of every state was to maximize power to the optimal level. He viewed the activity of international politics “as a continuing effort to maintain and to increase the power of one’s own nation and to keep in check or reduce the power of other nations”. Morgenthau likened the three basic patterns of the struggle for power among states – keeping power (status quo), increasing power (imperialism), and demonstrating power (prestige) – to man’s lust for power that is manifest in the “desire to maintain the range of one’s own person with regard to others, to increase it, or to demonstrate it”. According to this view, international politics is a continuous struggle between the status quo and revisionist powers.

### Structural Realism and Power

Structural realists concur with classical realists that the realm of international politics is a continuous struggle for power, but they do not endorse the classical realist assumption that this is attributable to certain propensities found in the nature of man. Waltz, for example, writes “international politics is the realm of power, of struggle, and of accommodation”<sup>77</sup>. Thomas Hobbes, who is often interpreted as a structural realist, argued that in the absence of an overarching power human beings exhibit “a perpetual and restless desire for power after power, that ceaseth only in death”. For Hobbes, man’s desire “for power after power” was neither the result of greed nor stemmed from an intrinsic delight in dominating others, but rather “because he cannot assure the power and means to live well, which he hath present, without the acquisition of more”<sup>78</sup>.

Waltz explains that “from the vantage point of neorealist theory, competition and conflict among states stem directly from the twin facts of life under conditions of anarchy: states in an anarchic order must provide for their own security, and threats or seeming threats to their security abound”. In the absence of a superior authority, structural realists argue that self-help is necessarily the principle of action. Writing much earlier than Waltz, Nicholas Spykman observed that in an anarchical

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<sup>77</sup> WALTZ, N. K., 1979, *Theory of International Politics*, New York: Random House

<sup>78</sup> HOBBS, T., 1985, *Leviathan*, ed. C.B. Macpherson (New York: Penguin Books)

international society, “each individual state has continued to depend for its very existence, as much as for the enjoyment of its rights and the protection of its interests, primarily on its own strength or that of its protectors”<sup>79</sup>. Because of the possibility that force may at any time be used by one state against another, all states must take appropriate measures to ensure their own survival. Structural realists argue that the most important measure that a state can take to help guarantee its own survival is to accumulate a sufficient amount of power. According to Gilpin, “power refers simply to the military, economic, and technological capabilities of states”.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, Waltz and other structural realists argue that the distribution of capabilities in the international system is the key independent variable to explaining international outcomes such as wars, alliances, and the operation of the balance of power. But, what effect does the international distribution of power have on the behaviour of states, particularly their power-seeking behaviour? Waltz argues that states, especially the great powers, have to/should? be sensitive to the capabilities of other states. In order to ensure their own survival in a self-help environment, neorealists assume that prudent states will only seek an appropriate amount of power. According to them, power is a means to the end of security.

According to John Mearsheimer, the structure of the international system compels states to maximize their relative power position. The environment that states inhabit, Mearsheimer argues, is responsible for the ubiquitous competition for power that prompts states to search for opportunities to increase their power at the expense of rivals. He articulates five basic assumptions about the international system: it is anarchic, all great powers possess some offensive military capability, states can never be certain about the intentions of other states, survival is the primary goal of states, and states are rational actors. Mearsheimer argues that the most important pattern of behaviour that follows from these bedrock assumptions is power maximization.<sup>81</sup> Contrary to Waltz, Mearsheimer argues that states understand that the best path to

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<sup>79</sup> SPYKMAN, J. N., 1942, *America’s Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of power* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co.)

<sup>80</sup> GILPIN, R., 1981, *War and Change in World Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

<sup>81</sup> MEARSHEIMER, J., 2001, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton)

survival in the self-help, anarchical system is to accumulate more power than anyone else. The ideal position – albeit one, Mearsheimer argues, that is virtually impossible to achieve – is to be the global hegemony.

Thus, power is the key concept of offensive realism and Mearsheimer admits that it is only by clearly defining power that we can understand the behaviour of the great powers. Like Waltz, Mearsheimer endorses the elements of the national power approach and defines power as “nothing more than specific assets or material resources that are available to a state”. Unlike Waltz, however, he devotes greater attention to discussing these elements and attempts to provide a reliable way to measure state power. Mearsheimer begins by distinguishing between two kinds of state power: military power and latent power. The essence of a state’s effective power is its military power, based largely on the size and strength of the army, as it compares to the military forces of other states. Nevertheless, by endorsing the view that power is equivalent to the possession of tangible resources, both Waltz and Mearsheimer overlook the extent to which power is a matter of perception.

To summarize, realists are the theorists of power politics. The image of states perpetually struggling for power and security provides the bedrock foundation of the realist ontology of international politics. Therefore, as noted by Stephen Walt, “the concept of power is central to realist theory, yet there is still little agreement on how it should be conceived and measured”.<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, there is a degree of consensus on how they define power. Although classical realists, and Morgenthau in particular, defined power in terms of both the relational and elements of the national power approach, the overwhelming majority of realists in all three categories endorse the latter view. Even though there is disagreement on the most important elements that contribute to the power of a state, realists have been reluctant to infer the power of a particular state based solely on its ability to influence or control the actions of another state.

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<sup>82</sup> WALT, M. S., 2002, “The Enduring Relevance of the Realist tradition”, in *Political Science: The State of the Discipline*, ed. Ira Katznelson and Helen V. Milner ( New York: W.W. Norton)

Instead, realists have defined power in terms of the possession of material resources. By refusing to define power in a relational manner, and by insisting that power is largely fungible across diverse issue areas, realists continue to be vulnerable to a wide range of criticisms<sup>83</sup>. In addition to defining power in terms of the possession of material resources, there is a general tendency among realists to associate power with military might. While not taking them to be synonymous, realists do regard war-fighting ability to be the essence of state power. Power is largely defined in military terms by realists because they believe that force is the ultima ratio of international politics.

And yet, in the end, and notwithstanding all of the conceptual and measurement difficulties identified by the critics, the essence of the realist conception of international politics as fundamentally determined by the struggle for power seems, for many, to be intuitively correct.

When Joseph S. Nye Jr., who has been a vocal critic of realism, asked the former United States Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld about the concept of “soft power,” Rumsfeld replied “I don’t know what ‘soft power’ is”.<sup>84</sup>

### Disputes and open questions

One of the main criticisms that the early generation of realists put forward against the scholars of the interwar period was that they had neglected the fundamental role of power in international politics. The most famous critique of the interwar scholars’ failure to recognize the centrality of power was provided by E.H. Carr in *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919-1939*. Carr explained that he had written the book “with the deliberate aim of counteracting the glaring and dangerous defect of nearly all thinking,

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<sup>83</sup> On this topic see See BALDWIN, A. D., 2002, “Power and International Relations”, in *Handbook of International Relations*, eds. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth A. Simon (London: Sage) and KEOHANE, O. R., 1983, “Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond”, in *Political Science: The State of the Discipline*, ed. Da W. Finifter (Washington, DC: APSA)

<sup>84</sup> TRAUB, J., 2005, “The New Hard-Soft Power”, *The New York Times Magazine*, 30 January 2005, 28

both academic and popular, about international politics in English-speaking countries from 1919 to 1939 – the almost total neglect of the factor of power”<sup>85</sup>.

The close relationship that exists between the realist school and the concept of power stems from its basic insight: conflict and competition are intrinsic to the practice of international politics. Given this unquestioned assumption by realists, which they argue is supported by history, they submit that the acquisition and management of power is the central feature of politics among nations. Thus, as Barry Buzan asserts, the ‘focus on power politics provides the apparent continuity of the realist tradition’<sup>86</sup>. However, there are important disagreements among realists themselves on the best way to conceptualize and measure power. As we have seen, some realists define power in terms of measurable attributes, such as the size of a country’s population and military forces, while others define power in a relational manner as the ability to exercise influence over other actors in the international system. Power is considered by some realists to be an end in itself, while others assert that it is a means to an end. The behaviour of the state as a self-seeking egoist is understood to be a reflection of the characteristics of the people that comprise the state. It is, according to classical realists, human nature that explains why international politics is necessarily power politics. This reduction of the driving force behind international politics to a condition of human nature is one of the defining characteristics of classical realism and is most famously represented in the work of Hans J. Morgenthau. Morgenthau held that “politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature”<sup>87</sup>.

Structural realism, which is most often associated with Kenneth Waltz’s landmark book, *Theory of International Politics* (1979), shifts the focus away from the laws of human nature and argues that the power-seeking behaviour of states is a function of

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<sup>85</sup> CARR, H. E., 1946, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919-1939: An introduction to the Study of International Relations*, New York: Harper and Row

<sup>86</sup> BUZAN, B., 1996, ‘The Timeless Wisdom of Realism?’, in *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, eds. Steve Smith, Ken Booth, and Marysia Zalewski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.)

<sup>87</sup> See MORGENTHAU, J. H., 1954, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press)

international anarchy. For structural realists, who find their progenitor in Thomas Hobbes, the condition of anarchy – that is, the fact that there is no ‘higher power’ to ensure the peace among sovereign states – is often viewed as synonymous with a state of war. Structural realists argue that because there is always the possibility that any particular state may resort to force, the outbreak of war is a likely scenario in an anarchical environment. According to Waltz, anarchy prevents states from entering into co-operative agreements to end the state of war. Moreover, Waltz argues that it is the structure of the system that compels states to seek power.

Finally, the modified realist category includes those realist thinkers who have ventured to transgress Waltz’s maxim to steer clear of reductionist theory. While accepting the importance of systemic forces, modified realists have sought to move beyond the limiting confines of structural realism and endeavoured to incorporate unit level characteristics into their account of the struggle for power among nations. Modified realists, especially neoclassical realists such as Randall Schweller, Fareed Zakaria, and William Wohlforth, introduce a variety of intervening variables that stand between the state and international outcomes. By considering the role of variables operating at the domestic and individual level of analysis, neoclassical realists provide a different account of the power-seeking behaviour of states.

Another key obstacle in the endeavour to make power the central focus in IR is the difficulty of reaching a consensus on the most appropriate way to define and measure such an elusive concept. Power, like a host of other important concepts in IR, is an essentially contested concept – it means quite different things to different people. David Baldwin describes the two dominant traditions of power analysis in IR “in terms of the elements of the national power approach, which depicts power as resources, and the relational power approach, which depicts power as an actual or potential relationship”<sup>88</sup>. Proponents of the elements of the national power approach equate power with the possession of specific resources. All of the important resources

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<sup>88</sup> See BALDWIN, A. D., 2002, “Power and International Relations”, in *Handbook of International Relations*, eds. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth A. Simon (London: Sage)

that a state possesses are typically combined in some fashion to determine its overall aggregate power. The resources that are most often used as an indicator of national power include the level of military expenditure, size of the armed forces, gross national product, size of territory, and population. One of the difficulties with the elements of the national power approach is the issue of power conversion; that is “the capacity to convert potential power, as measured by resources, to realized power, as measured by the changed behaviour of others”. In the end, it is not the mere possession of power resources that matters, but the ability to convert these into actual influence. An alternative to the power as resources approach is the relational power approach that was championed by behavioural oriented political scientists during the 1950s and 1960s. According to Robert Dahl, who was an influential advocate of the relational conception of power, “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do”<sup>89</sup>. Fundamental to the relational conception of power is the ability to demonstrate a change in outcomes. According to this view, power is a process of interaction whereby a state is able to exercise influence over the actions of another state. Power as a set of resources is deemed to be less important than the actual ability of actor A to change the behaviour of actor B.

One of the motivations for developing the relational approach to power was to overcome the fungibility problem; rather than power being a “one size fits all” category, the relational approach disaggregates power into a number of component parts in order to demonstrate how it is exercised in specific issue areas. The dimensions of power typically include “its scope (the objectives of an attempt to gain influence; influence over which issue), its domain (the target of the influence attempt), its weight (the quantity of resources), and its costs (opportunity costs of forgoing a relation)”<sup>90</sup>. Proponents argue that the relational concept of power allows one to investigate how influence or control is achieved in a variety of specific settings.

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<sup>89</sup> The classic work is Harold LASWELL, D. H. and KAPLAN, A., 1950, *Power and Society: A Framework for Political Inquiry*, (New haven: Yale University Press)

<sup>90</sup> GUZZINI, S., 1993, ‘Structural Power: The Limits of Neorealist Power Analysis’, *International Organization* 47, No. 3



### Power: resources, actors, events and outcomes

One of the first questions about power is surely how to measure it. How can we recognize and evaluate the amount of power one person, organization or state has? In order to measure power we have to be clear what power is, but, more importantly, we have to be very clear how we look at power and how we approach the understanding of power. This is particularly important, because things also depend on the point of view we look at them from. This is why, I think it is important to address from the outset of this chapter, how we can think about power and, in doing so, I will follow Jeffrey Hart's "Three Approaches to the Measurement of Power in International Relations" categorization<sup>91</sup>.

According to Hart, there are three main approaches to the observation and measurement of power: control over resources, control over actors and control over events and outcomes, which Hart defines as "the best approach to the measurement of power in contemporary international politics. But let's analyze in depth each of these three categories.

Power as control over resources. The control over resources approach is the most widely used and accepted approach to the study of national power<sup>92</sup>. Military expenditures, the size of armed forces, gross national product and population are frequently used as indicators of national power in empirical studies. The control over resources approach rests on assumptions about how control over resources can be converted into control over actors or events. For example, some scholars suggest that if one takes into account intangible resources such as the structure of military forces, leadership skill and the will to use force when necessary, then one can explain or predict, with a reasonable degree of success, the outcome of conflicts between nations. That is, there is a conversion process through which control over resources is

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<sup>91</sup> HART, J., 1976, "Three Approaches to the Measurement of Power in International Relations", *International Organization*, Vol. 30, No. 2

<sup>92</sup> See for instance, J. David Singer and Melvin Small, "The Composition and Status Ordering of the International System: 1815-1940," *World Politics*, Vol. 18 (January 1966): 236-82; and George Modelski, *World Power Concentrations: Typology, Data, Explanatory Framework* (Morristown, N.J.: General Learning Press, 1974).

translated into control over actors or events<sup>93</sup>. It is assumed that a set of resources, both tangible and intangible, can be found such that a general measure of national power, which is a function of the nation's control over different types of resources, will successfully predict the ability of the nation to get its own way, despite opposition from others. The main difficulties with this approach are: 1) it is not always certain that actors will be able to use resources which are nominally under their control; 2) it is not always clear what type of resources should be included in a general measure of power, and one suspects that for different types of conflicts different combinations of resources will be needed to explain the outcomes of conflicts; 3) some types of resources, such as the will to use force, are extremely difficult to measure; 4) the focus on national power precludes the consideration of the role of non-state actors in determining the outcome of conflicts; and 5) it is not clear how one is to deal with interdependence, coalitions, and collective action.

Power as a control over actors. The control over actors approach is perhaps the most familiar one to political scientists in general, if not to students of international politics. Robert Dahl's definition of power as the ability of A to get B to do something which he would otherwise not do is a control over actors definition, and has not been greatly improved upon since its appearance in 1957. One possible objection to Dahl's definition is that if A does not want B to do that "something," then his ability to get B to do it is not terribly useful, except insofar as the non-exercise of this power produces the desired results. Some people distinguish positive from negative power, where negative power is the ability to get someone to do the opposite of what you want. Another possible objection is that A may be able to get B to do a certain thing but not others. But in his original formulation, Dahl noted that power may be more or less limited in "scope." That is, power may be limited to a specific type of activity or domain of action. It is possible, therefore, for A to have power over B in one domain but not in another. Nevertheless, power can be coercive or non-coercive. A can get B

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<sup>93</sup> See KNORR, K., 1975, *The Power of Nations: The Political Economy of International Relations*, New York: Basic Books. See also Hayward Alker, Jr., "On Political Capabilities in a Schedule Sense: Measuring Power, Integration and Development," in Hayward Alker, Karl Deutsch and Antoine Stoetzel (eds.), *Mathematical Approaches to Politics* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1973), p. 325.

to do something which he would not have done by using threat or persuasion. The persuasive type of power is sometimes called "influence," to distinguish it from coercive power. Klaus Knorr calls non-coercive power "non-power influence" to distinguish it from both power, which in his formulation must be based on coercion, and influence, which can be used to refer to either coercion or persuasion. He also argues, quite convincingly that "non-power influence" has been a neglected concept in the study of international politics. Finally - Knorr argues - one may want to distinguish between intentional and unintentional power. That is, a change in B's behaviour may result from his anticipation of a change in A's behaviour, despite the fact that A had no intention of changing his behaviour or producing the change in B's behaviour. A may be pleased or displeased about the change, but it is clear that he did not intend to produce the change. This is a phenomenon which Knorr calls "silent power."

Power as a control over events and outcomes. This approach was first developed by James S. Coleman and is best articulated in his book, *The Mathematics of Collective Action*<sup>94</sup>. It is based on a rational choice theory of power, in which the reasons for controlling resources or other actors arise out of the desire to achieve certain outcomes. Outcomes are social states which are the results of individual or collective action and which are mutually exclusive. Desired outcomes, or goals, can be defined as outcomes which produce a net increase in the actor's utility, where utility is "simply a function of the actor's preferences over the set of outcomes". Instead of making a direct connection between actions and outcomes, Coleman provides for intermediate links between actions and events and between events and outcomes. Each event is associated with at least one outcome for each actor, and each outcome is associated with a net impact on utility. Events associated with more than one outcome in a probabilistic fashion will be associated with an expected utility, equal to the sum of expected net impacts on the utility of each outcome. The focus on events, rather than outcomes, frees the analyst from having to identify all the possible, mutually exclusive

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<sup>94</sup> James C. Coleman, *The Mathematics of Collective Action*, (Chicago: Aldine, 1973). See also Peter Abell (ed.), *Organizations as Bargaining Influence Systems* (New York: Halsted Press, 1975), for a slightly modified version of Coleman's theory.

outcomes of every action, and allows him to focus on events, of which there will be a smaller number and which may be associated with sets of outcomes which are not mutually exclusive. Clearly - Hart notes - if one actor has total control over all events, then that actor has no need to control other actors. He can simply present them as a fait accompli. Similarly, although one expects to use resources to gain control over events, there is no a priori reason to believe that the degree of control over events is directly proportional to the degree of control over resources. Therefore, unless the actors regard control over other actors or resources as valuable in themselves, then the ability to control actors and resources will be considered secondary to the ability to control events. The most common form of control over events in contemporary international politics may be shared control over mutually consequential events, a condition which some scholars might call "interdependence". To summarize, the control over events and outcomes approach, as exemplified by Coleman's theory, is extremely useful for measuring power in the context of interdependence and collective action. It allows one to derive insights into bilateral power and control over resources from estimates of control over and interest in events.

Three approaches to the observation and measurement of power have been described and compared here: 1) control over resources; 2) control over actors; and 3) control over events and outcomes. According to Hart, the control over events and outcomes approach emerges as the best approach for the measurement of power in contemporary international politics, "because 1) it is the only approach which takes into account the possibility of interdependence among actors and of collective action; 2) it is more general than the other approaches; and 3) it produces a type of analysis which has both descriptive and normative advantages over the types of analysis which are associated with the other approaches"<sup>95</sup>. These arguments, in my opinion, support rather than undermine the necessity for power-oriented theories. The control over events and outcomes approach to power is capable of dealing with new types of actors and

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<sup>95</sup> HART, J., 1976, "Three Approaches to the Measurement of Power in International Relations", *International Organization*, Vol. 30, No. 2

changing goals or techniques, as is the bilateral power approach. Non-national actors are important not because they are new, but because they may have become more powerful. The fact that it may be possible to talk about power, collective action, and interdependence in the same theoretical context should be seen as a plus for the control over events and outcomes approach. Perhaps the most important argument in favour of power-oriented theories is that most, if not all, contemporary actors think about international politics in terms of power.

#### Multiple Conceptions of Power

As I have illustrated above, power and realism are really intertwined and interconnected concepts. They reinforce one another. But this generates a limit: as noted by Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall<sup>96</sup>, though the concept of power is central to international relations (...) “disciplinary discussions tend to privilege only one, albeit important, form: an actor controlling another to do what that other would not otherwise do. By showing conceptual favouritism, the discipline not only overlooks the different forms of power in international politics, but also fails to develop sophisticated understandings of how global outcomes are produced and how actors are differentially enabled and constrained to determine their fates”. Consequently, they go on to argue that “scholars of international relations should employ multiple conceptions of power and develop a conceptual framework that encourages rigorous attention to power in its different forms”. To this end, they have developed a taxonomy of power. According to them, “power is the production, in and through social relations, of effects that shape the capacities of actors to determine their circumstances and fate. This general concept entails two crucial, analytical dimensions: the kinds of social relations through which power works (in relations of interaction or in social relations of constitution); and the specificity of social relations through which effects are produced (specific/direct or diffuse/indirect)”. These

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<sup>96</sup> BARNETT, M. and DUVALL, R., 2005, “Power in International Politics”, *International Organization*, Vol. 59, No. 1

distinctions generate four concepts of power: compulsory, institutional, structural, and productive.

The potentially system-defining attacks of September 11, the war on terrorism, and the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq have caused scholars and practitioners to refocus attention on a central concept in international politics: power. However, debate is likely to be limited conceptually, informed primarily by a realist conception of power - the ability of states to use material resources to get others to do what they otherwise would not. Indeed, this is already happening. Much of the debate triggered by the U.S. invasion of Iraq, for instance, has focused on unipolarity, the ability of the United States to use its military and economic resources to overcome resistance by states and non-state actors, and whether other states will balance against or jump on the bandwagon with U.S. power

The discipline of international relations has tended to treat power as the exclusive province of realism. Associated with this tendency, there is a widely accepted conceptualization that is viewed as the only way to understand power: how one state uses its material resources to compel another state to do something it does not want to do. The disciplinary tendency to associate power with realism and to work primarily with the realist conceptualization partly owes to the fact that rivals to realism typically distance themselves from "power" considerations. This feature has been especially visible in recent years, as neoliberal institutionalists, liberals and constructivists have attempted to demonstrate their theoretical salience by demonstrating how "power" variables are not causally consequential in their explanation of empirical outcomes.

Neoliberals have argued how states with convergent interests create international institutions and arrangements that effectively tame (state) power, highlighting processes of social choice and leaving the impression that institutions are the antidote to power.<sup>97</sup> Scholars of the liberal international relations theory typically stress that

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<sup>97</sup> KEOHANE, R., 1984, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press; and KEOHANE, R., and MARTIN, L., 1995, "The Promise of Institutional Theory", *International Security*, Vol 20, N. 1

many important international outcomes cannot be adequately explained with reference to power, but instead are better understood by the salutary presence of democracy, particular configurations of domestic interests, liberal values, economic interdependence or international institutions.<sup>98</sup> Mainstream constructivists, too, have positioned themselves against explanations in terms of power as they have attempted to demonstrate the causal significance of normative structures and processes of learning and persuasion.<sup>99</sup>

Because these rivals to realism have juxtaposed their arguments to realism's emphasis on power, they have neglected to develop how power is conceptualized and operates within their theories. A consequence of this failure to develop alternative conceptualizations of power has been to reinforce the discipline's gravitation toward the default conception as defined by realism. Yet, as famously noted by Gallie, and as repeated by social theorists ever since, power is an “essentially contested concept”. Its status owes not only to the desire by scholars to agree to disagree, but also to their awareness that power works in various forms and has various expressions that cannot be captured by a single formulation. The failure to develop alternative conceptualizations of power limits the ability of international relations scholars to understand how global outcomes are produced and how actors are differentially enabled and constrained to determine their fates.

Hence, any discussion of power in international politics, then, must include a consideration of how, why, and when some actors have "power over" others and how social structures and processes generate differential social capacities for actors to define and pursue their interests and ideals.

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<sup>98</sup> MORAVCSIK, A., 1997, “Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics”, *International Organization*, Vol. 51, No. 4

<sup>99</sup> On this topic see KATZESTEIN, P., ed. 1996, *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press; RISSE, T., 2001, “Let’s Argue: Communicative Action in International Relations”, *International Organization*, Vol. 54, No. 1; CHECKEL, J., 2001, “Why Comply? Social Learning and European Identity Change”, *International Organization*, Vol. 55, No. 3; FINNEMORE, M., 2003, *The Purpose of Intervention: Changing Beliefs About the Use of Force*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press

According to Barnett and Duvall, power has two dimensions: the first dimension - kinds - refers to the polar positions of social relations of interaction and social relations of constitution. Accordingly, power is either an attribute of particular actors and their interactions or a social process of constituting what actors are as social beings, that is, their social identities and capacities. It can operate, for example, by pointing a gun and issuing commands, or in underlying social structures and systems of knowledge that advantage some and disadvantage others. The second dimension - specificity - concerns the degree to which the social relations through which power works are direct and socially specific or indirect and socially diffuse. It can operate, for example, at the very instant when the gun is brandished, or through diffuse processes embedded in international institutions that establish rules determining who gets to participate in debates and make decisions. These two dimensions generate what the authors call "taxonomy of four types of power". To clarify, according to them, we can distinguish four types or forms of power: the first type is power as relations of interaction of direct control by one actor over another - Compulsory Power; the second is the control actors exercise indirectly over others through diffuse relations of interaction - Institutional Power; the third is the constitution of subjects' capacities in direct structural relation to one another - Structural Power; and the fourth is the socially diffuse production of subjectivity in systems of meaning and signification - Productive Power.

Barnett and Duvall claim: "our taxonomy of power offers several advantages for scholars of international relations theory. First, because it is founded on an explicit and logically systematic decomposition of the general concept of power, it is able to detach discussions of power from the limitations of realism and to encourage scholars to see power's multiple forms. Realism's prominence has contributed to a situation in which scholars are often asked to choose a realist formulation to the neglect of an alternative, or vice versa. Those who want to expand the conceptualization of power frequently pose theirs as a supplement or an alternative to the realist benchmark. Joseph Nye, for example, offers his concept of "soft power" as a counterpoint to the realist emphasis



on "hard power." Gruber's concept of "go-it-alone power" is a modification of realist influenced approaches"<sup>100</sup>.

In fact, because the authors' taxonomy alerts scholars to the fact that multiple forms of power are simultaneously present in international politics, it discourages a presumptive dismissal of other conceptual forms. Second, this approach provides a framework for integration. Taxonomies not only highlight distinct types but also point to connections between them. In other words, the different types should not be seen as necessarily competing concepts, but rather as different forms in which power works in international politics. Third, this approach represents a decisive advantage over recent contributions to the debate about power in international relations because it incorporates both social relations of interaction and constitution, that is, both "power over" and "power to." Baldwin's influential contributions have relied heavily on a Dahlian formulation in which A exercises influence over B, and then attempt to incorporate a variety of concerns, including unintended effects and non-material means of influence<sup>101</sup>.

In a series of articles, Stefano Guzzini has urged international relations scholars to expand their understanding of power.<sup>102</sup> He insists that "power be reserved for moments when an actor intentionally produces effects, and that constitutive arguments be understood as governance".

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<sup>100</sup> GRUBER, L., 2000, *Ruling the World: Power, Politics, and the Rise of Supranational Institutions*, Princeton, N.J.:Princeton University Press

<sup>101</sup> BALDWIN, D., 1980, "Interdependence and Power: A conceptual Analysis", *International Organization*, Vol. 34, No. 4; BALDWIN, D., 1989, *The Paradoxes of Power*, New York: Basil Blackwell; BALDWIN, D., 1993, "Neorealism, Neoliberalism, and World Politics", in *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate*, edited by David Baldwin, 3-25. New York: Columbia University Press

<sup>102</sup> GUZZINI, S., 1993, "Structural Power: The Limits of Neorealist Power Analysis", *International Organization*, Vol. 47, No. 3; GUZZINI, S., 2000, "The Use and Misuse of Power Analysis in International Theory", in *Global Political Economy: Contemporary Theories*, edited by Ronen Palan, New York: Routledge; GUZZINI, S., 1998, *Realism in International Relations and International Political Economy*, New York: Routledge; GUZZINI, S., 2002, "Power in International Relations: Concept Formation Between Conceptual Analysis and Conceptual History", Paper presented at the 43d Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, March, New Orleans, La.

### Conceptualizing Power

According to Barnett and Duvall, power is the production, in and through social relations, of effects on actors that shape their capacity to control their fate. This concept has two dimensions at its core: (1) the kinds of social relations through which actors' capacities are affected, and (2) the specificity of those social relations. Conventionally for social theorists, social relations can be viewed as being broadly of two kinds: relations of interaction among previously constituted social actors; or relations of constitution of actors as particular kinds of social beings.

The first dimension concerns whether power works in interactions or social constitution. One position on this dimension treats social relations as comprised of the actions of pre-constituted social actors towards one another. Here, power works through behavioural relations or interactions, which, in turn, affect the ability of others to control the circumstances of their existence. In these conceptions, power nearly becomes an attribute that an actor possesses and may use knowingly as a resource to shape the actions or conditions of action of others. The other position consists of social relations of constitution. Here, power works through social relations that analytically precede the social or subject positions of actors and that constitute them as social beings with their respective capacities and interests. Constitutive relations cannot be reduced to the attributes, actions or interactions of pre-given actors. Power, accordingly, is irreducibly social<sup>103</sup>.

This conceptual distinction between power working through social relations of interaction or in social relations of constitution tracks fairly closely with a distinction that frequents the literature on power: "power over" and "power to." Concepts of power rooted in behavior and interaction point to actors' exercise of control over others; they are, then, "power over" concepts. Concepts of power tied to social relations of constitution, in contrast, consider how social relations define who the actors are and what capacities and practices they are socially empowered to undertake; these concepts are, then, focused on the social production of actors' "power to".

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<sup>103</sup> BARNETT, M. and DUVALL, R., 2005, "Power in International Politics", International Organization, Vol. 59, No. 1

The second core analytical dimension concerns how specific, direct and immediate, are the social relations through which power works. Scholars working with this conception tend to presume that connections between actors are mechanistic, flush with contact, direct or logically necessary. A consequence of this dependence on social proximity is that it becomes more difficult to observe power in operation the greater is the social distance, the lag between stimulus and effect, or the absence of logical necessity, characterizing these connections. This approach is nicely summarized by Dahl's famous claim that there is "no action at a distance." But it is not only Dahl's and related behavioural conceptions that operate with a specific and direct view of power. Some constitutive analyses do so as well. For example, scholars such as Bhaskar, Giddens, and Wendt point to the structured relationship of co-constitution between social roles or structural positions (such as Marxian class categories), and how their social capacities are defined in direct and specific relation to other roles or positions. In this way, they identify a direct and specific relationship between the social positions, which are jointly constituted structurally.<sup>104</sup>

These two core dimensions—the kinds of social relations through which power works, and the specificity of the social relations through which power's effects are produced generate a fourfold taxonomy of power: compulsory power exists in the direct control of one actor over the conditions of existence and/or the actions of another. Institutional power exists in actors' indirect control over the conditions of action of others who are socially distant. Structural power operates as the constitutive relations of a direct and specific—hence, mutually constituting—kind. Productive power works through diffuse constitutive relations to produce the situated social capacities of actors.

#### Barnett and Duvall's Taxonomy of Power

As argued above, Barnett and Duvall developed what they called "taxonomy" of four forms or types of manifestations of power. Let's follow this categorization, to understand and widen our understanding of power.

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<sup>104</sup> See also, ISAAC, J., 1987, *Power and Marxist Theory*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press

This first concept of power - compulsory power - focuses on a range of relations between actors that allow one to shape directly the circumstances or actions of another. Some of the most famous and widely used definitions of power fall under this concept. Weber defined power as the “probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability exists”.<sup>105</sup> In terms of sheer influence, especially for scholars of international relations, arguably no definition surpasses that of Dahl's earliest formulation.<sup>106</sup> Dahl's concept has three defining features. One, there is intentionality on the part of Actor A. What counts is that A wants B to alter its actions in a particular direction. If B alters its actions under the mistaken impression that A wants it to, then that would not count as power because it was not A's intent that B do so. Two, there must be a conflict of desires, to the extent that B now feels compelled to alter its behavior. A and B want different outcomes, and B loses. Three, A is successful because it has material and ideational resources at its disposal that lead B to alter its actions. According to the authors, compulsory power is present whenever A's actions control B's actions or circumstances, even if unintentionally. As Bachrach and Baratz argue, power still exists even when those who dominate are not conscious of how their actions are producing unintended effects. Compulsory power has significantly influenced thinking about power in international politics;<sup>107</sup> For many scholars, both realists and their critics, to study power in international relations is to consider how one state is able to use material resources to advance its interests in direct opposition to the interests of another state. This approach steers attention to the great powers. Yet major powers are not alone in the ability to deploy resources to overcome the objections of actors. Multinational corporations can use their control over capital to shape the foreign economic policies of developing states, as well as

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<sup>105</sup> See WEBER, M., 1947, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, translated by A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, New York: Free Press

<sup>106</sup> DAHL, R., 1957, “The Concept of Power”, *Behavioral Science*, Vol. 2, No. 3

<sup>107</sup> See for instance, CLAUDE, I., 1962, *Power and International Relations*, New York: Random House; KNORR, K., 1973, *Power and Wealth: The Political Economy of International Power*, New York: Basic Books; VASQUEZ, J., 1998, *The Power of Power Politics: From Classical Realism to Neotraditionalism*, New York: Cambridge University Press

global economic policies. Non-state networks and groups sometimes conduct campaigns of unconventional warfare that terrorize entire populations. Compulsory power is not limited to material resources; it also entails symbolic and normative resources.

Whereas compulsory power entails the direct control of one actor of the conditions and the actions of another, institutional power is actors' control of others in indirect ways. Specifically, the conceptual focus here is on the formal and informal institutions that mediate between A and B. A works through the rules and procedures that define those institutions and guides, steers, and constrains the actions (or non-actions) and conditions of existence of others. Here, power is no longer a matter of A's direct effect on B, but works instead through socially extended, institutionally diffuse relations. In other words, A does not "possess" the resources of power, but because it stands in a particular relation to the relevant institutional arrangements, its actions exercise power over B. International relations scholars have developed a range of arguments that examine how formal and informal institutions enable some actors to shape the behaviour or circumstances of socially-distant others. The literature on formal and informal agenda setting focuses on who sets the agenda and how that agenda omits certain possibilities.<sup>108</sup> In short, the institutions that are established to help actors achieve mutually acceptable, even Pareto-superior outcomes also create "winners" and "losers", to the extent that the ability to use the institution and, accordingly, collective rewards, material and normative, are unevenly distributed long into the future and beyond the intentions of the creators.

The third form identified by Barnett and Duvall is called structural power. According to them, it concerns the structures or, more precisely, the co-constitutive, internal relations of structural positions that define what kind of social beings actors are. Whereas institutional power focuses on differential constraints on action, structural

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<sup>108</sup> See for example, MANSBACH, W. R., and VASQUEZ, A. J., 1981, *In search of a Theory: A New Paradigm for Global Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press; KRASNER, S., 1985, *Structural Conflict: The Third World Against Global Liberalism*, Berkeley: University of California Press; POLLACK, M., 2003, *Engines of European Integration: Delegation, Agency, and Agenda Setting in the EU*, New York: Oxford University Press

power concerns the determination of social capacities and interests. This important difference is due chiefly to their different theoretical understanding of structure. Scholars focusing on institutional power usually define institutions and structure in almost interchangeable terms, as sets of rules, procedures and norms that constrain the action of already constituted actors with fixed preferences. Scholars focusing on structural power conceive structure as an internal relation—that is, a direct constitutive relation such that the structural position A exists only by virtue of its relation to structural position B. The classic examples here are master-slave and capital-labour relations. Structural power shapes the fates and conditions of existence of actors in two critical ways. One, structural positions do not necessarily generate equal social privileges; instead structures allocate differential capacities and typically differential advantages to different positions. Capital-labour and master-slave relations are obvious examples of how social structures constitute unequal social privileges and capacities. Two, the social structure not only constitutes actors and their capacities, it also shapes their self-understanding and subjective interests. The consequence is that structures which distribute asymmetric privileges also affect the interests of actors, often leaving them willing to "accept their role in the existing order of things".<sup>109</sup> As Steven Lukes observed: "is it not the supreme and most insidious exercise of power to prevent people, to whatever degree, from having grievances shaping their perceptions, cognitions, and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things?." In this way, structural power operates even when there are no instances of A acting to exercise control over B.

Finally, Barnett and Duvall introduce the concept of Productive Power. Productive power and structural power overlap in several important respects. Both are attentive to constitutive social processes that are themselves not controlled by specific actors, but are affected only through the meaningful practices of actors. Both concern how the social capacities of actors are socially produced, and how these processes shape actors' self-understanding and perceived interests. Additionally, neither concept of power

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<sup>109</sup> LUKES, S., 1975, *Power. A radical View*, Houndmills, England: MacMillan Education

depends on the existence of expressed conflict. Yet structural and productive power differ in a critical respect: whereas the former works through direct structural relations, the latter entails more generalized and diffuse social processes. Productive power is the constitution of all social subjects with various social powers through systems of knowledge and discursive practices of broad and general social scope. Moreover, productive power concerns discourse, the social processes and the systems of knowledge through which meaning is produced, fixed, lived, experienced and transformed. In this way, discourses are sites of social relations of power because they situate ordinary practices of life and define the social fields of action that are imaginable and possible.

To sum up, Barnett and Duvall's taxonomy does more than simply illuminate the different ways power operates in global governance, for it also encourages scholars to identify connections between these forms. Power is a complex and contested concept, largely because there are important but distinctive ways to understand how social relations shape the fates and choices of actors. If international relations scholars have erred in their past attempts to understand power, it is by trying to identify and rely on a single concept. But no single concept can capture the forms of power in international politics<sup>110</sup>.

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<sup>110</sup> BARNETT, M. and DUVALL, R., 2005, "Power in International Politics", *International Organization*, Vol. 59, No. 1

## Fourth Chapter

### **Forms of power: hard and soft power**

Introduction  
Hard power  
Hard power in International Relations  
Soft power  
The resources of soft power  
Soft power in IR  
A pattern of “power choice”  
Conclusion

#### Introduction

In this chapter we will address two concepts that are usually used to describe and define power at the international level, notably hard and soft power. These concepts are applied to understand and explain the behaviour of states at the international level. Our idea is also to try to challenge this assumption: hard and soft power as developed over recent years by Professor Joseph Nye and other IR scholars are surely suited for the study of international relations, but they can also be applied to the study of “power choice” in social relations i.e., in the management of decisions between human beings, within social groups and organizations of any kind. Joseph Nye himself does this in his latest book<sup>111</sup>.

Finally, in the last sections we will try to define a pattern of “power options”: this will also help to introduce our idea of smart power as a form of power and to explain why and in what sense it is different from hard and soft.

We start with the conviction that - as pointed out by Joseph Nye - “power [in international politics] is like the weather. Everyone talks about it, but few understand it.” And that power, like love, “is easier to experience than to define or measure”<sup>112</sup>. Our effort will be in understanding power a little more than it is usually.

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<sup>111</sup> See, NYE, J., 2008, *The Powers to Lead*, Oxford University Press, New York

<sup>112</sup> NYE, J., 1990, *Bound to lead: the changing nature of American power*, Basic Books



### Hard power

Hard power is a very simple and intuitive form of power. It is more easily experienced than soft power and, to a certain extent, is less costly to put into practice - relatively costly, not in terms of economic resources employed, but in relation to the capacity to understand what hard power requires to be used effectively. Hard power is older than soft power and manifests itself in a very practical and concrete way. Moreover, hard power is easier to see and its effects are easier to measure. Like soft power it not only carries on its own ideological approach but can also be found in different contexts.

“Everyone is familiar with hard power. It can rest on inducements (carrots) or threats (sticks)”<sup>113</sup>. Hard power is defined as the capacity to get what you want through the use of economic power or through the use of military force, by threatening others that you will use against them your economic superiority or your coercive capabilities. Therefore, hard power is heavily resource-based. In this sense it is a long way from soft power since it is viewed in classical terms, as a form of power that rests on the capacity of an actor to accumulate as many resources as are necessary to impose its will. By “resources” we mean, in this case, physical resources in the sense of tangible things and not intangible resources like ideas and opinions. In this sense, hard power is basically different from soft power and radically so.

But let’s now analyse how hard power manifests itself. First of all there are different degrees of inducement as well as different degrees of coercion. As we have seen before, the key element is actually the capacity to threaten to use such resources. This “threat” is the first sign that hard power is present. Nonetheless, the assumption is that whoever makes the threat is then also capable of implementing it. Put another way, bluff is not permitted. Subject A’s hard power depends on his capacity to carry out the threat he made.

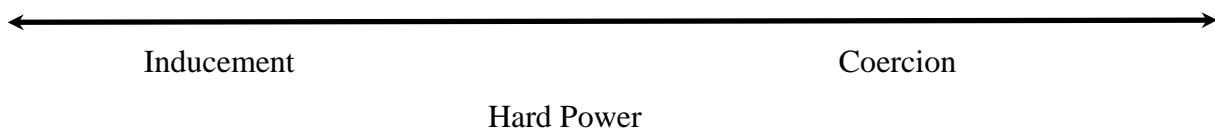
Inducement is about the economic superiority of subject A towards subject B and can be positive or negative. This latter manifests itself in being able to impose economic sanctions. For instance, an employer can threaten to dismiss his employee if he refuses to obey. In the same way you can use your economic superiority to oblige people to do

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<sup>113</sup> NYE, J., 2004, *Soft Power: the means to success in world politics*, Public Affairs

what you want them to do. It is the capacity of A to destroy every source of subject B's economic survival that guarantees his obedience. The asymmetry between the two is so big that subject B has no alternative; to paraphrase Hirschman<sup>114</sup> subject B has no options, neither "voice" nor "exit".

There is then the positive side of economic power superiority: you can induce subject B to do what you want him to do by granting him a certain amount of money. In this case, your power over B derives from your capacity to "buy" him. But this attitude can be viewed also in terms of "reward". Subject B might be therefore willing and happy to follow subject's A instruction as long as he receives a "prize". This is a classical command - obedience relation, but it is a very peculiar one because there is a positive-sum. B obeys because he will receive a reward. Both are apparently happy. Subject A gets what he wants and B gets the money. But subject B might one day decide to obey no longer. He might decide to "sell" his obedience to subject C, for instance, or simply to become autonomous. In this case is hard power ineffective? Should subject A surrender to subject's B willingness? Is this an Hegelian example of "Master-slave dialectic"<sup>115</sup>, where in the end the slave becomes the master and the master the slave?



Actually, no. As shown in the graph above, hard power can be viewed as a continuum in terms of its capacity to be harsh, from inducement to coercion. Let's turn now to this latter aspect of hard power.

Coercion is a general category that comprises different degrees of intensity. Nonetheless, coercion has to do with the use of force. Since "force" is a tricky concept, it is better to say that coercion has to do with the employment of violence and

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<sup>114</sup> On this topic see HIRSCHMAN, O. A., 1970, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organisations, and States*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

<sup>115</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F., 1977, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by A.V. Miller with analysis of the text and foreword by J. N. Findlay, Oxford: Clarendon Press

even more precisely with the employment of physical violence. Force, in fact, can be seen as a positive feature: when you have force, you have the capacity and the willingness to do great things; you can use your force to obtain noble, positive outcomes that are shared. In this sense, it is a tricky term, because it can be misunderstood in such a context. On the contrary, coercion, in the sense of the capacity to exert violence is much clearer. To go back to our “story”, if subject B decides to stop obeying subject A, this latter has another option to convince B to go on obeying him. He can coerce subject B to do what he wants him to do. In other words, he can exert upon him physical violence. He can hit him, and threaten to kill him and in the end actually do so. The power of A derives from the capacity to get rid of an individual's - in this case our poor B's - essential feature: his existence. Of course, this last scenario remains a last resort option. Nevertheless, it is the concrete possibility that this can happen, because A is capable of it, that makes this option a “real” one.

Hard power is therefore a complex, though intuitive, form of power. It rests first and foremost on the possession of certain basic resources: among others, money and the means to coerce. Despite its constant specific ideological approach, this trait manifests itself very well when hard power is considered in the realm of international politics and especially as a means to resolve disputes between states. I will analyse this situation in the following paragraphs. But first, there is a last consideration to be made about hard power as a “currency” to use in social relations. As we have said, hard power is very easily experienced. It is, in fact, no hard task to realize that a person is hitting you. But some may argue that this is a theoretical pattern and that, ultimately, it does not exist in the real context of daily life. Put another way, some skeptics may say that it is very difficult to find hard power situations.

This argument fails to recognize an essential element of power relations: its institutionalization.

Hard power exists and the more the asymmetry between the parts, the more the likelihood to experience hard power. Let's follow another example. Take the case of the CEO of a big company and his latest personal assistant. Apparently, the boss is powerful due to his position. He can issue commands and demand obedience.

Moreover, he can dismiss his assistant at will as he did the previous five assistants over the last year. In contrast, the assistant lacks economic strength and negotiable capacity. He cannot “exit” because he needs that job. Therefore he has no choice but to obey. Nevertheless, power is institutionalized. The CEO cannot fire his assistant when and how he wants; in fact, he has to follow certain procedures and rules. And he certainly cannot hit him: he is an honorable person who treats people courteously and with due respect. Nor can he kill him, as he will be prosecuted and most certainly imprisoned and consequently he will lose his job and the power he derives from it. So, power is institutionalized and hard power cannot be exercised arbitrarily. But the asymmetry remains as well as the power gap. The boss can issue commands and the assistant should obey. The boss can put him down and the assistant should not answer back. Finally though, under certain circumstances, the boss can actually fire him.

Of course, there is also the positive scenario: the boss and his assistant have a good relationship. The boss is happy with his assistant and the assistant is happy with his boss. In this case the situation of asymmetry remains and power still applies but it is more sharply evident when people disagree, or have an issue and need to resolve it. When everything goes well, power is simply less perceived, though it exists and works.

#### Hard power in International Relations

Let's focus on hard power in the international arena. First of all, there are some premises that need to be considered. Hard power is definitely connected with realism<sup>116</sup>. In a nutshell, realists depict the international community as an anarchic environment, in which only states count. Each state seeks to maximize its security and there is competition to attain as much security and stability as possible. To defend and protect themselves, states can count on “self-help” only. The basic rule of the international system is that *superiorem non recognoscens*, meaning that states do not recognize any superior authority. International organizations and international regimes

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<sup>116</sup> On this topic see among others WALTZ, K. N., 1979, *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co. and MEARSHEIMER, J. J., 2001, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York, NY: Norton

are not considered and neither is the possibility to establish rules and bodies to resolve disputes and conflicts. States care about their own survival. This driving force for survival is the primary factor influencing their behavior and in turn ensures states develop offensive military capabilities for foreign intervention and as a means to increase their relative power. This is basically the context in which hard power operates at the international level. There is a second consideration to be made and this is regarding the ideological approach towards hard power in international relations. Usually hard power supporters do not think about soft power. They simply believe that soft power is not a form of power. Moreover, they argue that soft power is the relinquishment of power. A good example of this belief can be found in Robert Kagan's book, "Paradise and Power"<sup>117</sup>. From the outset of the book, the author gives his idea of power. His argument is more or less the following: if (states) want to live in a paradise, they automatically and implicitly relinquish their power. In other words, if you decide to live in peace, as in Heaven, it means that you have decided not to deal with power. The reason, according to Kagan, is that power has nothing to do with Paradise; power is bad and dirty, it means violence and it kills, unlike Paradise, which is exactly the opposite. In his view power means military power. Power equals hard power. In other words, power is the capacity and ability to resolve problems through the use of violence, the employment of force and ultimately through the recourse to war. This is power, nothing more and nothing less: it is rude, crude, ruthless, pitiless. Therefore, Professor Robert Kagan, like many other realist scholars do not believe that power can manifest itself in different forms. To be honest, this is not exactly the case: realists believe that power can assume different features and forms, but they do not believe that these other forms can be as effective as hard power is. The point is, hence, an issue of "power effectiveness", i.e. if the "power choice" produces the desired outcome. Hence, realists do not criticize the existence of other forms of power different from hard power, but they question that these other alleged forms of power are as effective as hard power.

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<sup>117</sup> KAGAN, R., 2003, Paradise and Power, Atlantic Books, London

### Soft power

Contrary to hard power supporters, soft power advocates think about hard power. They consider hard power a form of power, but they know there are alternatives: one of these is soft power.

A well known soft power supporter is Professor Joseph Nye. He argues: “[...] sometimes you can get the outcomes you want without tangible threats of payoffs. The indirect way to get what you want has sometimes been called the second face of power”. Put differently, “a country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries - admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness - want to follow it”. This is soft power: getting others to want the outcomes that you want. Co-opt people rather than coerce them.<sup>118</sup> In sum, soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others, without the use of force, coercion or violence. This form of power manifests itself in different contexts and with different degrees of intensity, and evidence.

For instance, at the personal level we are very familiar with the power of attraction and seduction. In our relationships with others we usually do not use violence or coercion, rather we try to use persuasion, attraction, good manners and examples. Nevertheless, even in a social relations, we have our goals and objectives and we want to get those outcomes and in doing so, we know that we have to manage our relationship with the others, in order to bring them to our side. This is a typical power context in which two or more people might have and very often have different desires, preferences, objectives and goals that are incompatible with one another or impossible to achieve at the same time. Therefore, power applies, in the very basic significance of the term, i.e. the capacity to get what a person wants even in the face of opposition from others.

Soft power is the ability to attract people to our side without coercion. Therefore, legitimacy is central to soft power. Nye argues: “if a people or a nation believes American objectives to be legitimate, (we) are more likely to persuade them to follow (our) lead without using threats and bribes”. Moreover, soft power opposition to - and the cost of - using hard power when the situation demands increases legitimacy.

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<sup>118</sup> NYE, J., 2004, Soft Power: the means to success in world politics, Public Affairs

According to Nye, “appealing to other’s values, interests and preferences can, in certain circumstances, replace the dependence on carrots and sticks”. This is particularly true in today’s international arena, where “militaries are well suited to defeating states but they are often poor instruments to fight ideas”. “Many of the organisations against which we are fighting - goes on Nye - control no territory, hold few assets, and spur new leaders for each one that is killed. Victory in the traditional sense, is [thus] elusive”. Consequently, “today, victory depends on attracting foreign populations to our side and helping them to build capable, democratic states. Soft power is essential to winning peace. It is easier - concludes Nye – “to attract people to democracy than to coerce them to be democratic”.

There are at least some elements of soft power that are central but without understanding them it is impossible to understand the nature of power. First of all, soft power as developed by Professor Nye is neither an evolution (or involution according to some commentators) nor a substitute for hard power. Soft power is simply another form of power. Raising awareness and understanding the potentialities of soft power means increasing power capacity and not relinquishing power as a “means to success in world politics”<sup>119</sup>. Some people find difficult to understand the meaning of soft power; the risk is to let people argue that soft power is a vague concept, without substance and that, ultimately, it is not a form of power. Moreover, others might be forced to think that soft power is a cultural concept - soft power as a pre-political or non political concept, related to the social sphere. This is not the case, at all. Prof. Joseph Nye, helps to clarify this second key feature of soft power: “soft power is more than cultural, although the appeal of Hollywood and American products can play a role in inspiring the dreams and desires of others”<sup>120</sup>. He goes on to argue that “American sources of soft power are plentiful, [they] include the political values and ideas enshrined in the Constitution and Bill of Rights, US economic system, personal contacts and exchanges, and our somewhat reluctant participation and leadership in

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<sup>119</sup> To paraphrase the title of Nye book on soft power, cited before.

<sup>120</sup> NYE, J., ARMITAGE R., 2006, A Smarter, more secure America, CSIS Commission on Smart Power, Washington, p. 7

institutions that help shape global agenda”. He concludes: “one of the biggest sources of US soft power is quite simply America’s obvious success as a nation”. In sum, “there is an enormous strength and vitality in the American civic spirit of opportunity, tolerance and mutual respect and shared commitment and in an economy that rewards innovation and hard work. Consequently, for people elsewhere, the United States can be a partner for a better life”. Yet with typical American pride and rhetoric, Nye clarifies very well not only the sources of soft power and the meaning of the concept, but also its effects of attraction and persuasion. Soft is power and very often it is more powerful than hard power. The key to success is hence being able to understand the context and to act accordingly, choosing the right instruments, be they hard or soft.

Legitimacy is a key element of any decision, but its presence or absence is even more clear when hard or soft power options apply. To a certain extent, we can say that hard power can be effective even without legitimacy, whereas a soft power story cannot be successful without it. This is probably the first and, to a certain extent, the foremost distinctive feature of soft power compared to hard power: soft power works as long as the command issued and the objective desired are perceived as legitimate. Moreover, soft power works if the “powerless” actors not only obey the command issued, but if they voluntarily and actively work to achieve the same objective as the “powerful” actors want.

This is also true in a variety of aspects of daily life: in the business world executives know that leadership is not just a matter of issuing commands, but also involves leading by example and attracting others to do what you want. In fact, it is difficult to run a large organization by command alone. You also need to get others to buy into your values. Similarly, political leaders have long understood the power that comes from attraction. If I can get you to want to do what I want to, then I do not have to use carrots or sticks to make you do it. There is an important difference in this last example: whereas leaders in authoritarian countries can use coercion and issue commands, politicians in democracies have to rely more on a combination of inducements and attraction. As pointed out by Nye, soft power is a “staple” of daily democratic politics. The ability to establish preferences tends to be associated with



“tangible assets such as an attractive personality, culture, political values and institutions and policies that are seen as legitimate or having moral authority. In other words, if a leader presents values that others want to follow, it will cost less to lead”<sup>121</sup>.

There is another feature of soft power that needs to be clarified. Soft power is about influence but it is not just influence. After all, influence is not necessarily linked to legitimacy. For instance, influence can rest on the hard power of threats and payments. Influence is sometimes confused as an equal to power. This is not true: if you have power, you certainly exert influence but it is not always so the other way round. It is true that influence is often associated with the use of instruments and methods different from the use of force or violence, but influence is to a certain extent an unintended capacity of subject A to get something it wants from subject B<sup>122</sup>. It is precisely this state of unintentionation that forces us to exclude the possibility of equating influence with soft power. This latter is, in fact, something more rational and scientific. People who adopt a soft power approach are aware that the use of certain instruments, attitudes and methods will lead to certain results. And most importantly, those who use soft power want to get that result. Soft power supporters value success as important as those who use hard power. And soft power is more than just persuasion or the ability to move people by argument, though that is an important part of it. It is also the ability to attract, and attraction often leads to acquiescence.

#### Soft power resources

One way to think about the difference between hard and soft power is to consider the ways you can obtain the outcomes you want. I have already made above a very brief example of these different behavioural attitudes or, “power solution options”. Let’s follow Nye’s argument: “you can command me to change my preferences and do what you want by threatening me with force or economic sanctions. You can induce me to do what you want by using your economic power to pay me”. Moreover, you can

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<sup>121</sup> NYE, J., 2004, *Soft Power: the means to success in world politics*, Public Affairs

<sup>122</sup> See, GALLINO, L., 2006, *Dizionario di Sociologia*, UTET, Torino



According to Nye, soft power resources tend to be associated with the Co-optive end of the spectrum of behaviour, whereas hard-power resources are usually associated with command behaviour. Nevertheless, Nye himself warns that this relationship is imperfect. For instance, sometimes a country may be attracted to others with command power by myths of its invincibility, and command power may sometimes be used to establish institutions that later become regarded as legitimate. In the same way, a strong economy not only provides resources for sanctions and payments, but can also be a source of attractiveness<sup>127</sup>.

### Soft power in IR

So far we have analyzed soft power as a general topic and as it works in social relations. But what about soft power in international relations? Put another way, what does it mean to use soft power in the relations between states, or between states and international organizations?

First of all, in international politics the resources of soft power are not scarce, but they depend primarily on the values expressed by an organization's or country's culture, in the example it sets by its internal practices and policies and in the way it handles its relations with others. Secondly, soft power is partly an attitude, in the sense that states or actors should be educated in soft power. Put another way, soft power is not so easy to understand, and its potentialities are very often disregarded. This is also due to an ideological approach towards power. I will deal with these issues later on.

Governments sometimes find it difficult to control and employ soft power, but that does not diminish its importance. Paradoxically, it was a former French Foreign Minister (and not an American one) who acknowledged that Americans are powerful because they can "inspire the dreams and desires of others, thanks to the mastery of global images through film and television and because, for the same reason, large numbers of students from other countries come to the United States to finish their

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<sup>127</sup> NYE, J., 2004, Soft Power: the means to success in world politics, Public Affairs

studies”<sup>128</sup>. Moreover, even a British realist like E. H. Carr<sup>129</sup>, writing in 1939, described international power in three categories: military, economic and what he called the power over opinion. In sum, “those who deny the importance of soft power are like people who do not understand the power of seduction”.

Sometimes, the same power resources can affect the entire spectrum of behaviour from coercion to attraction. For instance, a country that suffers economic and military decline is likely to lose not only its hard power resources, but also some of its ability to shape the international agenda and some of its attractiveness. But soft power - Nye underlines - does not depend on hard power. This is a very important consideration: soft power is not a means of last resort when hard power fails. On the contrary, it is an alternative power approach. This helps to point out another peculiarity of soft power: it does not depend on other forms of power because it is an independent form of power in itself. Nye exemplifies this point well: “the Vatican has soft power despite Stalin’s mocking question - how many divisions does the Pope have? The Soviet Union once had a good deal of soft power, but it lost much of it after the invasion of Hungary and Czechoslovakia”. Most importantly, Nye stresses that “Soviet soft power declined even as its hard economic and military resources continued to grow”. Therefore, soft power is not necessarily related to the economic and military might that a country possess; it can be dependent on those factors, in the sense that the more economic and military force a country has at its disposal, the more soft power it can deploy. But this is not always true. Soft power is an autonomous form of power, which has its rules, features and characteristics and it needs to be properly understood in order to be efficiently employed.

Sometimes countries enjoy political clout that is greater than their military and economic weight would suggest because they “define their national interests to include attractive causes such as economic aid or peacemaking”. For example, in the past two decades Norway - a “marginal” country at the international level - has taken a hand in

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<sup>128</sup> VÉDRINE, H., and MOISI D., 2001, *France in an Age of Globalisation*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institutions Press

<sup>129</sup> CARR, E. H., 1964, *The Twenty Years’ Crises, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, New York: Harper & Row

peace talks in the Philippines, the Balkans, Colombia, Guatemala, Sri Lanka and the Middle East. Norwegians say this grows out of their Lutheran missionary heritage, but at the same time the posture of peacemaker identifies Norway with values shared by other nations that enhance Norway's soft power<sup>130</sup>. In the same way, Ignatieff describes the position of Canada: "influence derives from three assets: moral authority as good citizens which we have got some of, military capacity which we have got a lot less of, and international assistance capability"<sup>131</sup>.

Institutions can enhance a country's soft power. Nye argues: "Britain in the nineteenth century and the United States in the second half of the twentieth century advanced their values by creating a structure of international rules and institutions that were consistent with the liberal and democratic nature of the British and American economic system: free trade and the gold standard in the case of Britain; the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations in the case of the United States".

Thus, as in these specific cases, when countries make their power legitimate in the eyes of others, "they encounter less resistance to their wishes". Moreover, "if a country's culture and ideology are attractive, others more willingly follow. If a country can shape international rules that are consistent with its interests and values, its actions will more likely appear legitimate in the eyes of others. If it uses institutions and follows rules that encourage other countries to channel or limit their activities in ways it prefers, it will not need as many costly carrots and sticks"<sup>132</sup>. And this is a well thought out and precise power strategy. This is not simply multilateralism, or the surrender of power, but a powerful power strategy. Soft power manifests in these cases all its power as a means to success in international politics.

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<sup>130</sup> See for instance, BRUNI, F., 2002, "A Nation That Exports Oil, Herring and Peace", New York Times, December 21

<sup>131</sup> IGNATIEFF, M., 2003, "Canada in the Age of Terror - Multilateralism Meets a Moment of Truth", Options Politiques, February 2003, p. 21

<sup>132</sup> NYE, J., 2004, Soft Power: the means to success in world politics, Public Affairs

Finally, there is another question to answer: what are the resources of soft power? Or better, does soft power depend on the possession of certain resources? In this case - power viewed in terms of resources - soft power is a very classical form of power. For this reason, we follow Professor Joseph Nye's categorization. We should remember that in this section we are considering soft power in IR. Nye argues that the soft power of a country rests primarily on three resources: its culture, its political values and its foreign policies.

Culture. It can be defined as the "set of values and practices that create meaning for a society"; it is common to distinguish between highbrow culture, which includes literature, art and education and popular culture, which focuses on mass entertainment. When a country's culture includes universal values and its policies promote values and interests that others share, it increases the probability of obtaining its desired outcome because of the relationship of attraction and duty that it creates. It follows that narrow values and parochial cultures are less likely to produce soft power. For example "US culture, low-brow or high, radiates outward with an intensity last seen in the days of the Roman Empire, but with a novel twist. Rome's and Soviet Russia's cultural sway stopped exactly at their military borders. America's soft power, though, rules over an empire on which the sun never sets"<sup>133</sup>. Contrary to this view, some analysts make the mistake of treating soft power simply as popular culture; in other words, they confuse the cultural resources with the behaviour of attraction. For instance, historian Niall Ferguson describes soft power as "non-traditional forces, such as cultural and commercial goods" and then dismisses it on the grounds that "it's, well, soft"<sup>134</sup>. Of course, Coke and Big Mac do not necessarily attract people in the Islamic world to love the United States. Moreover, the North Korean dictator Kim Jong II is alleged to like pizza and American videos, but that does not affect his nuclear programmes. Nevertheless, this is not to deny that popular culture is often a resource that produces soft power, but as we know, the effectiveness of any power resource depends on the context. To clarify, tanks are not a great military power resource in swamps or jungles.

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<sup>133</sup> JOFFE J., 2001, "Who's Afraid of Mr. Big?", *The National Interest*, Summer 2001, p.43

<sup>134</sup> FERGUSON N., 2003, "Think Again: Power", *Foreign Policy*, January-February 2003

Coal and steel are not major power resources if a country lacks an industrial base. Finally, American films that make the United States attractive in China or Latin America may have the opposite effect and actually reduce American soft power in Saudi Arabia or Pakistan. As we will see in the next chapter, the background attraction and repulsion of American popular culture in different regions and among different groups may make it easier or more difficult for American officials to promote their policies. But commerce is only one of the ways in which culture is transmitted. It also occurs through personal contacts, visits and exchanges. For instance, via the minds of more than a half a million foreign students who study every year in American universities, America can be said to export its ideas and values, which then tend to reach the powerful elite in their home countries on their return.

Political values and policies. Government policies at home and abroad are another potential source of soft power. Similarly, foreign policies strongly affect soft power. Government policies can reinforce or squander a country's soft power. Domestic or foreign policies that appear to be hypocritical, arrogant, indifferent to the opinion of others or based on a narrow approach to national interests can undermine soft power. For example, in the steep decline in the attractiveness of the United States as measured by surveys carried out after the Iraq War in 2003, people with unfavourable views for the most part said they were reacting to the Bush administration and its policies rather than the United States generally. Therefore, they distinguish American people and culture from American policies. It follows that the public in most nations continue to admire the United States for its technology, music, movies and television. But large majorities in most countries said they disliked the growing influence of America in their country<sup>135</sup>. Hence - Nye argues - a change in policies can produce a change in the opinion others have of the US.

Foreign Policies. The values a government champions in its behaviour at home, in international institutions and in foreign policy strongly affect the preferences of others. Put another way, governments can attract or repel others by the influence of their

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<sup>135</sup> See Pew Global Attitudes Project, *Views of a Changing World* June 2003, Washington, D.C.: Pew Centre for the People and the Press, 2003.

example. But soft power does not belong to the government in the same degree that hard power does. This is another crucial difference: some hard power assets such as armed forces are strictly governmental; others are inherently national such as oil and mineral reserves. In contrast, soft power resources are separate from the direct control of the government and are only partly responsive to its purposes.

Is soft power a panacea? Is it the solution to all power problems? Some skeptics object to the idea of soft power because they think of power narrowly in terms of commands or active control. In their view, imitation or attraction are simply that, not power. This is why soft power is not easy to understand properly. The realist view of power, based on command and obedience and on the use of coercion only is difficult to reshape and to re-educate with an idea of power that can manifest itself in terms of attraction, persuasion and influence through a variety of channels, from the commerce of movies and cheeseburgers to national policies and foreign programmes. Soft power is more complex and sophisticated than hard power: to function effectively it requires different expertise and skills.

As we have seen, some imitation or attraction does not produce much power over policy outcomes and neither does imitation always produce desirable outcomes. Therefore, such “realist” observations are correct, but they miss the point that exerting attraction on others often does allow you to get what you want. The skeptics who want to define power only as a deliberate act of command and control are ignoring the second- Nye uses the term “structural”- face of power: the ability to get the outcomes you want without having to force people to change their behaviour through threats and payments. You force people to change their behaviour in fact, but they are happy and willing to do so. And this is, ultimately, soft power.

Nevertheless, there are some conditions thanks to which soft power is more likely to lead to desired outcomes. For example, we know that popular culture is more likely to attract people and produce soft power in situations where cultures are somewhat similar rather than widely dissimilar. Hence, all power depends on context, but soft power depends more than hard power upon the existence of willing interpreters and



receivers (in fact if you decide to wage war against an enemy, the opinion of this latter is not actually so important). Secondly, soft power is also likely to be more important when power is dispersed in another country rather than concentrated. A dictator cannot be totally indifferent to the views of the people in his country, but he can often ignore whether another country is popular or not when he calculates whether it is in his interests to be helpful. In democracies - where public opinion and parliaments matter - political leaders have less freedom to adopt tactics and strike deals than in autocracies. Thus, for instance, it was impossible for the Turkish government to permit the transport of American troops across the country in 2003 because American policies had greatly reduced US popularity in public opinion and in Parliament. Finally, though soft power sometimes has direct effects on specific goals, it is more likely to have an impact on the general goals that a country seeks<sup>136</sup>. According to this theory, soft power may be less relevant than hard power in preventing attack, policing borders and protecting allies. But it is particularly relevant to the realization of “milieu goals”.

Other skeptics object to using the term soft power in international relations because - as said before - governments are not in full control of the attraction. It is true that firms, universities, foundations, churches and other non-governmental organizations, develop a soft power of their own that may reinforce or be at odds with official goals. That is all the more reason for governments to make sure that their own actions and policies reinforce rather than undercut their soft power. And this is particularly true since private sources of soft power are likely to becoming increasingly important in the global information age<sup>137</sup>.

#### A pattern of “power choice”

Hard and soft power are not suited for the study of IR only, but they are, to some degree, general models that can be applied in different contexts, including the social dimension, i.e. the variety of relations between human beings. This approach makes it possible to study hard and soft power in terms of specific “forms of power” and to

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<sup>136</sup> On this theory see WOLFERS A., 1962, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press

<sup>137</sup> NYE, J., 2004, *Soft Power: the means to success in world politics*, Public Affairs

understand their limits and potentialities. To this end, we can try to identify some key steps or factors that constitute what we call a “pattern of power choice”, i.e. the path that leads a person, an organization, a state or any other actor to choose the right instruments according to the context and the outcome desired.

There are, in total, four basic elements in any power decision that need to be considered and that produce different outcomes and different scenarios: the context, the power choice, the effectiveness and the agenda.

The context.

It is surely the most important element. If you want your action to be successful, you really need to understand the context. This is, at the same time, the most crucial and the most difficult task to deal with. In order to understand the context in which you are going to operate, you need a variety of elements: information, knowledge, luck, the capacity to understand the actors involved, their history, the relations between them etc.. It is therefore evident that success or failure depend heavily on the good or poor understanding of the context.

The power choice.

It follows from the context. Once you have identified the essential features, characteristics and peculiarities of the context, you can choose the “power solution” accordingly. This is a very important choice. Power solutions are never “obliged”, but are the result of a careful analysis of internal and external factors influencing a particular situation. The power choice should be the best solution in relation to the context. Nevertheless, this point is strictly related to the next one.

The effectiveness.

Power choice should be effective. In other words it should produce the outcome you want. This element is of critical importance, both in social relations and in the management of relations at international level. Everybody wants their actions to be effective. Failure is never an acceptable outcome. Therefore, understanding whether a power choice is likely to increase the effectiveness of your action is of primary importance. But this capacity, this lucidity, depends also on the previous steps, it depends on your power preference and, most importantly, on your context evaluation.

The agenda. This is in a sense the goal. Eventually, you want your ideas, your programme and ultimately your agenda to be implemented. Be it a personal or political agenda, the goal is the same. At the level of personal relations the agenda is sometimes contingent, with short term objectives, whereas at the international level the agenda is much more structured, with mid- and long- term goals. In this latter case the agenda reflects also a political programme, with political choices and priorities. Its successful implementation is therefore of paramount importance in order to keep and if possible increase consensus.

This “four-steps approach” highlights that any power decision is based or should be based on a careful assessment of different factors: it is, to some extent, an attempt to introduce a rational method to the decision- making process. It has nothing to do with rational choice, but the argument is that if you want to use power to get your desired outcome, you should be able to manage power in a way that the mistakes are minimized and the context in which you operate is well understood.

### Conclusion

Hard power and soft power can be considered, using a Weberian approach, two ideal-type<sup>138</sup> forms of power. For two reasons: first, because as any ideal-type it cannot be found in reality as pure as the model describes them. Put another way, even hard and soft power are constrained by other factors and, as Nye points out, very often we observe an interplay of them. Hence, hard and soft power “sometimes reinforce and sometimes interfere with each other” and the result is that these two forms of power are “[...] inextricably intertwined in today’s world”<sup>139</sup>. In sum, we observe hard power and soft power that interact, reinforce and sometimes overlaps.

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<sup>138</sup> Ideal type, also known as pure type, is a typological term most closely associated with sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920). An ideal type is formed from characteristics and elements of the given phenomena, but it is not meant to correspond to all of the characteristics of any one particular case. It is not meant to refer to perfect things, moral ideals nor to statistical averages but rather to stress certain elements common to most cases of the given phenomena.

<sup>139</sup> NYE, J., 2004, *Soft Power: the means to success in world politics*, Public Affairs

Nevertheless, and this is the second motivation, they are two “pure” forms of power and hence they can be taken as a “reference model” whenever the concept of “power” is encountered. In other words, when we have to deal with any power situation, we can apply these models and identify and describe the behaviour of the actors involved through the eyes of hard and soft power.

## Fifth Chapter

### **The concept of Smart Power: An American Story?**

Introduction

‘Smart Power’ Strategy: the Keystone of Obama’s Foreign Policy

The main features of smart power

Smart power: a political agenda

Smart power: a different approach towards power

Why smart power was born in the US

Anti-Americanism today

The US premises of smart power

Getting ready for smart power

### Introduction

Since the election of the new US President, the debate on US instruments of power and influence has become particularly relevant. A new foreign policy doctrine based on the concept of ‘smart power’ is emerging in Washington, D.C. This doctrine relies on the idea that the combination of ‘hard power’ and ‘soft power’ will allow the US to build an appropriate framework to tackle today’s unconventional threats. ‘Smart power’ seems to be the keystone of the US foreign policy, a concept that can be explained as follows: Thesis: ‘hard power’, power to coerce through military, economic and financial power. Antithesis: ‘soft power’, “power to attract”, “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments” (based on the policies, culture and political ideals of one country). Synthesis: ‘smart power’: neither ‘hard’, nor ‘soft power’, but “the skillful combination of both”.

Though the United States has tended to over-rely on ‘hard power’ over the last few years, today there is the will to “restore the full spectrum of US national power” by reshaping ‘soft power’ tools. The new US President intends to strike a balance between the three ‘Ds’ – defense, diplomacy and development – by rebuilding US civilian, diplomatic and development capacities. Such a shift in US foreign policy could constitute one of the most significant changes in US national security strategy in decades.

### 'Smart Power' Strategy: the Keystone of Obama's Foreign Policy

Since 2004, a new philosophy of action has emerged in Washington, D.C., based on the will to find an alternative to Bush's militaristic and unilateralist foreign policy. In 2004, Suzanne Nossel wrote an article in *Foreign Affairs*<sup>140</sup> trying for the first time to theorize 'smart power' and proposing to renew the doctrine of liberal internationalism. On the one hand, she argued that "smart power means knowing that the United States' own hand is not always its best tool" and she tried to restore the value of multilateralism. On the other hand, she explained that the US should take into account every instrument of US power: "unlike conservatives, who rely on military power as the main tool of statecraft, liberal internationalists see trade, diplomacy, foreign aid and the spread of American values as equally important". Joseph Nye was the first to give a clear definition of 'smart power' which is "neither hard, nor soft, it is both". He is convinced that the US will be aided in tackling tough global challenges if there is an integration of all US instruments of power and influence, both military and civilian, and the tools of 'hard power' and 'soft power'.

The emergence of a 'smart power' strategy is in line with a 'progressive realist' foreign policy. 'Progressive realism' was suggested by Robert Wright in 2006 in an article in the *New York Times* as "a realism that could attract many liberals and a progressivism that could attract some conservatives". This new foreign policy paradigm can reconcile "the humanitarian aims of idealists with the powerful logic of realists"<sup>141</sup>. Beyond the well-known opposition between realism and idealism, 'progressive realism' seems to be the appropriate foreign policy doctrine to sustain American power over time. This new doctrine implies a realist assessment of the threats and limits of US power and emphasizes the necessity of cooperating with other countries and within international institutions. As Joseph Nye argued, a 'progressive realist' policy stresses "the importance of developing an integrated grand strategy that combines hard military power with soft attractive power into smart power".

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<sup>140</sup> NOSSEL, S., 2004, Smart Power, *Foreign Affairs*, 83 (2);

<sup>141</sup> WRIGHT, R., 2006, An American Foreign Policy That Both Realists and Idealists Should Fall in Love With, *The New York Times*

'Smart power' has become the core principle of Obama's foreign policy and an analysis of Obama's speeches, as well as speeches by Joe Biden and Hillary Clinton, demonstrates that all of them advocate a 'smart power' strategy. During a speech at the Woodrow Wilson Center in August 2007, Obama already claimed: "we need to integrate all aspects of American might" and "we must improve our civilian capacity". He also explained that he will not hesitate to use the power of American diplomacy, as "the lesson of the Bush years is that not talking does not work". During her confirmation hearing, Clinton explicitly endorsed 'smart power' as a new foreign policy strategy: "We must use what has been called 'smart power' the full range of tools at our disposal – diplomatic, economic, military, political, legal and cultural – picking the right tool or combination of tools for each situation". This new approach of the Obama administration is also perceptible in Joe Biden's statements. In his speech at the Munich Security Conference in February 2009, the US Vice President focused on two key elements of a 'smart power' strategy: cooperation and partnerships with other countries as well as dialogue. He asserted: "we will work in partnership whenever we can, alone only when we must". Contrary to Bush's approach, Biden stressed the necessity for cooperating with nations around the world and added: "We believe that international alliances and organizations do not diminish America's power [...] So we will engage. We will listen. We will consult"<sup>142</sup>.

#### The main features of smart power

Professor Joseph Nye argues: "At first glance, the disparity between American power and that of the rest of the world looks overwhelming. In economic size America's roughly one-quarter share of world economic output is equal to the next three countries combined. In terms of soft power and cultural prominence, the United States is far away the world's number-one film and television exporter. The country also attracts the most foreign students each year to its institutions of higher education."<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup>BIDEN J., "Speech at the 45th Munich Security Conference", Munich, 7 February 2009, p. 2, [http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/rede.php?menu\\_2009=&sprache=en&id=238&](http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/rede.php?menu_2009=&sprache=en&id=238&), retrieved 7 April 2009.

<sup>143</sup> NYE, J., 2008, Recovering American Leadership, Survival, 50:1;

Hence, in terms of power resources the US is well ahead, but - Nye warns - “power measured in resources is not the same as power measured in terms of being able to produce the outcome one wants”. Central for him and embedded in the concept of smart power is another understanding of power, based on its capacity to influence others to produce the outcome one wants. This kind of power depends on contexts. Nye goes on to state that “power today is distributed among countries in a pattern that resembles a complex, three-dimensional chess game. On the top board, military power is largely unipolar. But on the middle board, economic power among states is already multipolar, with the United States, Europe and Japan representing a majority of world economic output, and China’s dramatic growth rapidly making it the fourth major player”. As a consequence on this economic board “the US is not a hegemon and often must bargain as an equal”. Finally, there is the realm of transnational relations that involve actors crossing borders outside government control. According to Nye, “this realm includes players as diverse as bankers electronically transferring sums larger than most national budgets, terrorists transferring black-market weapons and hackers disrupting Internet operations”, as well as “ecological threats such as pandemics and global climate change that can do damage on a scale equal or larger than major wars”.<sup>144</sup>

So, because of its leading edge in the information revolution and its past investment in traditional power resources, the United States will likely remain the world’s single most powerful country in military, economic and soft-power terms well into the twenty-first century. The problem for American leadership in the twenty-first century is that there are forever more things outside the control of states, even the most powerful one. Under the influence of the information revolution and globalisation, world politics is changing in a way that means Americans cannot achieve all their international goals alone. Consequently, understanding the context is of crucial importance as well as understanding the variety of forms power can assume and the different uses of them. Power defined as “the ability to influence the behaviour of

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<sup>144</sup> NYE, J., 2008, *Recovering American Leadership*, Survival, 50:1;



others to get a desired outcome has been measured in the past by such criteria as population, size, territory, natural resources, economic strength, military force and social stability”<sup>145</sup> but this is no longer the case. Power has transformed itself and changed as the contexts in which it has been exercised has changed. As a consequence there are several ways to influence others and therefore the ways in which power can be exercised differ greatly.

Therefore, what is Smart power? Firstly, let’s carefully analyse Nye’s definition. Then I will try to extrapolate some considerations. According to Prof. Nye smart power is “neither hard nor soft”, rather “the skilful combination of both. It means developing an integrated strategy, resource base, and tool kit to achieve American objectives [of course], drawing on both hard and soft power”. Nye then goes on to clarify that smart power “is an approach that underscores the necessity of a strong military, but also invests heavily in alliances, partnerships and institutions at all levels to expand American influence and establish the legitimacy of American action”. Finally, he enunciates one of the tasks that smart power should try to fulfil: providing for the global good. “It is central to this effort - according to Nye - because it helps America reconcile its overwhelming power with the rest of the world”.

Let’s now try to go back to this first part of the definition of smart power to highlight the approach taken by Nye that also helps to understand some key features that would be otherwise disregarded or oversimplified:

First of all, Nye tells us what smart power is not and then tries to say what it is. To him smart power is different from hard power but it is different from soft power as well. It is different because smart power is not a third form of power, rather something closer to a method. Smart power is a recognition of the different forms of power and the instruments that power can employ.

Secondly, Nye defines smart power as an “approach”. He sees it as an approach to the way in which power is exercised. Nye maintains that smart power has its roots in the

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<sup>145</sup> NYE, J., ARMITAGE R., 2006, A Smarter, more secure America, CSIS Commission on Smart Power, Washington, p. 6

American context and thus stresses that, looking at world challenges through smart power's eyes, means understanding that it is necessary to use both military means and violence, as well as focusing on alliances and partnerships. In any case the main point is that smart power goes well beyond soft and hard, not as a third power choice, but as a method, as an approach to the use of power which gives to decision-makers the chance to choose the best way to address a specific issue.

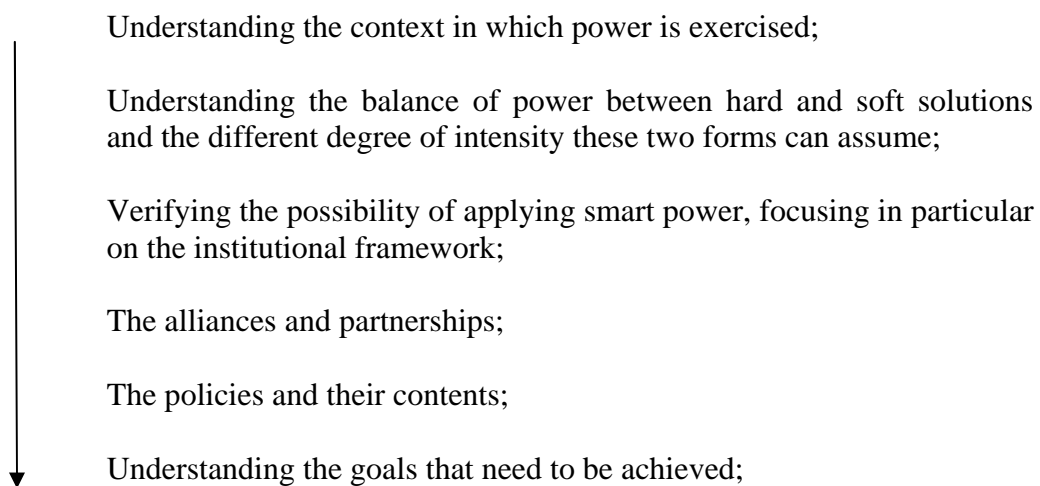
Thirdly, smart power is not simply a "good idea". Put another way, it is not simply a political concept used to gather consensus. According to Nye it is something closer to an agenda. Therefore - clarifies Nye - acting as a smart power means setting a structured political agenda in order to achieve desired goals.

To this end, smart power is first and foremost about institutions. The institutional framework in which smart power operates is thus essential. Moreover, smart power cannot be exercised alone, it requires partners and allies. Lastly, smart power aims at achieving important goals which Nye classifies under the category of "global public good".

It follows then that the ultimate goal of smart power is to expand [American] influence and legitimacy. It is curious to notice that this is exactly the goal that governments in general, and that of the US in particular, aimed to achieve through hard power solutions; and, to be honest, consequently this is the same objective that soft power supporters uphold. Hence, a question follows: what is new about smart power if the goals that it aims to achieve are the same as those of the other forms of power? One answer may be that the method or the approach is new because smart power focuses on the path towards decisions depending on context, political agenda, institutions, alliances and partnership, desired outcome. Smart power is definitely a process.

All in all, following Nye's definition, smart power is a "comprehensive" concept because it is embedded in: a) an analysis of power resources b) an analysis of how power can be differently exercised c) an analysis of the framework in which smart power can be better exercised d) an analysis of the goals that can be achieved.

It is evident that smart power follows a specific pattern and a very broad framework with specific elements. It means that, following this scheme, I can try to apply smart power to other political environments, different from the United States and secondly, that smart power might be applied in other realms and with different actors and variable. Put differently, smart power could be used to study or to explain the behaviour of political actors at the local or national level, as well as the behaviour of other social or economic actors. I have identified, in fact, a very broad pattern that goes as follows:



#### Smart Power: a political agenda

In this section I would like to focus specifically on the “political agenda dimension” of smart power. In doing so, I need to make reference to the US and to the particularity of that context. Making reference to the choices of the Bush Administration and to the political environment of that time is unavoidable. Nonetheless, the objective is to write about smart power through the context in which it first emerged.

The starting point of any commentator, scholar or student who writes about smart power is the recognition of the failure of the Bush administration and its political and ideological doctrine. Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, conservative foreign-policy makers have united behind a clear agenda: combating terrorism,

aggressively pre-empting perceived threats and asserting the United States' right and duty to act alone - clearly a hard power agenda. By contrast, progressives, have seemed extremely confused. Stuck on the sidelines, they advocate tactics that differ sharply from those of the Bush administration. But they have not consistently articulated a distinct set of progressive US foreign policy goals<sup>146</sup>. Suzanne Nossel argues that "progressives have now an historical opportunity to reorient US foreign policy around an ambitious agenda of their own" and, according to her this agenda should be rooted in what she calls the "mainstay of the twentieth-century US foreign policy", notably liberal internationalism. Basically, liberal internationalists argue that a global system of stable liberal democracies would be less prone to war. The US, the theory goes, should therefore offer assertive leadership - be it diplomatic, economic and military - to advance a broad array of goals: self-determination, human rights, free trade, the rule of law, economic development etc. The great difference with conservatives is that, unlike those who rely mainly or entirely on military power as the main tool of statecraft, liberal internationalists see trade, diplomacy, foreign aid and the spread of (American) values as equally important.

Suzanne Nossel argues then that "September 11 transformed Bush's administration foreign policy; the administration shifted from a detached to a defiant unilateralism. Bush adopted an evangelical, militarist agenda. At the same time, however, he embraced some of the idealistic rhetoric of his liberal predecessors". For instance, his 2002 National Security Strategy, pledges not only to fight terrorism and "pre-empt" threats, but also to "actively work to bring the hope of democracy, development, free market and free trade to every corner of the world"<sup>147</sup>. Therefore, by invoking the rhetoric of human rights and democracy to further the aggressive projection of unilateral military power, conservatives have tainted liberal internationalist ideas and the United States' role in promoting them. "A superpower that is not perceived as liberal - argues Nossel - will not be trusted as a purveyor of liberalism".

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<sup>146</sup> NOSSEL, S., 2004, Smart Power, Foreign Affairs, March/April 2004

<sup>147</sup> From The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, September 2002, Washington

All told, by undermining alliances, international institutions and US credibility, the Bush Administration has triggered a cycle that is, according to Nossel, “depleting US power”. The result is that “liberation and freedom, the most contagious ideas in history, are becoming associated, at least in the Middle East, with a violent and unwanted occupation. A new liberal internationalist agenda must turn this vicious cycle into a virtuous one, in which US power generates confidence in US leadership, enhancing US power all the more”<sup>148</sup>. This result can be achieved through a smart power agenda.

The point, therefore, is to understand how a smart power agenda can be implemented and which strategy is to be followed. Before going into that, it is worth going back to Nossel’s analysis of the American political situation that has been leading, according to her, to a steady decline in the consensus not only with respect to US policies but also to the US as a whole. Nossel identifies some key political problems that we can summarise as follows:

The Bush administration failed in international politics because it was not able to understand the context;

The Bush administration failed in international politics because it was not able to use the appropriate means in relations to the actors involved and the outcome desired.

The Bush administration failed because in its actions it was driven by an ideological approach that forced the President and the Secretary of State to develop a rhetoric based on the idea that violence and force would resolve the problems (hard power).

Consequently, the administration selected the tools to be deployed according to its “view about the world” and relied exclusively on hard power.

Finally, the administration considered soft power simply as non-power.

This simplification of the US political context helps to understand the dynamics behind any choice, be it political, economic or military and highlights three basic constants: the centrality of the context, the dynamics of power solutions, the intended

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<sup>148</sup> NOSSEL, S., 2004, Smart Power, Foreign Affairs, March/April 2004

or unintended outcomes. It is precisely on this basic model that Nye bases his smart power agenda for the recovery of the American image in the world.

Nye's argument starts with the consideration that "Smart Power has been portrayed by some in the media as simply presenting a "kinder, gentler" face of America to the world. The thought seems to be that all that is required is a new administration or a shift of style rather than substance. Smart Power is much more than this. It is an approach that seeks to match (our) strategies and structures at home to the challenges that face us abroad"<sup>149</sup>. The point, goes on the author, is that today's international environment is completely different from that of some years ago, in fact, "[US] military is the best fighting force bar none, but many of the challenges we face today do not have military solutions. We need stronger civilian instruments to fight Al Qaeda's ideas, slow climate change, to foster good governance and prevent deadly viruses from reaching our shores. The uncomfortable truth is that an extra dollar spent on hard power today will not necessarily bring an extra dollar's worth of security"<sup>150</sup>.

It follows that Smart Power is based on three main principles:

First, America's standing in the world matters to the security and prosperity of the US itself.

Second, today's challenges can only be addressed with capable and willing allies and partners and cannot be addressed successfully alone.

Third, civilian tools<sup>151</sup> can increase the legitimacy, effectiveness and sustainability of U.S. Government policies.

This is why Smart Power needs what Nye and Armitage call "an integrated grand strategy that combines hard military power with soft attractive power to create Smart Power of the sort that won the Cold War"<sup>152</sup>.

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<sup>149</sup> ARMITAGE, R., and NYE, J., 2008, Implementing Smart Power: Setting An Agenda For National Security Reform, Statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, CSIS, Washington

<sup>150</sup> ARMITAGE, R., and NYE, J., 2008, Implementing Smart Power: Setting An Agenda For National Security Reform, Statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, CSIS, Washington

<sup>151</sup> It is curious to notice that the authors use the term "civilian" as a synonym for "soft", whereas this is not the case, or not always the case, when civilian is applied to the EU

Smart Power is thus a framework for guiding the development of an integrated strategy, resource base and tool kit to achieve U.S. objectives, drawing on both hard and soft power. It underlines the necessity for a strong military force, but also invests heavily in alliances, partnerships and institutions at all levels to expand American influence and establish the legitimacy of American action.

The United States can become a smarter power by investing in the global good - providing services and policies that people and governments want but cannot attain in the absence of American leadership. This means support for international institutions, aligning our country with international development, promoting public health, increasing the interaction of their civil society with others, maintaining an open international economy, and dealing seriously with climate change and energy insecurity.

#### Smart power: a different approach towards power

Smart Power is firmly rooted in the US and therefore it reflects the historical, economic and - most importantly - political context of the American administration from the 1990 onwards. We can say that smart power is the result of an interesting process of transformation that affected the language and the style through which many scholars and policy analysts focused on American foreign policies in different parts of the world. Smart power is not the continuation of soft power, though it stems from it and .can be just as fashionable and popular.

If soft power was conceived as “another form of power” - different from hard power - smart power is, to a certain extent, something that goes beyond it and relates to the method, the ways in which power is exercised rather than to the substance of power itself. It is essential to understand this point to avoid misconceptions about smart power. I will go back to this point later on, but it is now essential to start an analysis of smart power bearing in mind that it is

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<sup>152</sup> Nye’s argument is that the US won the cold war thank to soft power. See chapter 2

“the capacity to choose the right forms of power to employ in relation to a particular context”

Let me give an example: if you have to address a specific issue, you have to choose the right way and the appropriate means to tackle the problem. In choosing you could be driven by an ideological approach and thus consider hard power instruments a better option than soft power solutions. Consequently you would use violence, coercion and other forms of hard power to try to solve the problem and get the desired outcome. In the same way you could be ideologically convinced that soft power solutions are better in principle than violence and hard power choices. You would, therefore, use persuasion, attraction, language and other soft means to get the result.

A government or an organisation, like a political party or a company operates more or less in the same way. In dealing with a problem a government has to choose the right way and in doing so it takes into consideration different aspects: domestic consensus, the international situation, money, stakeholders etc., but in the end it is driven by two basic instincts that are constantly intertwined: ideology and politics. It means that a government takes decisions in accordance with its political view of things, of the world, of society etc. (ideology) and, in relation to its political programmes, it chooses the instruments according to political advantages and disadvantages and to political convenience. Hence, a government considers hard power good and disregards soft power because its idea of the world is close to this approach. The central point is the following: this approach to the use of power is ideologically driven, i.e. driven by a set of beliefs about power and about the effectiveness of the instruments of power that force people to prefer either hard power solutions or soft power initiatives.

Smart power goes beyond this pattern and provides a new method, which I call non-ideological. Put differently, it is a method that focuses more on the contexts and the issues that need to be addressed and less on beliefs about power. Smart power is - to some extent - a de-politicisation of the use of power. It pushed for a “lay approach” to the problems and focuses on the variety of power solutions at disposal. Smart power treats power simply as a resource, without political or ideological connotations. A



smart power approach can thus lead to the use of hard or soft solutions but most of the time it leads to the discovery of mixed solutions, based on the right balance between hard and soft.

#### Why smart power was born in the US

“Concerns about the United States’ use of its power and wealth have made American exceptionalism fashionable shorthand for American nationalism and, in turn, an intellectual basis for claiming that the nation has embarked, intentionally or not, on the creation of an Americana empire”<sup>153</sup>. To understand smart power and why smart power was born in the US, it is essential go back to the origins of American power, to its exceptional mission, and to the debate about the - alleged - decline of the American Empire and of the American Dream. In this section I would therefore like to focus on the debate about the nature of US power, its mission and the debate about the different approach towards power. Moreover, I would like to focus on the different ideas that Americans have, including policy-makers and scholars, about the form and substance that power can take. This will help to show that in the US to consider power in non-ideological terms is not so obvious, and very often - especially in foreign affairs - it is associated with hard power. Power in IR equals hard power, the use of force, even military force. Soft power is not considered a form of power. This is precisely the reason why soft power has gained the popularity that it has now and why smart power is challenging it in terms of attraction, as a political and academic concept.

It might sound like a paradox, but the most powerful nation in the world has some problems in understanding power. The debate is centred more or less on the assumption pointed out by Jeremy Rifkin that: “America is no longer a great country. To be a great country it is necessary to be a good country. It is true that people everywhere enjoy American cultural forms and consumer goods - [but] he goes on - our way of life no longer inspires; rather, it is now looked on as outmoded and, still, as

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<sup>153</sup> KOHUT, A., and STOKES, B., 2006, *America against the world. How we are different and why we are disliked*. New York: Henry Holt, p. 9

something to fear, or abhor”<sup>154</sup>. Everything is rooted in the idea of American exceptionalism, which has many features: an exceptional people, exceptional nationalism, exceptional culture and values, an exceptional foreign policy and, ultimately, an exceptional mission to carry out.

To be succinct, for the first century of its existence the United States was preoccupied internally with its expansion westwards and the Civil War and consequently, largely refrained from foreign expansion . As it grew and prospered, however, the nation came to believe it had a special mission to help others; this vision was promoted first and foremost by Woodrow Wilson: “America had the infinite privilege of fulfilling her destiny and saving the world”<sup>155</sup>. This was the first manifestation of “liberal internationalism”<sup>156</sup> in foreign affairs that inspired his presidency and closed the era of domestic isolationism.

Throughout the Cold War, American foreign policy held as a principal objective the promotion of democracy, human rights and capitalism in response to the ideological force of Communism and the Soviet threat. At the same time, its leaders practiced the real politick of balancing national interests and seeking security by preserving stability. In this situation Europe and a united European Union were strategic objectives to support, even with heavy economic and political investments, as a guarantee against Soviet expansion and, eventually, hegemony in that area. But the change from a multipolar to a unipolar world without the ever present nuclear threat led to a new willingness to criticise the United States and its, by now, unrivalled power. Discomfort with and even suspicion of the United States has become one of the most significant elements behind the public attitude towards America.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> RIFKIN, J., “The European Dream”, *Utne*, September-October 2004

<sup>155</sup> LIVIEN, A., 2004, *America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism*, New York: Oxford University Press, p. 4

<sup>156</sup> Liberal internationalism is a foreign policy doctrine that argues that liberal states should intervene in other sovereign states in order to pursue liberal objectives. Such intervention includes military intervention and humanitarian aid. This view is contrasted to isolationist, realist or non-interventionist foreign policy doctrines, which oppose such intervention. These critics characterize it as liberal interventionism.

<sup>157</sup> KOHUT, A., and STOKES, B., 2006, *America against the world. How we are different and why we are disliked*. New York: Henry Holt, p. 14

Nevertheless - as pointed out by Kohut and Stokes - before the September 11 attacks, while the world acknowledged America's superpower status and resented it to some extent, few, with the exception of some Islamic extremists, considered the United States a threat. America was not on the offensive, nor at that time was it threatened. The terrorist attacks changed that. America's new offensive stance - argue the authors - has made the world's only superpower and its policies the global issue of our time. The consequence is that now, US power is resented even by America's oldest friends. "The rest of the world reacts to America, alternately because it fears America, lives under American protection, envies, resents, and plots against, and depends on America"<sup>158</sup>, argues Robert Cooper, a former special adviser to former Prime Minister Tony Blair. Some may argue that the terrorist assaults were merely a catalyst that hastened the world's changing view of America, an inevitable metamorphosis, given the great disparity of wealth and power between the United States and the rest of the world. Others will maintain that it was the Bush administration policies, before and after September 11, that precipitated the change. In any event, the post-Communist resentment of American power emerged clearly in the run-up to the Iraq invasion. Following the war, Middle Eastern oil has been even more broadly accepted by the global public as both America's real motive for invading Iraq and its rationale for the war on terrorism. At the same time, the Bush administration's declarations that US actions are an effort to install democracy in the Middle East have spurred anxieties that the United States has adopted a mission to spread Americana values. This conviction was further reinforced by President Bush himself in his second inaugural speech: "the survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in the world is the expansion of freedom in all the world. America's vital interests and our deepest beliefs are now one...It is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in

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<sup>158</sup> COOPER, R., 2005, "Mapping Out Europe's Strategy", *The Globalist*, April 13; accessible at <http://www.theglobalist.com/StoryId.aspx?StoryId=3852>

our world”<sup>159</sup>. With his words, the United States embarked on “transformational diplomacy”<sup>160</sup>, moving away from the real politik of previous US administrations towards a near-utopian goal of a world built in America’s image.

#### Anti-Americanism today

With more than 91,000 interviews conducted between 2002 and 2005, the Pew Research Centre’s Global Attitudes Project was the first major chronicler of the rise of anti-Americanism around the world in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Therefore, making reference to this huge amount of data to try to understand the changing nature of US power and how it is perceived is something that cannot be avoided. In this section I will focus on the negative opinion and image of itself that America unwittingly spread, in particular after the war in Iraq onwards<sup>161</sup>. We know that anti-Americanism is not a new phenomenon. But today’s anti-Americanism is an amalgam of discontent. One of the sources of anti-Americanism, is the world’s reaction to US foreign policies. Again, the resentment against American foreign policy is not a new phenomenon. Like other forms of anti-Americanism it extends to all parts of the globe. It is somewhat a paradox. In fact, for two decades after World War II, most of the world acknowledged they were indebted to American power for defeating the Axis powers. In particular western Europeans, though at times critical, were largely grateful for the Marshall Plan aid that had revived their societies, and they appreciated the US military umbrella that protected them against Soviet ambitions.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> President George W. Bush, Second Inaugural Address, Washington, D.C., January 20, 2005

<sup>160</sup> On the concept of “transformational diplomacy” see, VAÏSSE, J., 2007, “Transformational Diplomacy”, Chaillot Paper, n. 103, EUISS, Paris; Basically, Transformational Diplomacy is a diplomacy initiative championed by former United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice for reinvigorating American Foreign Policy and the United States Foreign Service. As Secretary of State, Rice championed the expansion of democratic governments. Rice stated that the September 11, 2001 attacks were rooted in “oppression and despair” and so, the U.S. must advance democratic reform and support basic rights throughout the greater Middle East. Rice has also reformed and restructured the department, as well as U.S. diplomacy as a whole. “Transformational Diplomacy” is the goal which Rice describes as “work[ing] with our many partners around the world... [and] build[ing] and sustain[ing] democratic, well-governed states that will respond to the needs of their people and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system”

<sup>161</sup> For additional information and for the data used see Pew Research Centre at [www.pewglobal.org](http://www.pewglobal.org)

<sup>162</sup> KOHUT, A., and STOKES, B., 2006, America against the world. How we are different and why we are disliked. New York: Henry Holt, pp. 23-24

Nevertheless, today's anti-Americanism is not only a product of controversial foreign policies; as stressed by Kohut and Stokes, "it runs broader and deeper". According to them, nowadays "the influence of American style is also rejected even as American products are still widely accepted. And, for the first time, the American people are also less liked". Among the thousands of interviews conducted and the huge amount of data collected by the authors, by Pew Global Project and other similar centres around the world, the most striking finding was how broadly anti-Americanism had spread geographically by 2003. It was no longer limited to Western Europe or to the Muslim world. In Brazil, for example, the favourable opinion of the United States decreased from 52 per cent in 2002 to 34 per cent a year later. In Russia, there was a 25 per cent point decline in the US favourability rating in the course of less than a year. Needless to say that in the Muslim world the situation was even more catastrophic: in the wake of the Iraq invasion majorities in seven out of eight predominantly Muslim nations were afraid that the United States might one day militarily threaten their country. What was most striking was that these included 71 per cent of people in Turkey, a US NATO ally.

And Europe? what was the opinion of European people towards Americana "activism" after September 11? Was it different or similar to the rest of the world? Eurobarometer confirmed that distrust of America was shared in Europe as well. A survey conducted in October 2003 in 15 of the member countries, found that people saw the United States and Iran as equal threats to world peace. Moreover, in four countries - Greece, Spain, Finland and Sweden - the United States was viewed as the greatest threat to stability, more menacing than either Iran or North Korea. Even in the United Kingdom, America's most trusted ally, a majority of 55 per cent considered the United States to be a danger<sup>163</sup>. Consequently, America's credibility sharply declined. Doubt multiplied about the motives behind the US "war on terrorism" strategy. As a reaction, larger segments of European nations supported developing foreign policy and security arrangements independent of the United States. Across Europe, there was considerable

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<sup>163</sup> Eurobarometer survey published in November 2003, based on interviews with 500 people in each of fifteen countries

support for the European Union to become as powerful as the United States. This is, for instance, another example of the unintended consequences of the misuse or flawed use of power.

Hence, the question follows: is antipathy toward the United States the symptom of a generalised anger at America and Americans or is it merely a more specific hostility towards President Bush and his policies? According to a Pew survey, majorities in most countries blamed the president, not his country. Mr. Bush was personally unpopular internationally from the first days of his first administration, owing to his opposition to the Kyoto Protocol to fight global warming and his perceived tendency to adopt a unilateral approach to many international issues. With the war in Iraq, his rating went from bad to worse. Therefore, professor Nye would argue, to restore America's image is just a question of policies and (right) power instruments. The problem is that, according to Kohut and Stokes, "American power itself, as well as US policies, fuel resentment toward the United States". Global publics believe, in fact, that the United States does too little to solve world problems and supports, if not advances, policies that increase the gap between rich and poor countries". This is because "Americans believe they can get what they want in the world. Indeed, they are accustomed to getting what they want".<sup>164</sup> The gap between the self-image of America on a white horse and the dim view of America from abroad has never been greater. Moreover, this gap in perception comes at a time when global public opinion has emerged as an important force in international politics, the by-product of economic globalisation, transnational opinion pulling and the connectivity of peoples through mass communication.

To sum up, using the words of professor Michael Ignatieff, the United States, "once a model to emulate, has become an exception to avoid"<sup>165</sup>, not only because of its foreign policy choices but also for a series of elements in the American system of government and for several values and customs that have lost their attractiveness.

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<sup>164</sup> KOHUT, A., and STOKES, B., 2006, *America against the world. How we are different and why we are disliked*. New York: Henry Holt, pp. 36, 37, 38

<sup>165</sup> IGNATIEFF, M., "Who Are Americans to Think That Freedom Is Theirs to Spread?", *The New York Times*, June 26. 2005

Finally, there is another element of Bushism that is related to power and it is connected to the argument of an ideological use of power, where ideological means in this context not driven by rationality but distorted by other emotional factors. In the wake of the September 11 tragedy, President Bush insisted that the US war on terrorism was not a holy war or a clash of religions. But, as noted in *America Against the World*, his public rhetoric returned again and again to religious themes to bolster and justify the America's public support for the US effort: "[the terrorists] have no justification for their actions" said Bush; "there is no religious justification, there is no political justification. The only motivation is evil". Moreover, in the run up to the US-led invasion of Iraq, President Bush used much the same religious imagery and justification. As noted by Howard Fineman in *Newsweek*, "he decided that Saddam was evil" and as a consequence "everything flowed from that". Peter Singer wrote that President Bush "has spoken about evil in 319 separate speeches"<sup>166</sup>; Bush religiosity - argued Tracy Wilkinson in the *Los Angeles Times* - was a condition for his leadership. "But [this feature] leaves many Americans and non-Americans anxious, particularly when it is applied to international affairs."<sup>167</sup>

To conclude this section: frustration with American actions on the world stage is not new, but this review of data about the changing image and opinion people around the world and Europeans in particular have about the American ally, leads to some key questions: does this matter? put differently, do negative views reflect a diminished American ability to achieve its national interests and uphold its values? And most importantly, can it be fixed? Or in other words, what are the main opportunities, solutions and ideas to reverse the course?

Nye's answer is "through smart power", i.e. a strategy that strikes a new balance between the use of hard and soft power and that integrates these elements into a smarter approach to the main challenges facing the United States and the global

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<sup>166</sup> SINGER, P., 2004, *The President of Good and Evil*, New York: E. P. Dutton

<sup>167</sup> WILKINSON, T., "Arab World Sees the Conflict in Religious Terms", *Los Angeles Times*, March 18, 2003

community<sup>168</sup>. Therefore, in the following sections I will try to understand and explain what is intended by the term “smart power”.

#### The US premises of smart power

According to the final report of the CSIS Commission on Smart Power<sup>169</sup>, “America’s image and influence are in decline around the world. To maintain a leading role in global affairs, the United States must move from eliciting fear and anger to inspiring optimism and hope”<sup>170</sup>. The report goes on to state that “the United States must become a smarter power by (once again) investing in the global good - providing things people and governments in all quarters of the world want but cannot attain in the absence of American leadership”. Therefore, according to the Report, “by complementing US military and economic might with greater investments in soft power, America can build the framework it needs to tackle tough global challenges”<sup>171</sup>. The introduction of the Report tells us some important premises on which the authors base their analysis, and provide the solution:

The starting point is the political, economic, social and cultural situation of the US, which is, according to the authors, “in decline” as well as the perception of America’s role abroad. Neither its enemies nor its allies are happy with America, because the country has lost its capacity to provide global public good. The US is no longer perceived as a state able to keep stability, peace and equilibrium nor is it still viewed as an actor committed to provide prosperity, wealth and happiness. On the contrary, it is envisaged as being committed to solving international problems alone, regardless of the opinions of the international community, mainly through arrogance, violence and war.

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<sup>168</sup> NYE, J., ARMITAGE R., 2006, A Smarter, more secure America, CSIS Commission on Smart Power, Washington, p. 19

<sup>169</sup> In 2006 the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) based in Washington, launched a bipartisan Commission on Smart Power to develop a vision to guide America’s global engagement;

<sup>170</sup> NYE, J., ARMITAGE R., 2006, A Smarter, more secure America, CSIS Commission on Smart Power, Washington

<sup>171</sup> From NYE, J., ARMITAGE R., 2006, A Smarter, more secure America, CSIS Commission on Smart Power, Washington, p. 1



But, the US is still a great country, rich in human resources, proud of itself, able to rethink itself and to find once again the right way to lead the world of the 21st century. The US continues to be the leading economic global power, military power and world soft power. Hence, the US is still the US and still has the “historical mission” to tackle global problems thanks to its “exceptional power”.

Therefore, the only way to restore a lost leadership is, according to the Report, to rethink the entire system of governance of world affairs and to shift from hard and soft to smart power, which is, according to Nye and Armitage, simply the complementary of military and economic might to soft power. This first definition of smart power focuses on the differentiation of power and on the ability, not easy, to understand the context and to select the instruments accordingly.

Finally, to restore its leadership, the US should focus on five critical areas:

- a) alliances, partnerships and institutions: by reinvigorating the alliances and institutions that serve US interests and that help to meet twenty-first century challenges;
- b) global development: in order to align US interests with the aspirations of people around the world;
- c) public diplomacy: the objective is to build long-term, people-to-people relationships, particularly among young people;
- d) economic integration: to continue its engagement in the global economy and to expand the benefits of free trade to include those left behind in the US and abroad;
- e) technology and innovation: secure energy sources and climate change are challenges that require American leadership.

Overall, implementing smart power strategy requires “a strategic reassessment of how the US government is organised, coordinated and budgeted”<sup>172</sup>. For now it is important to stress where smart power is rooted and why it was born in the US and not elsewhere, for instance in Asia or Europe. It is also important to highlight that smart

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<sup>172</sup> From NYE, J., ARMITAGE R., 2006, A Smarter, more secure America, CSIS Commission on Smart Power, Washington, p. 1

power is not only a “big idea” but is a political programme that involves institutions and policies and that requires a “revolution” in the approach and in the use of power instruments to be understood.

#### Getting ready for smart power

Elements of a smart power approach exist today, but they lack a cohesive rationale and institutional grounding. US foreign policy over-relies on hard power because it is the most direct and visible source of US strength. The US military is the best-trained and most well-equipped arm of the federal government. As a result, it has had to step in to fill voids, even with work better suited to civilian agencies. At the same time the military has also been a vital source of soft power; to give just one example, the massive humanitarian operations it launched in response to the Asian tsunami and Pakistani earthquake.

One first problem is that the US Government is still struggling to develop its soft power instruments outside of the military. “ I just don’t understand what it means” said Donald Rumsfeld addressing some questions of US generals about soft power. And this is surely “part of the problem”<sup>173</sup>. Then the attack: “civilian institutions are not staffed or resourced properly, especially for extraordinary missions. Civilian tools are neglected in part because of the difficulty of demonstrating their short-term impact on critical challenges”. Furthermore, “US foreign policy decision-making is too fractured and compartmentalized. Many official instruments of soft power - public diplomacy, broadcasting, exchange programs, development assistance, disaster relief, diplomacy, even military-to-military contacts - are scattered throughout the government, with no overarching strategy or budget that tries to integrate them with military power into a unified national security strategy”<sup>174</sup>.

Smart Power was therefore conceived in large part as a reaction to the global war on terror, a concept that the authors consider to be “wrongheaded as an organising

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<sup>173</sup> “How soft is smart”, Guernica /a magazine of art and politics, Joel Whitney interview with Joseph Nye, October 2008, accessible at [http://www.guernicamag.com/interviews/777/how\\_soft\\_is\\_smart\\_1/](http://www.guernicamag.com/interviews/777/how_soft_is_smart_1/)

<sup>174</sup> ARMITAGE, R., and NYE, J., 2008, Implementing Smart Power: Setting An Agenda For National Security Reform, Statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, CSIS, Washington

premise of U.S. foreign policy”. Americans, according to Nye and Armitage “were twice victimised by September 11 - first by the attackers, and then by (our) own hands when (we) lost our national confidence and optimism and began to see the world only through the lens of terrorism”. Basically, the conclusion is the following: when addressing the threat posed by al Qaeda and affiliated groups, the US needs to use hard power against the hard-core terrorists, but Americans cannot hope to win unless they build respect and credibility with the moderate centre of Muslim societies. If the misuse of hard power - the theory goes - creates more new terrorists than the US can kill or deter, it will lose.

Similarly, when “our words do not match our actions, we demean our character and moral standing and diminish our influence. We cannot lecture others about democracy while we back dictators. We cannot denounce torture and water boarding in other countries and condone it at home. We cannot allow Guantanamo Bay or Abu Ghraib to become symbols of American power”<sup>175</sup>.

In short, Nye and Armitage identify the most dangerous shortcomings of the US administration in the last eight years. They can be summarised as a lack of coherence and consistency and, ultimately, an erosion of legitimacy, both at home and abroad.

If the management of world affairs in the last eight years has been problematic, there is still hope and faith in the US: “foreigners will continue to look to America. The decline in American influence overseas is not likely to endure. Most want the United States to be the indispensable nation, but they look to us to put forward better ideas rather than just walk away from the table, content to play our own game”. To this end, the United States needs to rediscover how to be a smart power. But Nye himself warns about this concept: “smart power is not a panacea for solving the nation’s problems, and it is not about getting the world to like us. It is essentially about renewing a type

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<sup>175</sup> ARMITAGE, R., and NYE, J., 2008, Implementing Smart Power: Setting An Agenda For National Security Reform, Statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, CSIS, Washington

of leadership that matches vision with execution and accountability, and looks broadly at U.S. goals, strategies and influence in a changing world”<sup>176</sup>.

If smart power is a political agenda, which measures should the government take to implement it? Put another way, what is smart power really and how does an actor become a smart power? Nye and Armitage focus on a well defined strategy<sup>177</sup> to be implemented by the new administration. According to them, the next president should create a deputy national security adviser who is “double hatted” as a deputy at the Office of Management and Budget. The various tools available to the US government are spread among multiple agencies and bureaux. This “smart power” deputy should be charged with developing and managing a strategic framework for planning policies and allocating resources, working closely with relevant Congressional committees. The smart power deputy should be the leader of a process that conducts a systematic and comprehensive assessment of goals, strategies and plans.

The next administration should strengthen civilian agency coordination and expeditionary presence on a regional basis. Civilian government agencies do not have a regional command structure comparable to the Department of Defence. As a result, this prevents the development of regional strategies that integrate inter-agency operations on a regional basis.

The next administration should strengthen America’s commitment to a new multilateralism. America needs the United Nations, but it needs “a better one”. The United Nations could play an active role in promoting American interests in peacekeeping and peace-building, counterterrorism, global health, and energy and climate. Moreover, new multilateralism means strengthening, where not reinvigorating alliances both with old and new partners.

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<sup>176</sup> ARMITAGE, R., and NYE, J., 2008, Implementing Smart Power: Setting An Agenda For National Security Reform, Statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, CSIS, Washington

<sup>177</sup> From ARMITAGE, R., and NYE, J., 2008, Implementing Smart Power: Setting An Agenda For National Security Reform, Statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, CSIS, Washington

The next administration and Congress should encourage greater autonomy, coherence and effectiveness for US public diplomacy and strategic communication efforts.

The next administration should shape an economy flexible and competitive enough to deliver economic benefits while minimising the human cost of adjusting to economic dislocation. There is no doubt the benefits of trade are not evenly distributed - within a nation or across nations.

The next president should exercise US influence in international financial institutions to direct the efforts of these organisations towards aiding poorer countries that face the inevitable adjustment issues that come with the opening of markets.

The next administration and Congress must make addressing climate change and energy insecurity more than just a political catch phrase, by creating incentives for U.S. innovation.

American leaders ought to eliminate the symbols that have come to represent the image of an intolerant, abusive, unjust America, and use diplomatic power for positive ends.

The next administration should continue to expend political capital to end the corrosive effect of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The United States must resume its traditional role as an effective broker for peace in the Middle East. Effective American mediation confers global legitimacy and is a vital source of smart power.

The next Administration should not lapse into a new Cold War struggle to compete with and contain Chinese soft power. China's soft power is likely to continue to grow, but this does not necessarily mean that Washington and Beijing are on a collision course, fighting for global influence.

In this eight-point political agenda there is the essence of smart power as a comprehensive strategy of reform for the power system, i.e. the way in which power is exercised. Smart power is first and foremost about institutions. They are essential in reshaping the way power is exercised and perceived. It follows that a smart power agenda requires making an effort at reforming the institutional framework, which is basically the channel through which power is spread into the public sphere.

Secondly, it is impossible to use smart power effectively alone, at least in foreign affairs. Smart power needs to be shared. It follows that alliances and partnerships - in a word multilateralism - are an essential ingredient for a winning smart power strategy. Thirdly, power is not just about the way it is used and the tools needed to wield it, but it is also about the how it is communicated. Therefore, power is smart if it brings about a change in style and in the language associated with it.

Fourthly, smart power is about policies: the recovery from global economic crises, environmental problems and their consequences, the troubled Middle East and other foreign policy issues. All told, smart power is in this sense a political programme, with goals, promises and solutions.

Finally, smart power seeks leaders and leadership. It cannot be implemented without political will and without “extraordinary” people. In this sense it very related to the other forms of power that have a variety of political interpreters and supporters. Now we know that what Nye and Armitage called the “new” President is Barack Obama we also know that his leadership was welcomed not only in the US but in the rest of the world as well. Maybe he will manage to be the first smart- power political leader.

## Conclusion

### **Smart power: is the European way possible?**

The diffusion of smart power in the EU  
Smart power hits the road  
EU smart power: work in progress?  
Conclusion: is there a role for smart power?

#### The diffusion of smart power

Beyond the well-known antagonism between ‘the EU – civilian and soft power’ versus ‘the US – military and hard power’, it is now time to consider significant changes in foreign policy on both sides of the Atlantic, also in the light of the new “smart power approach”.

On the one hand, the European Union is engaged in a process of developing its military capabilities (‘hard power’ tools). This process takes time, but the EU has already launched several capability initiatives; the adoption of the ‘Declaration on Strengthening Capabilities’ in December 2008 attests to the EU’s will to remedy its military capability shortfalls. On the other hand, the United States is aspiring to modernize its civilian capabilities and to develop its ‘soft power’ tools. Drawing lessons from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the US has begun to realize the limits of military power. In fact, the growth of US defence budgets contrasts with the civilian capability shortfall and the lack of support for diplomacy and development. But since the second mandate of the Bush administration, the United States has been reconsidering the need for rebuilding non-military instruments of US national power.

These recent developments on both sides of the Atlantic seem to render Robert Kagan’s approach obsolete: we cannot assert today that “Europe is turning away from power”, whereas the US is “exercising power in an anarchic Hobbesian world”. As the President of the European Commission argued, “the good news about the new (American) administration is that they are closer to our European model and our

European values”.<sup>178</sup> In fact, the ‘smart power’ approach adopted by the Obama administration seems quite close to European strategic thinking. First of all, a ‘smart power’ strategy implies a strong commitment to multilateralism which is a key European value emphasized in the European Security Strategy (ESS): “we need to pursue our objectives both through multilateral cooperation in international organizations and through partnerships with key actors”.<sup>179</sup> In addition, the ESS explicitly mentions the need to integrate all instruments of power, which has become the keystone of Obama’s strategy: “the full spectrum of instruments for crisis management and conflict prevention [...] including political, diplomatic, military and civilian trade and development activities”.<sup>180</sup>

Europeans have developed powerful civilian and ‘soft power’ instruments, but, aware that a comprehensive security strategy requires ‘military power’ instruments as well, they have engaged in a process to develop EU military capabilities. If they succeed, they will be able to combine both ‘soft power’ and ‘hard power’ instruments into a ‘smart power’ strategy. The situation on the other side of the Atlantic is reversed: Americans have realized the limits of ‘hard power’ and the new US President is willing to restore US ‘soft power’ and to integrate civilian and military instruments into a ‘smart power’ strategy. This means that Europeans and Americans are moving in the same direction: both intend to use a strategy based on the combination of military and civilian tools. However, whereas the Obama administration explicitly mentions its will to use ‘smart power’, the EU has never referred to this concept in its strategic documents. This convergence of strategic thinking between the US and the EU is likely to lead to a strengthening of EU-US cooperation. The shift in US strategy implies that US foreign policy might be closer to European values and more compatible with European interests. At the NATO summit in April 2009, Obama set a new tone for EU-US relations. He asserted that in the US there has been “a failure to

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<sup>178</sup> Delegation of the European Commission to the USA, EU Focus, Washington, D.C., May 2009, p. 8, <http://www.eurunion.org/News/eunewsletters/EUFocus/2009/EUFocus-HumRts-05-09.pdf>, retrieved 26 March 2009.

<sup>179</sup> European Council, “A Secure Europe in a Better World – European Security Strategy”, Brussels, 12 December 2003, p. 13.

<sup>180</sup> 90 Ibid., p. 11.



appreciate Europe's leading role in the world"<sup>181</sup> and simultaneously there have been anti-American attitudes in Europe. According to him, "although these attitudes have become all too common, they are not wise".<sup>182</sup>

The European Union's role in international affairs, has been the subject of countless academic papers and endless speculation by policy analysts. Much of that commentary consists of myths and misconceptions. Is the EU the purely soft, Kantian power of Robert Kagan fame? Or is there more to it than that? And are the old beliefs about soft and hard power still valid? This last chapter seeks to tease out the meanings of the 'new' foreign policy doctrine of smart power, now one of the great strategic catch-phrases in both the US and the EU. In particular, the goal is to show how the idea of smart power has been taken up and employed in EU discourse. Here we see almost the opposite dynamics as operating in the USA. In the US 'smart power' has allowed the Democrats to hang on to soft power as a means of attacking the republicans but without appearing to be 'soft' on security. In the EU Nye's idea of smart power has served the function of letting the EU move beyond soft or civilian power and show that the EU is already doing a huge amount that is smart. Finally, I look at some of the problems with this notion.

### Smart power hits the road

Why was smart power so welcome in the EU?

We have seen that Professor Joseph Nye articulated what many in Europe had been saying for some time in opposition to the Bush doctrine: the dangers for the United States and the world of the US going it alone; the importance of international Treaties; the central role of institutions in international society; that winning was about hearts and minds. Secondly, Nye's notion of power married nicely with the EU's concept of security as being global, all-inclusive, and not just about armies and men in uniforms. Indeed, smart power appeared to give the EU a genuine role in creating security simply because it had lots of power other than military power. (Just to give an

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<sup>181</sup> H. Cooper & A. Cowell, "Obama Sets a New Tone for Alliance with Europe", The New York Times, 4 April 2009.

<sup>182</sup> 92 Ibid.

example: economic power, normative power, civilian power). It could not do what the USA could do i.e. sending in the troops to do battle. However, there were many other vital roles it could play. Thirdly, smart power nicely meshed with those in the EU who had for some time been arguing that 'soft power' was not enough for the EU. That the EU had to move away from the simple notion that "civilian power" was the most the EU could ever aspire to. This satisfied those pushing the EU in a certain foreign policy direction. Finally, smart power implied an enhancement for the EU as a foreign policy actor. This in turn provided strategic justification for the Lisbon Treaty.

What is more, it seems that many EU policymakers feel comfortable with the notion of smart power. Ms Ferrero Waldner, the Commissioner for Foreign Relations, was quite explicit in a September 2007 Columbia University speech entitled 'Hard look at Soft Power'. Her argument was more or less the following: hard power dead end in Iraq and soft power is not sufficient to deal with the threats we are witnessing. Therefore, she argues for a combination of power, a new form of power, "what some scholars - stressed Ms. Ferrero Waldner - call smart power". In her view smart power is already in practice: the process of enlargement; the deployment of 60k EU troops abroad; the European Neighbourhood Policy. Finally, there is the EU's leading role in Crisis management and climate change debate. Another advocate of the European way of smart power was Olli Rehn, former EU Commissioner for Enlargement. He endorsed smart power in two official speeches entitled "Europe's Smart Power in its regions and the World" delivered at Oxford in May, 2008 and 'The EU – from Civilian Power to Premier League Security Policy Player?' delivered in August, 2008 in Helsinki. In his view smart power has two possible applications as regards European affairs. First, it can be applied in the management of the Enlargement and Neighborhood policies and, secondly, to foster the (never-ending) process of unification and a more determined external EU foreign policy. In this respect, his argument is that the new institutional architecture will contribute to the spread of smart power through the EU organization: "the Lisbon Treaty would help in that respect as well as the new enhanced position of the High Representative". Finally, Hugh Richardson Head of Delegation of the

Commissioner to Japan in May 2008 delivered a speech with a focus on “Smartening the EU’s Soft Power”. He quoted Joseph Nye, stressing the limits of hard power. The EU cannot go down the hard power route. But the EU is not just about ‘soft power’. ‘Soft power’ is no longer enough’.

Scholars from Joseph Nye to Jeremy Rifkin have pointed out that the United States is suffering from the fading of its soft power. The EU, on the other hand, has reaped tremendous rewards from its soft power, the result of which is an enlarged union of 27 countries and unprecedented peace and prosperity on the European continent. And soft power is the key to strengthening alliances with China, India and new emerging markets, so vital for shaping the international system of the future. Yet soft power alone is insufficient to deal with the threats we face. Europe’s central historical experience may be that military victories produce only temporary peace. But as Spain and the United Kingdom so sadly testify, international terrorists do not respect the EU’s self-declared space of freedom, liberty and security. Rich though we may be in so-called “attractive power”, there are those who do not succumb to our charm. The answer is clearly that we need some combination of the two. Or perhaps a new form of power altogether, what some scholars have called “smart power”.

#### EU smart power: work in progress?

Those who believe the EU is still principally a soft power are behind the times. For over a decade the EU’s foreign policy has been to add more tools to its repertoire, including, crucially, a military dimension and crisis management functions. The EU has some 60,000 peacekeepers serving around the world, from Kosovo, to Afghanistan and Indonesia: it is the world’s largest donor of development aid, providing 56% of total global flows. The EU has a dense network of global relationships, and the European Commission alone is present on the ground in over 130 countries and territories around the world. As the EU continues to develop its role in the world, the challenge is two-fold: to ensure coherence between the civilian and military sides; and to use soft, attractive power more strategically.

As we have seen before, Olli Rehn, current EU Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, views smart power as a policy tool, a means to redefine Europe's role in the international system. "My topic [...] is Europe's smart power in its region and in the world [...] This is closely related to another question – what kind of Europe do we want to develop in what kind of world? Today, the question is how the EU acts globally and how to improve our institutions and policy instruments". He then goes on with his analyses, touching the core question: "let me explain what I mean by "smart power". Essentially, it is combining soft and hard power better in the EU's external relations by using the whole spectrum of our policy instruments and economic resources. This should be done in a forward-looking, consistent and unified way. The EU was slow to develop the ambition to play a major global role. The EU founding fathers did not set out to build a superpower. Instead, their goal was to create an alternative form of international governance in Europe, to end the great power rivalries that had led to two world wars". Olli Rehn's definition of smart power is essentially that given by Nye, and his focus is on the policy side of the spectrum. All in all, he treats smart power as a political instrument rather than as a power concept. His reasoning follows the role of the EU as a global actor: "as the years went by, the EU became more engaged in global affairs, initially in economic areas such as aid and trade. In recent years, we have seen the Union engaged in a wider range of activities outside of its borders – not only in development aid and institution building but also in diplomacy and security missions. Since the 1990s, largely as a lesson learned from the disastrous Balkan wars and following the realisation in France and Britain that they cannot deliver by going alone, the EU's common foreign and security policy has become worthy of its name. Then he went back to the core of the discussion, I would say the answer to the question, smart power for what? He states: "let us reflect, what are the best ways and means to further reinforce the EU's smart power in external relations in the future. To my mind, we'll get it right by working on the basis of the following two guiding principles. First of all, we must make the EU's external policies more coherent and effective. Our external impact is essentially based on our internal strength, so we must learn to use our formidable internal policies to a maximum

external effect. I trust my (former) colleague Javier Solana will take these points into account when revisiting the implementation of the European Security Strategy. The title of the 2003 strategy was called "A secure Europe in a better world". Perhaps the revised one due this year should be called "A better Europe in a secure world" – since we urgently need to work on improving the EU's capacities in external relations. We need both to upgrade our policy instruments and to make them work better together. It is equally vital to improve the institutional architecture of the Union by implementing the reforms to our external policy-making that are contained in the Lisbon Treaty. One of the institutional innovations of the new Treaty is to combine the task of a High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy to a post of Commission Vice President for External Relations. This should enable the same person both to better steer the EU's external policy by chairing the Foreign Affairs Council and to better execute external policy by coordinating the use of the Union's policy-making and financial resources that are mostly under the Commission's competencies. Contrary to some views, this position should not be in competition with the new President of the European Council nor with the President of the Commission. We should not end up with three competing power poles, neither in terms of architecture nor of personalities. It is of paramount importance that the Commission President and High Representative/Vice-President will form a strong team that steers the EU's external relations effectively by capitalising on the formidable policy-making and financial resources of both the Commission and Council. Thus, we can make the new arrangement a win-win outcome for the whole Union. The enlarged EU should have a high level of ambition for its external policy. For this, it will need to develop an institutional infrastructure – along the lines I described – which can support that level of ambition. The second guiding principle to reinforce the EU's smart power is to project its values and interests in its own neighborhood more effectively in order to extend the European zone of peace and prosperity, liberty and democracy. In the enlargement policy, this projection of the EU method and model has had a transformative power over decades in numerous countries. The EU has to use its policy instruments creatively and flexibly.

Hence, Olli Rehn's view of EU smart power is based on three pillars: a domestic political agenda, institutional reforms and the reinforcement of the external, foreign, presence. Smart power, for him, is a political programme: behind the concept, there should be the agenda which can be summarized as follows: more Europe, better institutions, clearer foreign policy objectives.

Hugh Richardson, Head of the Delegation of the European Commission to Japan, proposes a different vision of the concept. He tries to look ahead, from 'soft' power to 'smart' power. His reasoning is the following: "what is needed, and indeed what the EU is already evolving, is an influence or form of power that retains the EU's normative values, its soft power strengths, but which hardens, or tempers them. This is an idea that some have already termed 'smart power'. As the EU continues to develop its role in the world, the challenge is two-fold: to ensure coherence between the civilian and military sides; and to use soft, attractive power more strategically". Richardson went on to stress the institutional dimension as a founding element of smart power: "the (Lisbon) treaty will give the EU a clear single voice in the world, connecting the various different strands of EU external policy and permitting greater co-ordination in the way we conduct the EU's external relations. In particular, the newly-created post of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy will double as the Vice-President of the European Commission, enabling the EU's external actions to be more visible and more coherent. In his view this will contribute to highlight the normative dimension of EU smart power: "the Treaty will give a yet stronger foundation to the EU's core normative values, such as democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms which underpin global governance norms. The EU will also become a legal entity, allowing for formal membership of international organisations. Finally, he concludes that "there can be no doubt that big changes await the EU in its foreign policy dimension. The Lisbon Treaty will make things easier for those who remain confused by the way in which the EU conducts itself. Perhaps this is not so surprising, for the Union itself is constantly

evolving, and its foreign policy role, though far from nascent, still has plenty of room to mature, allowing the EU's power to smoothly evolve, from soft to smart.

Conclusion: is there a role for smart power?

Power has been exhaustively analysed in political science and IR. In the previous chapters we have encountered several ways of thinking about power: power as a relative capacity (we then say someone or some state is more powerful than another state). The most powerful state in this regard would be a superpower, hyper power, even Empire; through to middle powers; small states; microstates; to failing states where the state has no capacity because it has imploded. Then there is power in its different dimensions: for instance we have seen that E.H. Carr in *The Twenty Years Crisis* talks of three kinds of power: military power, economic power and power over opinion. Geopolitics looked at geographical sources of power. There is also legitimate power as opposed to power as might: for example consider the Weberian question of legitimacy that we introduced in the second chapter: tradition, charisma and bureaucratic power. Power then becomes authority. Let us consider power and its outcomes: through direct power (sending in troops or cutting off aid) or indirect power (being attractive or having the power to set the rules). We have seen that Lukes in his classic discussion of power talks of power not just in terms of having capabilities but of gaining the outcomes one wants. Secondly, IR as a discipline has been obsessed by power from Thucydides onwards. Basic division in IR is often said to exist between scholars who see the world as a power struggle or defined by distribution of power – known generically as ‘realists’ like E.H.Carr, Hans J. Moregnthau and Kennet Waltz – and liberal theorists who place greater stress on cooperation and interdependence. Finally, there are several different theories in IR where power is deemed central: the Balance of Power (“states seek to avoid the dominance of one particular state, will ally themselves with other states until an equilibrium is reached”); power transition theory, i.e. the theory of how and why states rise and fall and with what results; the theory of hegemonic stability, i.e. one power required to create global order.

Smart Power is a term which is beginning to enter the lexicon of mainstream government, politics and wider public. As armed forces, governments, nations and alliances re-examine the use of the various levers of national and international power, this dissertation has tried to investigate the utility of the spectrum of such levers – ranging from the high end of hard military capability through to softer policy options – and whether the application of more varied mixes of such power can deliver smarter effect. So, can Smart Power blend the attributes of both hard and soft power to offer a more realistic and usable policy tool? We have seen that current government thinking tends to focus mostly on soft power options, and appears to assume that the centrepiece of such options is information operations. This dissertation has attempted to identify gaps, limitations and confusion in current thinking, and has sought to expose and validate – or otherwise – current assumptions and definitions. In these last two chapters the objective was to discuss how governments (the United States and European nations in particular) are going to transform their political frameworks to embrace Smart Power thinking, and to apply – or ‘operationalise’ - it in policy terms.

Amongst a range of issues, my dissertation has tried to show the role of strategic communication in the effective delivery of a “smart- power way”, and the extent to which smart power theories, approaches and processes impact upon decision-makers. I have examined methodologies and tested frameworks for researching and examining smart power and its potential and actual effectiveness. Finally, the dissertation has discussed smart power theory alongside its application in the context of past and current academic and political debates (especially in the US and the EU).

The point that I have tried to address through this dissertation is the following: is there anything new about the current new debate about power: hard, soft, or smart? Is it something very déjà vu? New wine in an old bottle? I would suggest three things: one, smart power has to be taken seriously; two, it is forming a bridge of sorts between a new administration in Washington that is seeking to get away from the Bush doctrine and an EU seeking to enhance Europe’s foreign policy roles; three, it may even be the



building block upon which is being built a new foreign policy consensus between the EU and Washington.

Nevertheless, some questions still remain open. There are American problems: how can one ensure that smart is not seen by too many people in the USA as being 'soft'? Will the USA be seen as being soft and not smart both by enemies and allies. Then there is a European problem: one can see the appeal, but does it tie the EU too much to yet another American debate? Can Europe not have concepts of its own? Is there something rather parasitic here? Is it also tying the EU to something that is still being contested in the USA?. Finally, will it lead to any smart European spending on hard power?

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