

# SOFT POWER WORKSHOP

13 August 2008

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In conducting the workshops, Panel Members principally from academia and sometimes from the military, government, and industry come together for a 1- or 2-day moderated discussion session. SAO personnel lead the discussions through a series of questions posed to the panel. In addition to documenting verbal discussions, the workshop provides computer software for offline anonymous discussions among Panel Members and workshop observers.

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# INTRODUCTION

## SOFT POWER WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES AND CONDUCT

The purpose of the Soft Power Workshop was to assist APL in better understanding the following:

- The effectiveness of soft power in achieving U.S. national objectives
- The key instruments of soft power
- The benefits and limitations of soft power in achieving U.S. national objectives
- The interrelationship between soft power and hard power for achieving U.S. national objectives
- The past successes and failures in the application of soft power
- The prospects for future applications of soft power

The eight experts who made up the panel were drawn from the academic community. Individual members were nationally and internationally recognized authorities in international affairs in general and public diplomacy in particular. As a group, the Panel Members brought new perspectives, challenging insights, and “out-of-the-box” thinking, which are not always readily available to JHU/APL or its sponsors.

The workshop discussions were grouped into nine issues. The first four were covered in the morning session, and the last five were covered in the afternoon session:

- Understanding the Problem
- Objectives of Soft Power
- Instruments of Soft Power
- Smart Power: The Relationship Between Soft Power and Hard Power
- Effectiveness of Soft Power Instruments
- Obstacles to Soft Power Implementation
- Measuring the Effectiveness of Soft Power
- Sources of Past Successes and Failures
- Prospects for Future Applications of Soft Power

## SOFT POWER IN PERSPECTIVE

Over the past several decades, the international system and the international community have undergone profound changes. To mention just a few:

- The end of the Cold War, the demise of the Communist bloc, and the end of bipolarity

- The emergence of new centers of power and new international power relationships
- The changing nature of the nation-state, which has been the prime focus of international relations for centuries
- The emergence of important trans-national and nongovernment actors with worldwide influence and impact

Added to these changes is the impact of new technologies, including communications technologies, that can affect events and peoples around the world almost instantaneously.

In adapting to these new conditions, it is necessary for leaders of U.S. foreign policy and national security policy to explore and identify new approaches, instruments, and priorities. Herein, it is self-evident that U.S. military war-fighting power—or “hard power” in today’s nomenclature—can no longer sustain the primacy of place that it held during the Cold War era because many of the international community’s current and future problems lack kinetic solutions. It follows, then, that U.S. leadership in problem solving cannot rest essentially on U.S. hard power, military alliances, and war-fighting umbrellas. Although these forms of power doubtlessly remain critical in some cases, American leaders now must employ the relatively enhanced weight of the country’s ability to lead through “soft power,” which is founded on America’s attraction and influence rather than on coercion and payments.

Thus, it is necessary to take a fresh look at the nature, prospects, and benefits of the “soft” instruments of U.S. national power needed to attract and influence the people and governments of other countries.

## PANEL MEMBERS

**Dr. John H. Brown**, Research Associate, Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Georgetown University, and Adjunct Professor of Liberal Studies, School of Continuing Studies, Georgetown University

**Dr. Nicholas Cull**, Professor of Public Diplomacy and Director of the Masters Program in Public Diplomacy, University of Southern California

**BG (Retired) Russell Howard**, Director of The Jebson Center for Counter-Terrorism Studies, The Fletcher School, Tufts University

**Dr. Kay Knickrehm**, Professor of Political Science and Chair of the Department of Political Science, James Madison University

**Dr. Janne Nolan**, Professor of International Affairs, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Pittsburgh

**Dr. James Rosenau**, Professor Emeritus, The George Washington University

**Dr. Melissa Thomas**, Associate Professor of International Development, School of Advanced International Studies, The Johns Hopkins University

**Dr. Michael Vlahos**, Fellow, National Security Analysis Department, The Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

One basic problem in developing a soft power message is that the "United States" does not know what to sell about itself.

Soft power cuts many ways. There is an attractiveness and repulsiveness in soft power as well as a nexus between what you do and what you are. On the one hand, attractiveness is enhanced when the United States acts in a manner that is consistent with its stated ideals and values. On the other hand, repulsiveness is intensified by inherent contradictions. For example, an often-repeated complaint involves the list of recipients of U.S. foreign aid, which seems to belie what the government says about wanting to foster democracy.

Foreign nationals often have a negative view of the U.S. government but a positive view of American citizens. They are drawn to such positive attributes as the American "can-do" attitude, its optimism, tolerance, inventiveness, and openness to new ideas and innovation, among others. However, the same foreigners are often repulsed by a willingness of the U.S. government to ally itself with dictatorial and repressive regimes for short-term gains. To make matters worse, the United States is generally held to a higher standard than other states in part because Americans trumpet their values as inherent values for all peoples.

At the same time, strength is inherently repulsive, and this repulsion is directed not only at the United States but also toward Russia and China. Whereas hypocrisy can be remedied, strength per se is an unfixable dimension of U.S. power.

Designing a soft power policy is complicated by a conflict of processes and cultures not only between the Department of Defense (DoD) and other U.S. government agencies but also within the individual agencies themselves. Thus, whether the issue is interagency cooperation or intra-agency cooperation, there are usually differences in the way soft policy decision makers look at problems, the types and size of problems they deem critical, the nature of the solutions they seek to implement, the relative importance they attribute to a specific problem, etc.

## OBJECTIVES OF SOFT POWER

In developing its soft power activities, U.S. efforts should incorporate a broad range of objectives because target states and peoples have different needs, perspectives, and value systems. However, the intent should not be focused solely on U.S. goals or benefits. One of the unique advantages of soft power is that the highest rewards often derive from the most selfless U.S. actions.

U.S. leaders should strive to develop long-term political goodwill that would allow allied and on-the-fence nations and peoples to continue to be attracted to the United States even if they disagree with some aspects of U.S. policy. One way to accomplish this is to have U.S. soft power efforts focus less on the government level and more on people.

## **INSTRUMENTS OF SOFT POWER**

In order of priority, the Panel Members identified the following as critically important instruments of U.S. soft power:

- Listening to foreign messages
- Student exchanges
- Information dissemination

Devising new soft power instruments should not be left up to the government alone. Input from international business concerns could be helpful for good soft power planning because their leaders are likely to see soft power issues from very different viewpoints.

## **SMART POWER: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOFT POWER AND HARD POWER**

To integrate soft power and hard power into smart power, there needs to be a shift in U.S. leadership culture and thinking. Generation-gap issues also are involved in combining both hard power and soft power into smart power. For example, in the U.S. military, today's senior leadership comes from the Cold War era, whereas soldiers on the ground in Iraq are from a different generation with different references.

Concerns arose among the Panel Members about whether DoD should be taking on any new, complex missions related to soft power given that the U.S. military is likely to be losing funding in the future. Many questions and concerns also were raised about the ability of DoD and non-military agencies to work together to implement soft power requirements in a truly cooperative and coequal environment.

## **EFFECTIVENESS OF SOFT POWER INSTRUMENTS**

Two primary targets of U.S. soft power efforts were singled out by the Panel Members:

- The "Arc of Instability" from West Africa, through the Middle East and South Asia, to Southeast Asia
- Bloggers, who tend to be young, independent-minded, and open to discussions, debates, and new ideas

Panel Members believed that military objectives must flow down from national-level priorities, especially when short- or medium-term goals are involved.

Discussions at the National Command Authority (NCA) or the National Security Council (NSC) level to identify national priorities are often not as strategic as they should be. More often than not, the decisions made are reactive to world situations and usually involve the movement of people and resources. Very little of the background thinking gets filtered down to the troops on the ground.

Panel Members were concerned that DoD could face problems if they were continually directed to use a combination of both soft and hard approaches. They questioned whether the United States would want to have military personnel run clinics like Hezbollah does in some places. DoD does not always need to be the supported element overseas; sometimes it would prefer to be more of the supporting element. A bottom-up approach toward this kind of jointness of interagency efforts may work better than top-down projects, as has been seen in some recent ad hoc efforts.

Panel Members offered suggestions concerning which areas and topics should be given priority when soft power efforts are planned. Their recommendations included the following:

- Madrassas in the Arc of Instability
- The Pacific Rim
- The Middle East
- Terrorism
- China and India
- Nuclear Proliferation

## OBSTACLES TO SOFT POWER INFLUENCE-BUILDING

According to some Panel Members, U.S. government leaders tend to underestimate the importance of soft power. All other problems in developing soft power plans flow from this. In general, U.S. leaders tend to look at soft power too tactically.

The interagency process used to develop and implement soft power is a failure. Although many organizations profess to be engaged in soft power activities, the lack of senior leadership's appreciation and commitment makes coordination, consistency, and coherency almost impossible.

Further restricting soft power development is the fact that the American populace seems to be going through a nativist phase in which Americans seem little inclined to engage the world. This attitude is exacerbated by a national narcissism apparent in many Americans who expect that others want to be like us and that we are inherently "likeable." The unacknowledged result is that these Americans see little importance in concerted efforts to improve the U.S. image abroad or to attract others to us.

Limitations related to prevailing domestic political agendas and "Executive Group Think" often impede the development and implementation of soft power messages and activities. Combining the two phenomena results in ground truth rarely being spoken to "higher-ups." When truth is spoken, it is often rejected, particularly if it is perceived as undermining preferred policies.

## MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SOFT POWER

A typical U.S. government mantra is: "If it is worth doing, it is worth measuring." However, measuring U.S. soft power effectiveness is extremely difficult. Although certain aspects of soft power activity can be measured, the effectiveness of many critical activities cannot. Unfortunately, U.S. decision makers often gravitate toward those options that have measurable impacts or consequences, especially those that seem to have demonstrable near-term benefits.

The question of how important or valid these easily measureable elements might be in assessing a foreign affairs situation was considered debatable. Indeed, one school of thought suggests that we can never really know what soft power contributed to a situation.

Building and nurturing political goodwill is one of the more obvious soft power goals that cannot really be measured, especially in the short term. Indeed, the real impact and benefit may arise only in crisis situations, when the United States needs the support of other states and peoples to achieve its purpose.

A fundamental knowledge base for modeling soft power issues does not really exist, even among experts. Nor is it possible to pin down experts on specific data points required by a model. The result can be a model with a false level of precision that would not be a dependable predictor of future events.

However, if modeling is used as part of a planning process, it can be helpful in building a plan for future actions in time of crisis. The resulting plan is actually of less importance than the planning process itself. The process of planning can highlight issues for discussion so that the players will at least be familiar with the concepts should similar events arise in the future. At all costs, those developing soft power plans should avoid the oft-heard concept of "Don't put it in the scenario because we don't know how to model it."

## SOURCES OF PAST SUCCESSES AND FAILURES

Panel Members identified the major events or issues that exemplified the best U.S. soft power activities of the post-World War II period, including the following:

- *The Marshall Plan*: It was collaborative, and it considered European values and priorities.
- *U.S. Libraries and Cultural Centers Abroad*: These libraries were often the only source of objective information in countries that could not or would not provide it.
- *The U.S. Civil Rights Movement*: It demonstrated to the world, specifically to the USSR, that Americans could practice good values, not simply preach them.
- *Postwar Open Markets*: The United States lowered trade barriers at some short-term cost to itself to allow other more damaged countries to grow and prosper.
- *The Apollo Program*: After Sputnik, the world had the impression that the Soviet Union was the most advanced technological society. This changed dramatically in 1969 with the Apollo moon landing.

- *Nuclear Deterrence*: Diplomacy, military-to-military contacts, cultural exchanges, elite dialogues, and other soft power activities played major roles.
- *The Helsinki Accords of 1975*: These accords provided a framework and mechanism to focus world attention on human rights.
- *U.S. Support for South Korea*: This enduring relationship has been the key indicator that the U.S. government would defend its allies and friends over the long haul.

## PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE APPLICATIONS OF SOFT POWER

Specific initiatives that would improve the image and attractiveness of the United States to foreign audiences include the following:

- Listen to foreign audiences.
- Expand U.S. dialogue with a wide variety of peoples in very diverse settings and conditions.
- Improve the coordination of government, public, private, and nonprofit soft power initiatives.
- Improve the flexibility and responsiveness of soft power institutions.

As though advising the new president, Panel Members offered some specific recommendations related to soft power:

- Bring together representatives of Madison Avenue and the White House inner circle.
- Ensure that the new Secretaries of Defense and State appreciate the value of soft power from the start.
- Bring back the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) as a separate agency.
- Use new social networking capabilities, such as viral marketing, to create buzz about U.S. efforts.
- Uphold the Doha Development Round to show U.S. support for free trade and economic development.
- Recognize that the refusal by the United States to give up subsidies to its industries and farmers is seen as hypocrisy around the world.
- Recognize that there are not separate foreign and domestic policies but rather one national policy.
- Think of the president as the primary public affairs officer for the country.
- Recognize that others outside the country are also always listening to American politicians.
- Tone down U.S. evangelism without abandoning American ideals.
- Get rid of the Fortress America concept.
- Be more accepting and inclusive.

The United States truly needs a grand strategy to drive all of the tools of soft power. Such a big shift in thinking should have happened at the end of the Cold War but did not.

There is no central point of control for soft power. It was suggested that an entity within the State Department would work best as long as it was given appropriate funding and personnel.

In general, the Panel Members believed that there is room for optimism. Some U.S. officials are beginning to project a new level of concern and appreciation for soft power and its benefits.

## DISCUSSION FORMAT

The workshop centered around free-wheeling give-and-take among the Panel Members on the issues of interest. There were no formal presentations. In addition to oral discussions, each Panel Member was provided with an individual laptop computer running groupware that permitted supplementary comments on oral discussions and/or the development of sidebar issues. Both forms of input were encouraged in order to capture the widest documentation of Panel Member opinions possible. In all instances, the panel's oral remarks and typed comments were documented on a nonattribution basis.

Because of the complexity of the issues covered, two ground rules were established. First, the discussions were oriented toward higher level insights, observations, and assessments. The discussions were not intended as an exercise in data gathering. Second, discussants were asked to express their views and assessments in terms of "the most likely" and "the least likely." Although this may have minimized the nuances of some difficult issues, it tended to avoid less useful "on the one hand/on the other hand" observations.

The Moderator opened each of the topics for discussion with a brief introduction to focus the thrust of the exchange. In addition, the Panel Members were presented with a set of potential "Initial Issues for Discussion," which were intended to provoke, but not direct or delimit, the discussions. The majority of the time was then given to panel discussions. At the end of each topic discussion, a few minutes were given over to questions from the in-house and invited observers.

## DETAILED DISCUSSIONS

### WHAT IS SOFT POWER?

#### *Initial Issues for Discussion*

As a preliminary "warm-up" survey question, the Panel Members and observers were asked "What is soft power?"

#### *Key Points from the Discussions*

Panel Members offered several views about what soft power means to them, including:

- Non-kinetic power of persuasion, even the power to seduce
- Non-military means for achieving particular foreign policy objectives
- Getting others to want the same things you do, and thus making your aims legitimate
- The ability of international actors to advance their foreign policy interests through the attractiveness of their culture and values rather than through force or economic leverage
- Modifying behavior or attitudes across wide functional distances

### UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

#### *Initial Issues for Discussion*

- How can U.S. soft power better sell the "United States" abroad?
- Does the use and importance of soft power today differ from the past? In what way(s)?
- Do we know more now about why soft power succeeds or fails than we did 20 years ago?

#### *Key Points from Panel Discussions*

One basic problem in developing a soft power message is that the "United States" does not know what to sell about itself. Compared with earlier periods, U.S. leaders and the American people have less consensus on what, exactly, is Brand America. There is less agreement on what we want our brand to be. For some, there is almost an embarrassment when it comes to projecting traditional American values abroad.

Soft power cuts many ways. There is an attractiveness and repulsiveness in soft power as well as a nexus between what you do and what you are. On the one hand, attractiveness is enhanced when the United States acts in a manner that is consistent with its stated ideals and values. On the other hand, repulsiveness is intensified by inherent contradictions. For example, an often-repeated complaint involves the list of recipients of U.S. foreign aid, a list that seems to belie what the government says about wanting to foster democracy. Excluding Israel, the top five recipients are all very repressive governments. The explanation behind this distribution appears to be that the United States is generally looking for stability because it is a status quo policy country.

Foreign nationals often have a negative view of the U.S. government but a positive view of American citizens. They are drawn to such positive attributes as the American "can-do" attitude, its optimism, tolerance, inventiveness, and openness to new ideas and innovation, among others. However, the same foreigners are often repulsed by a willingness of the U.S. government to ally itself with dictatorial and repressive regimes for short-term gains. To make matters worse, the United States is generally held to a higher standard than other states in part because Americans trumpet their values as inherent values for all peoples.

The U.S. presence overseas is embodied in our embassies, and they are now essentially barricaded behind moats and high walls. This situation not only is a barrier to traditional diplomacy but also provides a negative first impression for foreign embassy visitors. As a result, Americans are increasingly seen as less friendly, less approachable, less down-to-earth, more arrogant, and more elitist than in previous periods.

At the same time, strength is inherently repulsive, and this repulsion is directed not only at the United States but also toward Russia and China. Whereas hypocrisy can be remedied, strength per se is an unfixable dimension of U.S. power.

By comparison, France has had some success in explicitly working with different objectives for different areas. Their approach is not perfect, but they are fairly honest about what they are doing. France is not doing this to be idealistic. The United States could learn from French experiences.

U.S. support of some policies may also backfire, especially considering second- or third-order consequences. Calling for democracy and then waiting to see what happens is always risky, but necessary. Doing otherwise has caused the United States several problems in the last few years.

Problems also arise when trying to negotiate between two or more warring factions. Helping the process along may involve giving identical aide to the two different parties in a dispute. If that is not done, at least one side will likely be further alienated, believing that they are not being given something that they think they deserve. In the process, they tend to blame the United States for the entire situation.

Designing a soft power policy begins with the complications involving the U.S. government's internal relations, as evidenced by the frequent lack of interagency

partners at planning meetings called by the DoD. Reasons for this lack of interagency participation begin with the fact that other agencies look at DoD with both suspicion and envy because of its huge budget. DoD's enormous size complicates relations even further because everything DoD does is designed to handle only big issues. All too often in interagency efforts, DoD relies on a "Field of Dreams" approach: If we build it, they (the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security, etc.) will come. Often "they" do not.

When coordination meetings can be arranged, DoD's predilection for planning does seem to energize efforts to encourage the State Department and other agencies to design plans of their own. As useful as this may be, it becomes another visible example of the cultural differences that separate State and DoD personnel. Perspectives within the State Department may also differ. For example, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) does not fully share the culture of the rest of the State Department. Under the leadership of former Secretary of State Colin Powell, some efforts were made to change these cultural divides, but they currently remain, adding to the coordination problems between departments. Some recent success in interagency operations can be noted as representatives of many agencies were forced to work together in Iraq Provincial Reconstruction Teams. Even in those situations, there has been no real coordination, only discussions about separate ongoing projects.

Panel Members also raised concerns about the critical importance of having the United States take credit for its good works. In countries where much of U.S. aid work is being done, media outlets are often limited in number and scope, so they tend not to spontaneously pass on information about these aid programs. However, it also was recognized that in some situations, overtly branding a project may actually undercut what the United States is trying to accomplish.

## OBJECTIVES OF SOFT POWER

### *Initial Issues for Discussion*

- Should the U.S. government develop, assess, and prioritize U.S. soft power activities primarily on the basis of:
  - U.S. political objectives?
  - U.S. economic objectives?
  - U.S. security objectives?
  - Humanitarianism?
  - Other issues?
- Is U.S. humanitarianism an effective and cost-effective means for building successes in other soft power areas?

### *Key Points from Panel Discussions*

In developing its soft power activities, the Panel Members agreed that U.S. efforts should incorporate a broad range of objectives because target states and peoples have

different needs, perspectives, and value systems. However, the intent should not be focused solely on U.S. goals or benefits. One of the unique advantages of soft power is that the highest rewards often derive from the most selfless U.S. actions.

Panel Members recommended, for example, that U.S. leaders should strive to develop long-term political goodwill that would allow allied and on-the-fence nations and peoples to continue to be attracted to the United States even if they disagree with some aspects of U.S. policy. One way to accomplish this is to have U.S. soft power efforts focus less on the government level and more on people. For example, U.S. assistance should target the "village," not the national government. If U.S. officials, especially Foreign Service officers, continue to concentrate on traditional state-to-state diplomacy without getting engaged in local economic issues, they will be increasingly marginalized. Consequently, the image and attractiveness of the United States will decline.

South Korea is a good example of the use of U.S. soft power to help stabilize a country and allow it to move out into the world. However, the success of this multilateral effort was nearly the only recognized example of a country coming up from nothing.

Even the vaunted Marshall Plan started with a good deal of useful human capital and a population that still had some institutional memory of good government. At the same time, as a second-order effect, the Marshall Plan helped to defang Europe by stopping the individual countries there from continually building their own armies and fighting among themselves, because the U.S. security guarantee covered their primary needs. Now the third-order consequences include a lack of adequate military effort in Europe. However, the United States probably does not want to cede all power back to European allies.

These long-established trans-Atlantic power relationships also have consequences relating to the expansion of NATO, a move that has upset the Russian government. Of particular concern is what would happen if one of the new NATO (former Soviet-dominated) countries was invaded. Even if the United States decided to help, other NATO countries might not. Such a split would result in the collapse of NATO. Recognizing this uncertainty, potential aggressors are carefully watching how the United States is handling the current situation in Russia's neighbor Georgia.

## INSTRUMENTS OF SOFT POWER

### *Initial Issues for Discussion*

- What are the most critical instruments of U.S. government soft power? What instruments of soft power are most useful? Least useful?
- What instruments of soft power are most useful in conflict conditions? Least useful in conflict conditions?

### *Key Points from Panel Discussions*

In order of priority, the Panel Members identified the following as critically important instruments of U.S. soft power:

- *Listening to foreign messages:* It is not sufficient to project U.S. images and messages. U.S. leaders must be recognized as paying attention to the messages coming from abroad. Too often U.S. leaders focus on behavior and ignore the message.
- *Student exchanges:* Exchanges, especially bringing foreign students to U.S. institutions, may take years to produce concrete benefits, which even then are hard to measure. However, developing relationships this way can pay significant dividends in the long term, particularly when those former students reach high levels in their own governments, as they often do.
- *Information dissemination:* The United States is the most advanced country in world technologically, yet it is challenged in cyberspace by terrorists because U.S. leaders do not view the Internet as a critical public diplomacy tool.

Panel Members also recognized that each of these instruments can create problems for the U.S. government as well. For example, the student exchange effort can also create a major counterintelligence problem. Nevertheless, the panel believed that the risk was worth the payoff.

Devising new soft power instruments should not be left up to the government alone. Input from international business concerns could be helpful for good soft power planning because their leaders are likely to see soft power issues from very different viewpoints. All government development of soft power plans would have some internal problems. DoD itself may have little impact on designing soft power tools, but its concepts would go further if an interagency approach were to be used. For all elements of the government, planning a strategy becomes more difficult when they also must deal with Congressionally mandated budget earmarks.

## **SMART POWER: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOFT POWER AND HARD POWER**

### *Initial Issues for Discussion*

- How is U.S. soft power related to the U.S. government's use of hard power? Is it a zero-sum or non-zero-sum game?
- Aside from funding advantages, should DoD expand its roles and activities into areas traditionally attributed to the State Department, USAID, and other soft power institutions?
  - What are the benefits of such DoD expansion?
  - What are the disadvantages of such DoD expansion?
- How should the U.S. government rebalance the universally agreed imbalance between soft power and hard power?

### *Key Points from Panel Discussions*

Smart power has been described as a judicious combination of hard power and soft power. To integrate soft power and hard power into smart power, there needs to be a shift in U.S. leadership culture and thinking. Generation-gap issues also are involved in combining both hard power and soft power into smart power. For example, in the U.S. military, today's senior leadership comes from the Cold War era, whereas soldiers on the ground in Iraq are from a different generation with different references. They see the problem and its solution from different perspectives.

Panel Members also were concerned about whether DoD should be taking on any new missions related to soft power given that the U.S. military is likely to be losing funding in the future. In fact, DoD is now asking other agencies to take on much more.

Several questions related to the interagency approach were broached but not answered, including the following:

- Will these other agencies stay engaged with DoD soft power efforts?
- Will their efforts continue to be funded?
- Will their efforts be interoperable with those of DoD?

These same questions would apply to working with foreign partners as well. Going further, Panel Members noted that coordination problems always seem to arise if DoD is not in control, raising several other questions:

- Whose objectives will be foremost in any interagency or international effort?
- Does DoD culture permit it to work well with others?
- Can DoD use the same skill sets here that they developed for working in joint force environments?

Of note, as much as he might support smart power efforts, Secretary of Defense Gates has said that the United States would not be transforming the military into the Peace Corps with guns. Core competency skills need to be maintained despite the addition of new duties. Yet, there is only a finite amount of time for training troops. As limited as training time might be for DoD, it does have many more people available to send for training compared with other agencies that might work with the military on smart power projects. The new U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) is trying to ameliorate the types of problems that occur when DoD has significantly larger numbers of people available and is so often considered the go-to agency for any and all complex international tasks.

## **EFFECTIVENESS OF SOFT POWER INSTRUMENTS**

### *Initial Issues for Discussion*

- What should be the primary targets of U.S. soft power efforts?
- Should U.S. government soft power efforts prioritize a "positive" offensive approach or a "responsive" counteroffensive approach?

- How should the U.S. government counter the soft power messages and appeals of Nth countries?
- Are U.S. government soft power efforts more effective if they seek a consistency of message or a diversity of viewpoints concerning U.S. policies, behavior, and programs?

### *Key Points from Panel Discussions*

Two primary targets of U.S. soft power efforts were singled out by the Panel Members:

- The "Arc of Instability" from West Africa, through the Middle East and South Asia, to Southeast Asia
- Bloggers, who tend to be young, independent-minded, and open to discussions, debates, and new ideas

DoD can use both soft and hard power instruments if the objectives are clearly identified for them. Planners must be told by their leadership whether the objective is, for example, to stop the flow of weapons in a target country, to rebuild its economy, or both. The military's preferred choice usually is to handle the weapons situation first. Doing so may require them to work with dictators, creating second-order problems in the future. However, the U.S. military often faces conflicting objectives that may shift over time. Divergent views about the highest priority may come from the NCA, NSC, or even Congress. Panel Members believed that military objectives must flow down from national-level priorities, especially when short- or medium-term goals are involved. Obviously, developing student leaders who might become national leaders in 20 years will be a lesser priority than those directly related to immediate security or economic concerns.

Discussions at the NSC and NCA level to identify national priorities are often not as strategic as they should be. More often than not, the decisions made are reactive to world situations and usually involve the movement of people and resources. Very little of the background thinking gets filtered down to the troops on the ground. As in political campaigns with their dueling positive and negative approaches, it may not be possible to stay positive if your opponent goes negative. Similarly, the national leadership cannot only be reactive, but there is always a question about how much of the positive approach DoD should be responsible for. Once a crisis abroad reaches a combat situation, then at least one of soft power's national objectives has failed. However, this does not mean that DoD can ignore what happens before a situation reaches a hostility phase. DoD obviously has an interest in making sure that soft power works. If it does not, then DoD will be handed the job of taking care of the resulting situation. And DoD is not allowed to fail at that job.

Some Panel Members were concerned that DoD could face problems if they were continually directed to use a combination of both soft and hard approaches. They questioned whether the United States would want to have military personnel run clinics, like Hezbollah does in some places. DoD does not always need to be the supported element overseas; sometimes it would prefer to be more of the supporting

element. A bottom-up approach toward this kind of jointness of interagency efforts may work better than top-down projects, as has been seen in some recent ad hoc efforts.

Panel Members also offered suggestions concerning which areas and topics should be given priority when soft power efforts are planned. Their recommendations included the following:

*Madrassas in the Arc of Instability:* Students in a large number of these schools are instructed to hate and fear the United States. They are taught that the best thing to do is to sacrifice their lives for the cause as stated by the madrass leaders. Some believe that democratization is against their religion and, therefore, consider U.S. efforts to develop democracy to be an attack on Islam. Generations have been taught to think this way. In the view of some Panel Members, this problem is much larger than any other that the United States currently faces and, therefore, should receive 80% of the appropriate resources. To limit the impact of the madrassas, the size and number of these schools must be cut back by limiting the amount of funding they get.

So much of what the United States has done throughout the area has had no impact on situations there or made things worse. Basically, the United States is not engaging in a battle of ideas that is going on all across the Arc of Instability. Nor is it easy to determine exactly what the situation is. Is Al Qaeda pulling back because of U.S. hard power efforts or for their own soft power reasons?

*The Pacific Rim:* This area is of increasing interest to the United States and is somewhat more stable than the Middle East. Governments there are already somewhat more favorable to the United States. Therefore, the United States would get more bang for its buck in this region.

*The Middle East:* Having something catastrophic happen in the Middle East would severely damage the price of oil, which would be bad for the entire world's economy. For economic reasons alone, U.S. soft power efforts should be focused in this region. However, the United States should not fixate only on this area.

*Terrorism:* Although this phenomenon has caused significant damage in individual locations, it has also resulted in tremendous, widespread physical security costs. Yet, these protective changes have created no real value. The United States on its own made decisions to bear these expenses. Using soft power to alleviate the terrorism problem might be cost-effective in the long term.

*China and India:* Soft power needs years to develop, so perhaps it should be focused on these rising powers.

*Nuclear Proliferation:* This issue is of particular concern in Iran and the Middle East, which are already areas of particular interest to the United States.

## OBSTACLES TO SOFT POWER IMPLEMENTATION

### *Initial Issues for Discussion*

- What are the primary obstacles to the effective implementation of U.S. soft power efforts?

- What is the boundary between permissible soft power implementation and impermissible interference in the internal affairs of other states or peoples? What policies or actions should be deemed impermissible and/or unethical?

### *Key Points from Panel Discussions*

According to some Panel Members, U.S. government leaders tend to underestimate the importance of soft power. All other problems in developing soft power plans flow from this. However, this situation may be changing because U.S. leaders seem to be in the initial stages of an upswing on the acceptance of soft power as a useful international relations tool. In general, U.S. leaders tend to look at soft power too tactically. They do not integrate soft power with other elements of U.S. power to meet the country's international goals.

The interagency process used to develop and implement soft power is a failure. Although many organizations profess to be engaged in soft power activities, the lack of senior leadership's appreciation and commitment makes coordination, consistency, and coherency almost impossible.

Further restricting soft power development is the fact that the American populace seems to be going through a nativist phase. Whether due to anti-terrorism, anti-immigration, or anti-globalization, Americans seem little inclined to engage the world. This attitude is exacerbated by a national narcissism apparent in many Americans who expect that others want to be like us and that we are inherently "likeable." The unacknowledged result is that these Americans see little importance in concerted efforts to improve the U.S. image abroad or to attract others to us.

Limitations related to prevailing domestic political agendas and "Executive Group Think" often impede the development and implementation of soft power messages and activities. Combining the two phenomena results in ground truth rarely being spoken to "higher-ups." When truth is spoken, it is often rejected, particularly if it is perceived as undermining preferred policies.

Although academic criticism of soft power methods may be understandable, it should be recognized that accomplishing the intended objectives can be very difficult. Other conditions often intervene to make the obvious soft power choice hard to implement. For example, it was considered very desirable to return Aristide to power in Haiti. However, by the time that could happen with U.S. assistance, his mental state was no longer stable. The objective that had been handed down to DoD turned out to be impossible due to circumstances that had neither a soft nor a hard power solution. As could be seen in this case, sometimes an emphasis on ethics can clash with reality.

Panel Members believed that there would be value in discussing topics related to ethical concerns, and DoD does discuss them on occasion. However, these topics are not really considered by the public. Discussions cannot take place using only sound bites. It is easier to criticize U.S. "torture tactics" than it is to debate which interrogation techniques are permissible.

Underlying all of these problems is the complication that the United States is held to a higher standard by the world. Because of its proven and self-proclaimed

technological preeminence, the world expects that any American missile strike should hit only one bad guy in his bed while leaving his family and neighbors unharmed. Much of the world also expects the United States to come fix their problems even when they consider the presence of the U.S. to be a problem. In the most recent case, the Iraqi people now see that the United States has limited impact and can get things wrong. This new knowledge makes the U.S. position more precarious.

Another complicating factor is that centralized control of the message really cannot be accomplished all that well by the U.S. government. Leaders should not have to talk directly to each strategic corporal all the time. Nor do leaders have the time to craft a response to each situation. Instead, they must constantly push out a consistent basic message. In a perfect world, the White House would produce a narrative and the combat commanders would be given the pieces that show their section of the process. Soldiers on the ground would in turn be given enough to know how to handle a range of situations that are likely to differ from one region or time to another. For example, U.S. government radio and television networks currently operating in the Middle East play much more music than did the old Voice of America broadcasts to Europe. In the case of the old European broadcasts, news and information shows were considered more important because so little information was readily available, particularly in the Eastern Bloc countries at that time.

## MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SOFT POWER

### *Initial Issues for Discussion*

- Should U.S. assistance be related to a government's or a people's favorable opinion of or favorable behavior toward the United States?
- In terms of cost-effectiveness, which should be the higher priority:
  - Centralized efforts that can control the message and manage the implementation?
  - On-site efforts that can "show the flag" and respond more quickly?
- How can the U.S. government measure the effectiveness of its soft power efforts toward the following:
  - Allies and friends?
  - Rivals and competitors?
  - Terrorist foes?

### *Key Points from Panel Discussions*

A typical U.S. government mantra is: "If it is worth doing, it is worth measuring." However, measuring U.S. soft power effectiveness is extremely difficult. Although certain aspects of soft power activity can be measured, the effectiveness of many critical activities cannot. Unfortunately, U.S. decision makers often gravitate toward those options that have measurable impacts or consequences, especially those that seem to have demonstrable near-term benefits.

Money spent on foreign affairs is easy to count and is, therefore, often used in measurement efforts. For example, it might be possible to measure the number of terrorists in an area compared to the amount of Saudi aid money spent in that area. Other correlations could be used to compare an identifiable amount of something to the number of casualties in a hostilities area. The question of how important or valid these easily measurable elements might be in assessing a foreign affairs situation was considered debatable by some of the Panel Members.

Indeed, one school of thought suggests that we can never really know what soft power contributed to a situation. For example, it may not be possible to determine whether some improving opinions about the United States in Africa are attributable to U.S. soft power efforts or to the Chinese overstepping boundaries in their increasing economic activities in the region.

Building and nurturing political goodwill is one of the more obvious soft power goals that cannot really be measured, especially in the short term. Indeed, the real impact and benefit may arise only in crisis situations, when the United States needs the support of other states and peoples to achieve its purpose.

Much of soft power assessment is done by anecdote, but that does not provide a particularly rigorous or "academic" result. Doing more might be possible; however, there is always a resource management issue involved. The same thing is true with other areas, such as modeling and simulations. Although anthropology would be difficult to model, there is no reason not to try to do so except for the amount of effort needed to acquire the inputs.

Currently, the U.S. government is spending a great deal of money on the modeling of soft power issues. This approach is controversial because some people may discount the usefulness of such models and cannot understand how others could rely on them. Difficulties and limitations abound. A fundamental knowledge base for soft power does not really exist, even among experts. Nor is it possible to pin down experts on specific data points required by a model. The result can be a model with a false level of precision that would not be a dependable predictor of future events.

Models of human behavior also are complicated by the fact that human decision making is chaotic. However, if modeling is used as part of a planning process, it can be helpful in building a plan for future actions in time of crisis. The resulting plan is actually of less importance than the planning process itself. The process of planning can highlight issues for discussion so that the players will at least be familiar with the concepts should similar events arise in the future. At all costs, those developing soft power plans should avoid the oft-heard concept of "Don't put it in the scenario because we don't know how to model it."

Panel Members noted that there is always a question of whether people will actually do what the models say they will. Governments or peoples elsewhere also may decide on a particular course of action because the United States has taken a different course of action. Despite their limitations, models may provide a good place to start talking with other agencies about consequences involved in scenarios. Once a strawman model result is produced, other participants could be asked for their opinions of the

model-derived scenario. Such an activity is more likely to generate responses than asking for initial input for scenario building.

Some academics fear the use of their data for national security purposes, and, therefore, will not share their data with DoD. Others object to influencing foreign populations rather than just observing them. Regardless of these concerns, any soft power objective must support overall national security objectives in a specific region, and there needs to be a good academic understanding of that region to provide a solid basis for the measurement. Within academia, there is sensitivity about even discussing the use of the soft sciences for purposes that might influence other peoples.

## SOURCES OF PAST SUCCESSES AND FAILURES

### *Initial Issues for Discussion*

- In your view, what major event or issue of the post-World War II period best exemplifies U.S. soft power activity? Why/how did U.S. soft power make a difference?

### *Key Points from the Panel Discussions*

Panel Members identified the major events or issues that best exemplified U.S. soft power activities of the post-World War II period, including the following:

- *The Marshall Plan*: It was collaborative, and it considered European values and priorities, instead of simply imposing U.S. preferences.
- *U.S. Libraries and Cultural Centers Abroad*: Before the spread of the Internet, U.S. libraries and cultural centers provided a valuable service to foreign peoples. These libraries were often the only source of objective information in countries that could not or would not provide it. Likewise, the cultural centers supported events that drew the countries' elites and opinion-makers, as well as common people.
- *The U.S. Civil Rights Movement*: The movement vastly enhanced U.S. soft power abroad as it demonstrated to the world, specifically to the USSR, that Americans could practice good values, not simply preach them.
- *Postwar Open Markets*: The United States lowered trade barriers at some short-term cost to itself to allow other more damaged countries to grow and prosper.
- *The Apollo Program*: After Sputnik, much of the world had the impression that the Soviet Union was the most advanced technological society. This changed dramatically in 1969 with the Apollo moon landing. U.S. leaders at the time were strongly aware of the soft power—as well as scientific and technical—importance of this event, ensuring the landing was widely publicized in the mass media around the world.
- *Nuclear Deterrence*: Many people, even experts, tend to attribute the effectiveness of U.S. nuclear deterrence in the Cold War era primarily to U.S. military capabilities. However, this overlooks the fact that diplomacy, military-to-military contacts, cultural exchanges, elite dialogues, and other soft power activities also played major roles.

- *The Helsinki Accords of 1975*: These accords provided a framework and mechanism to focus world attention on human rights.
- *U.S. Support for South Korea*: Since the mid-1950s, the U.S. support for and presence in South Korea has been a key indicator that the U.S. government would defend its allies and friends over the long haul.

Panel Members also discussed how the U.S. public has reacted to recent soft power issues. One Member noted the importance of the (former Secretary of State Colin) Powell Doctrine: Pick your battles. His underlying meaning was that the U.S. public will support U.S. government activities that they believe are important. At the same time, it has been proven that the U.S. public is not as casualty-averse as enemies think. As an example of both concepts combined, it was noted that most Americans now understand the concept of not pulling out of Iraq too rapidly. Originally, the U.S. public was consumed with debating whether the United States should have gone into Iraq. Now they have moved on, and most Americans realize that there is still a job to do in Iraq, although the issue came up again as part of the 2008 election campaign.

## PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE APPLICATIONS OF SOFT POWER

### *Initial Issues for Discussion*

- What U.S. soft power initiatives would most improve the image and attractiveness of the United States to foreign audiences, including foreign governments, movements, and peoples?
- Does the U.S. government take soft power seriously when measured by criteria such as:
  - Sufficient priority?
  - Sufficient authority?
  - Sufficient funding?
  - Sufficient career promotions?
  - Other considerations?
- Is the current approach to allocating resources among the diverse soft power institutions adequate? Does the U.S. government have a national strategy for resource allocation among:
  - U.S. government “soft power” institutions?
  - U.S. government national and security objectives?

### *Key Points from Panel Discussions*

Panel Members suggested that the most important requirement for expanding future U.S. soft power effectiveness is imagination and innovation in public diplomacy coming from within the government. Imaginative ideas exist outside the government, but they need to be translated into coherent government policies.

Specific initiatives that would improve the image and attractiveness of the United States to foreign audiences include the following:

- Listen to foreign audiences. This is the critical side of soft power activities that U.S. leaders most often overlook. It is not sufficient to monitor foreign political broadcasts and leadership speeches.
- Expand U.S. dialogue with a wide variety of peoples in very diverse settings and conditions. In the process, we need to remember that dialogue is not simply “preaching” U.S. values and policies but a real two-sided exchange of views.
- Improve the coordination of government, public, private, and nonprofit soft power initiatives.
- Improve the flexibility and responsiveness of soft power institutions so that they can respond more rapidly and effectively to emerging demands.

In general, there is no clear view of how well the United States has been doing in its efforts at soft power. Anecdotal evidence indicates that HIV/AIDS help for Africa has been well received. However, there was doubt among Panel Members as to whether we could identify what we have done well in that situation so that we could build on that success.

Panel Members also questioned whether work by U.S.-based nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) is recognized as American. Much of this NGO support is never counted when identifying overall measurements of U.S. foreign aid. For example, are contributions from organizations such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation seen as American aid?

As though advising the new president, Panel Members offered some specific recommendations related to soft power:

- Focus on imaginative options by bringing together representatives of Madison Avenue and the White House inner circle to develop monthly plans.
- Ensure that the new Secretaries of Defense and State appreciate the value of soft power from the start.
- Bring back the USIA as a separate agency, not as part of the State Department.
- Use new social networking capabilities such as viral marketing to create buzz about U.S. efforts.
- Uphold the Doha Development Round, the current trade-negotiation round of the World Trade Organization, to show U.S. support for free trade and the economic development of under-developed areas of the world as well as the promotion of other free-trade policies.
- Recognize that the refusal by the United States to give up subsidies to its industries and farmers is seen as hypocrisy around the world.
- Recognize that there are not separate foreign and domestic policies but rather one national policy.
- Think of the president as the primary public affairs officer for the country.
- Recognize that others outside the country are also always listening to American politicians.

- Tone down U.S. evangelism without abandoning American ideals and while also avoiding efforts to dictate that the American way is the only way to do things.
- Get rid of the Fortress America concept.
- Be more accepting and inclusive.

Panel Members noted that major changes in policy are unlikely to get through Congress much the way that the Kyoto accords have failed to attract enough positive responses to be passed. However, the United States truly needs a grand strategy to drive all of the tools of soft power. Such a big shift in thinking should have happened at the end of the Cold War but did not. Since then, the need has grown to shift the country's thinking and determine what we really want the United States to do. To come to any conclusions might require the president taking all of his Cabinet members to Camp David for several weeks of contemplation about where the United States should be in 50 years.

Unfortunately, some Panel Members lamented, this era lacks a George Kennan—someone who can come up with a new paradigm to replace Kennan's Cold War paradigm. Nor is there a central point of control for soft power, although the establishment of a new agency should be avoided. It was suggested that an entity within the State Department would work best as long as it was given appropriate funding and personnel.

Looking solely at funding projections, prospects for the future appeared dismal especially when recognizing that over the past 25 years, U.S. political leaders have gutted U.S. foreign aid. In terms of GDP, the United States is near the bottom rung of donor nations. Moreover, the greater proportion of this aid is aimed at winning the favor of a few dictatorial regimes, not truly helping needy states and peoples to develop and prosper. This one factor provides a good measure of how low soft power sits in the esteem of U.S. leaders.

Another concern is that some soft power or aid programs may be a success overseas but a failure at home. A better narrative is needed for explaining what is being done overseas and why. Domestic targets of soft power are a legitimate concern with any type of program, as in the case of the Space Race. Although it had a tremendous international effect, some elements in the U.S. public complained about its expense when compared to funding needed for domestic programs.

In general, the Panel Members believed that there is room for optimism. Some U.S. officials are beginning to project a new level of concern and appreciation for soft power and its benefits.

# PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES

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