**THE LOGIC OF ATTRACTION:
OUTLINE OF A THEORY OF SOFT POWER**

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(2019)

This paper has evolved from the paper titled “How Soft Power Works,” presented at the American Political Science Association meeting in Toronto, September 3, 2009.

Joe Nye has accompanied the writing of this paper with relentless encouragement and insightful discussion, for which I am forever grateful.

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Abstract

What is soft power? Where does it come from? How does it work? This paper outlines the basic sketch of a theory of soft power by addressing these questions, operationalizing the distinctive features, key sources, and causal mechanisms of soft power. Disentangling two orthogonal dimensions in Joseph Nye's full spectrum of power behaviors, I map the power behaviors with a two-dimensional continuum that distinguishes between power-over and power-with on one hand, and between hard and soft terms of the power process on the other. I argue that the "soft" in soft power does not mean intangible or gentle, as most of the discourse on soft power assumes; rather it refers to the soft terms of the power process and the symmetry of positive freedom between the participants in this process. Soft power is a form of power-with that works through the diffuse reciprocity of social exchange. It is contrasted with the traditional concept of power that equates it with power-over and with the specific reciprocity of economic exchange. Soft power comes in three flavors rooted in three kinds of positive agential qualities: kindness, competence, and commitment. It emerges from the social exchange of kindness, coalition benefits, deference benefits, competence benefits, and commitments to a shared goal, value, identity, or belief between its participants. Three families of agential qualities—kindness, competence, and commitment—give rise to three species of soft power through signaling and perception. This theory suggests that positive agential qualities and social exchange, as the sources and

mechanism of soft power, deserve far more attention in the study of international relations, and that soft power is best to be studied with an interdisciplinary approach.

Introduction

What makes up the power of a “Great Power”? The answer from the monumental survey *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* by the historian Paul Kennedy is: economic wealth and military might.¹ This idea resonates well with most observers of world politics, but it tells only half of the story. Partly in response to Kennedy’s analysis, Joseph Nye coined the term “soft power” to name a missing variable in the equation.² Soft power, Nye explains, “is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments.”³ In the three decades since its inception, the term has become ordinary language; the concept, or more precisely its various interpretations, gained prominence both in the academic discussion of power and the foreign policy of major powers.⁴ It also turns out

¹ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987).

² Joseph S. Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).

³ Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), p. x.

⁴ Soft power is the subject matter of three of the fifteen chapters in Felix Berenskoetter and M.J. Williams, eds., *Power in World Politics* (London: Routledge, 2007), a major volume on power in international relations. The *Journal of Political Power*, a premier forum for interdisciplinary discussion on social power, has devoted two special issues, No. 1 (2011) and No. 3 (2016), to soft power. Among the great powers, China and Russia have formally endorsed soft power as an important foreign policy concept. See the *Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*, February 12, 2013, available at http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICk6BZ29/content/id/122186; and the report of General Secretary Xi Jinping at the Chinese Communist Party’s 19th National Congress, October 18, 2017, available at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/19thcpnationalcongress/2017-11/04/content_34115212.htm. U.S. leaders such as Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton have

that soft power is not unique to great powers or international relations alone; small states can also have it, and it is present among individuals as well as groups of people.⁵

Proponents of soft power often think of it as a low-cost but high-value kind of power. They claim that it consumes less resources while being more ethical than hard power. Depending on the context, soft power can be more effective than its opposite. Nye argues that soft power is more important when power is diffuse and when people live in an information age.⁶ Kenneth Boulding's discussion of integrative power, a very close kin to soft power, suggests that the influence generated by soft power tends to be more far-reaching than that of hard power.⁷ In Nye's words, "winning the peace is harder than winning a war, and soft power is essential to winning the peace."⁸ But there are as many skeptics of soft power as there are believers of it. Major criticisms range from "it's, well, soft" (soft power is less effective than hard power) to "it isn't so soft" (soft power is as coercive as hard power) to "not sure if it's for real" (there is little evidence of its working and hardly a reliable way to measure it, so it may not exist) and "perhaps it is only the halo of hard power, the gleam on the sword."⁹ Worlds apart as they are, most critics and supporters of soft power agree on one point: its concept is ambiguous, its characterization

also emphasized the importance of soft power. See August Cole, "Defense Industry Pursues Gold in Smart Power Deals," *Wall Street Journal*, March 23, 2010.

⁵ Nye, *Soft Power*; Joseph Nye, *The Powers to Lead* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁶ Nye, *Bound to Lead*; Nye, *Soft Power*; Nye, *Powers to Lead*; Nye, *Future of Power*.

⁷ Kenneth E. Boulding, *Three Faces of Power* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990).

⁸ Nye, *Soft Power*, p. xii.

⁹ Niall Ferguson, "Think Again: Power," *Foreign Policy* 134 (January/February 2003); Janice Bially Mattern, "Why 'Soft Power' Isn't So Soft: Representational Force and Attraction in World Politics," in Berenskoetter and Williams, *Power in World Politics*, pp. 98-119; Brantly Womack, "Dissecting Soft Power: Attention, Attraction, Persuasion," in Womack, *China among Unequals: Asymmetric Foreign Relationships in Asia* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2010), p. 65.

underspecified.¹⁰ Despite several efforts to remedy this situation, fundamental questions about the defining characteristics, key sources, and causal mechanisms of soft power remain either poorly explored or inadequately answered. As Jean-Marc Blanchard and Fujia Lu have observed, “A deficiency in the literature is the operationalization of soft power.”¹¹ The ambiguity of the concept and its theoretical underpinnings has negative ramifications for both analysis and practice. It leaves unclear what soft power is, how we know it when we see it, how it actually happens, and how actors can deal with it. The vagueness about soft power increases the chances for claims and doubts about it to be misplaced and excessive. Misunderstanding about soft power is likely to lead to poor policy choices, erroneous recognition of its existence, and ignorance of its effects.

¹⁰ In addition to the critics cited above, see, for example, Steven Lukes, “Power and The Battle for Hearts and Minds: On the Bluntness of Soft Power,” in Berenskoetter and Williams, *Power in World Politics*, pp. 83-97; Giulio M. Gallarotti, *Cosmopolitan Power in International Relations: A Synthesis of Realism, Neoliberalism, and Constructivism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Matthew Kroenig, Melissa McAdam, and Steven Weber, “Taking Soft Power Seriously,” *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 29, No. 5 (2010), pp. 412-431; Todd Hall, “An Unclear Attraction: A Critical Examination of Soft Power as an Analytical Category,” *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 3 (2010), pp. 189-211; Steven B. Rothman, “Revising the Soft Power Concept: What Are the Means and Mechanisms of Soft Power?” *Journal of Political Power*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (April 2011), pp. 49-64; David W. Kearn, “The Hard Truth about Soft Power,” *Journal of Political Power*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (April 2011), pp. 65-85; Craig Hayden, *The Rhetoric of Soft Power: Public Diplomacy in Global Contexts* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012); Ty Solomon, “The Affective Underpinnings of Soft Power,” *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (2014), pp. 720-741; Yulia Kiseleva, “Russia’s Soft Power Discourse: Identity, Status, and the Attraction of Power,” *Politics*, Vol. 35, No. 3-4 (2015), pp. 316-329; David A. Baldwin, *Power and International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), pp. 164-171; the works referenced in Justyna Szczudlik-Tatar, “‘Soft Power’ in Chinese International Relations Theory: Some Aspects of the Chinese Debate on ‘Soft Power,’” *Asien*, No. 125 (October 2012), pp. 62-77; and the individual chapters in Mingjiang Li, ed., *Soft Power: China’s Emerging Strategy in International Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009); and Inderjeet Parma and Michael Cox, eds., *Soft Power and US Foreign Policy: Theoretical, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2010).

¹¹ Jean-Marc F. Blanchard and Fujia Lu, “Thinking Hard about Soft Power: A Review and Critique of the Literature on China and Soft Power,” *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (2012), pp. 565-598.

This paper will refine and further develop the concept of soft power with the aim of outlining the basic sketch of a theory of soft power. I hope that the propositions presented here will serve as assumptions and hypotheses of a soft power research program. To this end, I will address three central questions that undergird such an outline: What is soft power? Where does soft power come from? How does soft power work? These questions concern the essence of soft power, the key sources and processes that generate soft power, and the causal mechanisms that explain why soft power occurs. Relying on Nye's intuitive idea and his numerous examples of soft power, I will explicate and operationalize the concept, drawing on theoretical and empirical research in multiple disciplines ranging from biology, psychology, and economics to anthropology, sociology, and political science to substantiate the propositions.

When Nye initially developed the concept, he followed the search for hidden power that started with Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz's seminal article entitled "Two Faces of Power," but he went further afar with the idea of attraction as soft power.¹² This idea leads us beyond the realm of power-over, in which not only the first and the "second face of power" (Bachrach and Baratz's view) but also the "third" (Steven Lukes's) and "fourth face of power" (Michel Foucault's) remain.¹³ Power as attraction can only be understood in terms of a very different kind of power—power-with.

¹² Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, "Two Faces of Power," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 56, No. 4 (1962), pp. 947-952; Nye, *Bound to Lead*, pp. 31, 266.

¹³ Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, Second edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Peter Digeser, "The Fourth Face of Power," *Journal of Politics* Vol. 54, No. 4 (1992), pp. 977-1007.

Power, in the most comprehensive and general sense that is common to all cases, is the ability to do things, the capacity to effect outcomes.¹⁴ The fountain of this capacity is called the base of power. In social relations, the elemental process of power typically involves an agent and a subject. The agent is the one who can harness the base of power, and the subject is the other who is involved as either the affected or the contributing actor or both. The traditional (and still dominant) view of power recognizes the affected actor, hence the term “subject,” but it ignores the contributing actor, which I will call “partner,” “client,” and “audience,” depending on the context. Whereas the traditional view reduces power to *power over* a subject, this study sees power comprehensively as *power to do* things, which in the social context entails *power over* a subject and *power with* a partner, client, or audience.

Nye’s full spectrum of power behaviors houses two major forms of power-over (coercion and structuring) and two major forms of power-with (inducement and attraction), but it collapses two orthogonal dimensions into one. Explicating these dimensions is key to operationalizing the essence of soft power. The term “soft power” is founded on an intuitive distinction between soft and hard. But different senses of soft and hard have given rise to different uses of the term. This paper argues that the “soft” in soft power does not mean intangible or gentle, as most of the discourse on soft power assumes, rather it refers to the soft terms of the power process and the symmetry of positive freedom between the participants in this process. The soft terms of the power process allow it to not face with subject resistance. The symmetry of positive freedom between the participants ensures that

¹⁴ Peter Morriss, *Power: A Philosophical Analysis*, Second edition (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*.

they can engage in the process voluntarily. Nye has intuitively sensed that voluntarism and indirection are two defining features of soft power; this paper will explicate why and how.

Explicating the causal mechanisms of soft power at the behavioral and psychological levels is another focus of this paper. The key factors that are essential in generating soft power—in other words, the bases or basic resources of soft power—are the agent’s positive qualities as perceived by the audience. To put it quantitatively and reflecting the process of its production, $\text{Soft Power} = \text{Quality} \times \text{Signaling} \times \text{Perception}$. The generic mechanism that gives rise to soft power is the diffuse reciprocity of social exchange. Soft power comes in three flavors originating from three families of positive agential qualities. These are virtues in relation to people (kindness), virtues in relation to activities (competence), and virtues in relation to values, identities, beliefs, and aspirations (commitment). Benign power comes from kindness; its mechanism is the exchange of kindness. Brilliant power comes from competence and operates through the exchange of competence benefits for deference benefits and coalition benefits. Beautiful power has its roots in commitment and is generated by the resonance of commitment to a shared value, identity, belief, or aspiration.

This paper argues that the major hallmarks of soft power are the attraction of positive qualities, the mechanism of social exchange or diffuse reciprocity, the symmetry of positive freedom, and the obviation of resistance. Based on the two-dimensional spectrum of power forms, soft power can be defined variously as the ability to get what you want by getting others to genuinely want what you want (cf. Nye’s (1990, 31) formulation, I add the adverb “genuinely”) and the ability to get what one wants through

attraction rather than coercion, inducement, or arrangement (cf. Nye's (2004, x)

formulation, I add "arrangement" and replace "payments" with "inducement").¹⁵

The concept of soft power as attraction can be operationalized at two levels. At the level of mechanism, soft power is the ability to produce favorable outcomes through social exchange (diffuse reciprocity), in which the participants maintain mutual control of the range of choices available. At the level of power base, soft power is the attraction of positive agential qualities such as kindness toward the audience, competence in a domain valued by the audience, and commitment to a value, identity, belief, or aspiration shared by the audience.

The remainder of this paper is divided into six sections. The next two sections discuss what soft power is, where it comes from, and how it is generated. They are followed by three sections that explore the causal mechanisms of soft power in its three subtypes at the behavioral and psychological levels. These mechanisms are the patterns of social intercourse between the participants of the soft power process and the motives that drive them to engage in that process. The concluding section briefly discusses some implications for further research, especially for the field of international relations.

What Is Soft Power?

As the term "soft power" became ordinary language, its content was "stretched and twisted" far beyond its original idea.¹⁶ The most common uses of the term range from a very narrow sense that equates soft power with cultural influence to a very broad sense in

¹⁵ Nye, *Bound to Lead*, p. 31; Nye, *Soft Power*, p. x.

¹⁶ Joseph S. Nye, "Think Again: Soft Power," *Foreign Policy* (February 2006), web exclusive at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=3393.

which soft power is synonymous with anything but military force. In this broad sense, soft power is often understood as a form of non-coercive power that typically involves the use of economic, cultural, and informational resources. Nye has objected to both uses; indeed, they convey false ideas about soft power. Against the mistake of equating soft power with cultural influence, Nye noted, “Excellent wines and cheeses do not guarantee attraction to France, nor does the popularity of Pokémon games assure that Japan will get the policy outcomes it wishes.”¹⁷ The association of soft power with economic, cultural, and informational resources ignores the fact that military resources can greatly enhance soft power. One example is the role of military force in protection and assistance given to allies and partners.¹⁸

Nye’s writing in the last 30 years oscillates between a narrower view of soft power as attraction and a broader view that includes not just attraction but also persuasion, agenda-setting, and framing, where agenda-setting and framing share a similar mechanism different from that of attraction and persuasion results from the combination of attraction and framing.¹⁹ This raises the question, what is the core—or, as Yun Seong-Hun puts it,²⁰ the “definitional DNA”—of soft power? The literature on soft power has given four distinct answers to this question: culture, politics, legitimacy, and attraction. Popular in the West and dominant in China, the idea that soft power emerges from cultural influence has

¹⁷ Nye, *Soft Power*, p. 12.

¹⁸ Nye, *Future of Power*, pp. 45-48.

¹⁹ Nye, *Bound to Lead*; Nye, *Soft Power*; Nye, *Future of Power*.

²⁰ Yun Seong-Hun, “An Overdue Critical Look at Soft Power Measurement: The Construct Validity of the Soft Power 30 in Focus,” *Journal of International and Area Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2018), pp. 1-19.

informed the Chinese government's programs to enhance Chinese soft power abroad.²¹ The idea that politics is the core of soft power is the second major view in the Chinese debate over the core of soft power.²² However, its main proponents conceive of the "core" not so much as the "definitional DNA" but as the "operating system." According to Yan Xuetong, the leading proponent of the "politics" school and the initiator of the debate in China, political power, being the "operating power," provides the basis for both soft power and hard power, which include "resource power." Yan uses soft power as a label for cultural and political power, which are intangible, and hard power as the common name of military and economic power, which are tangible.²³ These two views clearly stretch the idea of soft power beyond what makes sense of it. By contrast, the views that the core of soft power is legitimacy or attraction stay close to Nye's. Nye defines soft power as "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments" (2004, x) and notes, "in behavioral terms soft power is attractive power" (2004, 6).²⁴ Nye stresses legitimacy as the property that distinguishes soft power agenda-setting from hard power agenda-setting.²⁵

Since soft power is defined as the "soft" kind of power and the opposite of hard power, the question "What is soft power?" boils down to two interrelated questions, "What makes soft power soft?" and "What differentiates soft power from hard power?" In the

²¹ Bonnie S. Glaser and Melissa E. Murphy, "Soft Power with Chinese Characteristics," in Carola McGiffert, ed., *Chinese Soft Power and Its Implications for the United States: Competition and Cooperation in the Developing World*, Report of the CSIS Smart Power Initiative (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2009).

²² Glaser and Murphy, "Soft Power with Chinese Characteristics."

²³ Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, edited by Daniel A. Bell and Sun Zhe, translated by Edmund Ryden (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), pp. 101-102.

²⁴ Nye, *Soft Power*.

²⁵ Nye, *Future of Power*, p. 20.

prevalent understanding, it is intangible resources that make soft power soft and separate soft power from hard power. The use of intangible assets is often seen as the distinctive feature of soft power. However, as Nye has repeatedly warned, “the relationship is imperfect” and “intangibility is not a *necessary* condition for soft power.”²⁶ Typical “hard power resources” such as military units can produce soft, attractive power when conducting humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and typical “soft power resources” such as computer codes can generate hard, coercive power when blocking users’ access to their own files, forcing them to pay ransom or to lose their files altogether. The association of soft power with intangible resources makes little sense if “soft” resources can give rise to hard power and “hard” resources can engender soft power. Alas, this association is assumed in most of the literature.

To solve this problem, a few authors propose to turn from the nature of the means employed to the way those means are employed. In this direction, Tarık Oğuzlu argues that when hard power is at work, actors comply as a result of a cost-benefit calculation, but when it comes to soft power, they comply “because they view the power-holder’s identity and policies as legitimate.”²⁷ Mingjiang Li contends that it is not the softness of resources, but the soft use of resources that makes soft power soft. Soft power, he elaborates, emerges from the “prudent, cautious, accommodating, and considerate” use of resources, which the subject perceives as legitimate and beneficial.²⁸ Giulio Gallarotti suggests that soft power occurs when liberal principles such as fair play, cooperation, and respect dictate the use of

²⁶ Nye, *Bound to Lead*, p. 267; Nye, *Soft Power*, p. 7; Nye, *Future of Power*, pp. 21, 243 (emphasis in original).

²⁷ Tarık Oğuzlu, “Soft Power in Turkish Foreign Policy,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (March 2007), pp. 83-84.

²⁸ Mingjiang Li, “Soft Power: Nurture Not Nature,” in Li, *Soft Power*, pp. 3-8.

resources, and hard power happens when resources are expended in the context of illiberal principles.²⁹

Although an improvement, these proposals still do not solve the problem. The trouble with Oğuzlu's proposal is that cost-benefit calculation and legitimacy are not opposites and soft power does not exclude cost-benefit calculations. Attraction to role models is an archetype of soft power. But many people are attracted to their role models based on the cost-benefit calculation that learning from role models is an efficient shortcut to self-improvement.³⁰ As for Li's argument, soft power can also result from a hard use of resources. Rosa Parks's refusal to budge on a segregated bus can hardly be viewed as accommodating and cautious, but her act of principled civil disobedience unleashed a legion of followers.³¹ Julius Caesar's military campaigns in Gaul were ruthless and brutal, but they earned him huge respect and popularity in Rome.³² Osama bin Laden's attacks against the United States were hardly soft, but as Nye has noted, "Some radical Muslims are attracted to support Osama bin Laden's actions not because of payments or threats, but because they believe in the legitimacy of his objectives."³³ The latter examples also cast doubt on Gallarotti's suggestion. Caesar's troops and bin Laden's attacks were exactly "tangible resources that are illiberal," which in Gallarotti's view "fall into the category of hard power."³⁴ As will be seen in this paper, being nice is just one of the three major ways

²⁹ Gallarotti, *Cosmopolitan Power*, pp. 37-38.

³⁰ Joseph Henrich and Francisco J. Gil-White, "The Evolution of Prestige: Freely Conferred Deference as a Mechanism for Enhancing the Benefits of Cultural Transmission," *Evolution and Human Behavior*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (May 2001), pp. 165-196.

³¹ Joseph S. Nye, *The Powers to Lead* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 18.

³² Adrian Goldsworthy, *Caesar: Life of a Colossus* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).

³³ Nye, *Powers to Lead*, p. 31.

³⁴ Gallarotti, *Cosmopolitan Power*, p. 38.

to obtain soft power; one can also have soft power by being competent (as Caesar demonstrated with his campaigns in Gaul) or being committed to a cause (as bin Laden showed with his terrorist attacks). Nye has numerous examples of the bully and illiberal having soft power—Hitler, Stalin, Mao, and bin Laden, to name a few.³⁵

A good starting point in the search for what makes soft power soft and different from hard power is Nye's spectrum of power behaviors.³⁶ It is a continuum with two halves that represent two "methods of exercising power," one is "directive or commanding" (the hard half) and the other "indirect or co-optive" (the soft half). The full spectrum ranges from coercion through inducement/payment on the hard side to agenda-setting/framing and attraction on the soft side. Coercion and attraction represent the two extremes of the continuum. The key to understanding the essence of soft power is the dimension along which this spectrum runs. Nye notes that this is voluntarism on the part of the subject.³⁷ Moving along this spectrum, subject voluntarism increases from coercion to attraction. However, the reverse is true for inducement/payment and agenda-setting/framing. When the agent uses payments to induce the subject to do something for him, the subject retains a qualitatively higher degree of voluntarism than when the agent shapes her choices by framing the situation. With inducement the agent can only get what he wants if the subject agrees to accept the payment offered, but when he sets the agenda or frame the situation, the subject has to live with the options he makes available to her. Why does Nye's spectrum incorporate two opposite directions of the degree of voluntarism? The reason is that it conflates two orthogonal dimensions. Nye observes that

³⁵ Nye, *Powers to Lead*.

³⁶ Nye, *Bound to Lead*, pp. 31, 267; Nye, *Soft Power*, pp. 7-8; Nye, *Future of Power*, pp. 20-21.

³⁷ Nye, *Future of Power*, p. 243.

soft power is associated with indirection and voluntarism—but the two are uncorrelated. The spectrum that houses soft power and the other forms of power is thus a two-dimensional continuum in which coercion is the polar opposite of attraction and inducement/payment the polar opposite of agenda-setting/framing.

Refining Nye's spectrum, I propose to mark this two-dimensional continuum with four elemental forms: coercion or coercive power, inducement or transactional power, arrangement or structural, institutional, manipulative (briefly: arrangemental) power, and attraction or attractive power (see Figure 1). These are ideal types in Max Weber's sense—pure forms distilled for the sake of analysis while most instances in real life are their various combinations. This continuum allows for mixtures of different types, borderline cases between different types, and mutations from one type to another. These forms of power differ in terms of their operative mechanisms—they represent different pathways to power. Different mechanisms can co-exist in the same act or the same situation; a single event can produce various power effects if multiple pathways to power are at work. For example, the defeat of Nazi forces by the Allies in 1945 was a violent act against the Hitler regime (coercive power), but it generated gratitude in the liberated population (benign power), inspiration in those who shared the cause of liberation (beautiful power), and admiration in those who valued the competence of the victor (brilliant power). The Allies' triumph over the Axis powers also transformed the global geopolitical complexion, resulting in a massive restructuring of the world order (structural power).

Coercion. Coercive power works by denying choice to its subject; its mechanism is the imposition of a non-choice. Force is the key factor that carries out this imposition.

Force can be physical or non-physical, and it can be deployed actually, as in brute force, or imaginatively as in threats, blackmail, and intimidation.

Figure 1. Spectrum of Power Forms

		Terms of power process				
		hard		soft		
Positive freedom	asymmetric	Coercive Power COERCION <i>Hard Power</i>		Arrangemental Power ARRANGEMENT	Power-over	Modes of power
	symmetric	Transactional Power INDUCEMENT		Attractive Power ATTRACTION <i>Soft Power</i>	Power-with	
		direct		indirect		
		Dealing with resistance				

Arrangement. Structural/institutional/manipulative power works by channeling the choice of its subject; its mechanism is the organization of a field of possibilities. Structure in the broadest sense, including pattern, regularity, arrangement, network, and configuration, is the key factor that carries out this organization. Structures can be material (e.g., topography, demographic distributions, and the distribution of material capabilities),

social (e.g., norms, roles, institutions, culture, and fashion), ideational (e.g., common knowledge, narratives, and the distribution of interests), or a mixture of different ontologies (e.g. a situation). Actors can harness the power of structures by activating existing ones, creating new ones, mobilizing them, manipulating them, and occupying an advantageous position in them. Arrangement is more general than agenda-setting and also includes, for example, the ability to structure a situation; the framing of an issue, a discourse, a perspective; the manipulation of people, information, and things; the power to shape and change the rules of the game; the ability to shape the frameworks within which actors are related to each other; the capacity to determine the terms of the ways things are done; etc.

Inducement. Transactional power works by conditionally meeting certain needs of its participants; its mechanism is economic exchange: the negotiation of a bargain based on specific reciprocity. Payment, in any form that meets the needs of the actors, is the key factor that makes this exchange possible—by drawing the actors to and keeping them at the negotiation.

Attraction. As will be seen in this paper, attractive power works by creating a virtual common pool of benefits for its participants to share; its mechanism is social exchange, also called “diffuse reciprocity.” Positive agential quality, or virtue for short, is the key factor that makes this exchange possible by drawing the actors to and keeping them in it.³⁸

The two dimensions of this continuum involve the terms of the power process and the positive freedom of its participants. Positive freedom refers to the capacity to control a

³⁸ The term “virtue” as used in this study is deprived of its moral connotations.

range of choices available to an actor, whereas negative freedom is the freedom of choice within a field of possibilities.³⁹ Power in the sense of A's power over B is characterized by the asymmetry of A and B's positive freedom. Coercion and arrangement are two forms of power-over. When an actor points a gun to another actor and demands something, or when an actor shapes the playing field of another actor and obtains a favorable outcome, there is asymmetry in who controls the range of choices available to the other.

But power needs not always be power-over; it can also be power-with, specifically when it works through the mutuality of control that renders symmetric the positive freedom of the participants of the power process. Inducement and attraction are two variants of power-with. The generic case of inducement is that A offers B payment P with the request that B do X for A. A gives B two options (either do X and get P or not do X and not get P), but B can refuse to accept these options without being worse off. In this situation, neither party controls the range of choices available to the other. Alternatively, B can demand that A raise the payment from P to Q so B will accept the offer. In this situation, if A controls the options available to B in one instance, B controls the options available to A in the next turn, and so on until both agree (or fail to agree) on a bargain. The mutuality of control also characterizes attraction. Two prototypes of an actor with soft power is the friend and the role model. Friends are obliged to help each other when called for assistance. Each controls the range of options available to the other through this obligation, but the direction of control goes both ways. If a role model virtually controls a

³⁹ Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 118-172.

range of her followers' actions by providing the model for the latter to follow, the followers are the jury with regard to the former's qualification as their role model.

The other dimension of our power continuum involves the terms of the power process, where "hard" means strict or specific and "soft" means flexible or diffuse. Along this dimension, coercion and inducement reside in the hard side while arrangement and attraction belong to the soft side. Although both coercion and arrangement work by imposing a range of choices on the subject, the terms of imposition in coercion are so strict that for the subject under normal conditions it is practically a non-choice. In the sixteenth year of the Peloponnesian War, Athens sent envoys to Melos to negotiate the island's fate. Referring to their overwhelming force, the Athenians gave Melos two options: either submit and become part of the Athenian empire or receive war and be defeated. For the Melians, submitting to Athens meant slavery, which was unacceptable. As the Melians refused to surrender, they were quickly either killed or enslaved by the Athenians.⁴⁰ By contrast, the terms of imposition in arrangement are flexible. Arrangement provides choice, though it shapes choice in a certain way. Agenda-setting is both a process of creating and organizing options and a "mobilization of bias" that makes the missing options unavailable and the available options sometimes unequal.⁴¹

If power-over works by imposition, power-with operates through voluntary exchange: inducement through economic exchange, and attraction through social exchange. A key distinction between economic and social exchanges involves the

⁴⁰ Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. Richard Crawley (New York: Modern Library, 1982), V.85-113.

⁴¹ Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, "Two Faces of Power," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 56, No. 4 (December 1962), pp. 947-952.

specificity of the terms of exchange.⁴² Economic exchange rests on an agreement that specifies what are to be exchanged, when, and how. There is no such agreement in social exchange, although a tacit bargain may exist.⁴³ The parties to a social exchange often engage in an implicit negotiation over their relationship, but the terms of the social exchange are diffuse. One can repay a friend's favor whenever one wants and the thing returned may be heterogeneous, incommensurate, or incomparable with the thing received.⁴⁴ Economic exchange is specific reciprocity, social exchange is diffuse reciprocity.

Because of the hard terms of their power process, coercion and inducement have to deal with subject resistance directly. Coercion overcomes resistance with negative sanctions such as force and threats, inducement overcomes resistance with positive sanctions such as payments and bribes. The soft modalities of arrangement and attraction allow them to deal with subject resistance indirectly. Arrangement avoids, circumvents, or deflects resistance by relying on structures—material, social, and ideational—that are either invisible to the subject or seen as normal, legitimate, necessary, inevitable, or constitutive of the world. Attraction renders resistance unthinkable, unnecessary, or undesirable because it rests on the appeal of virtues such as kindness, competence, and commitment to a shared value, identity, belief, or aspiration.

⁴² Peter Blau, *Exchange and Power in Social Life* (New York: Wiley, 1964), p. 93. A seminal discussion of these two types of exchange in international relations is Robert O. Keohane, "Reciprocity in International Relations," *International Organization*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (1986), pp. 1-27, in which they are called "specific" and "diffuse reciprocity."

⁴³ These characteristics belong to the ideal types. As alluded by the continuum, most instances in the real world are in the gray, blending varying doses of the ideal types.

⁴⁴ Ricardo F. Crespo, "Reciprocity and Practical Comparability," *International Review of Economics*, Vol. 55, No. 1-2 (April 2008), pp. 13-28. See also Blau, *Exchange and Power*.

Of the four fundamental forms of power, only coercion is really hard and attraction really soft; inducement and arrangement are hard in one dimension and soft in another. Coupled with the tendency to reduce power to resources, this explains the widespread use of the term “soft power” as anything but military power and as cultural and economic influence. But lumping together attraction, arrangement, and inducement under soft power deprives the concept of its analytic purchase, while combining attraction and either arrangement or inducement into soft power is arbitrary. I propose, therefore, to reserve the term “soft power” for attraction only and “hard power” for coercion only. The explication of the two dimensions of soft power’s softness has enabled us to operationalize the concept as the ability to produce favorable outcomes through social exchange (diffuse reciprocity), in which the participants maintain mutual control of the range of choices available to them in the process.

Where Soft Power Comes From

In his critique of soft power measurement, Yun Seong-Hun observed that the literature often mixes basic resources with instrumental ones and sometimes favors instrumental over basic resources when measuring soft power, thus rendering the measurement invalid.⁴⁵ This state of affairs faithfully reflects the common way the concept of resource is treated in the larger literature on power. Indeed, the terms “resources” and “power bases” are often used interchangeably in the literature. Yet not all resources are created equal. Basic resources are the bases of power, the essential factor from which power arises; instrumental resources are the vehicles of power, the additional factors involved in the

⁴⁵ Yun, “An Overdue Critical Look at Soft Power Measurement.”

“translation” of the power bases into power effects. As Yun has noted, “Basic and instrumental resources notwithstanding are far from identical even if inseparable; nor are they fungible to, and substitutable for, one another in the conversion equation.”⁴⁶ Consider how I can boost my soft power with you. I can use my money to buy for you something you crave; I can spend my precious time with you to listen to your grievances; I can use my knowledge to give you advices on the issues that wake you up at night; I can use my network of former classmates to get you a job; I can use my truck to help you with moving; I can use my muscles to beat the guy who is attacking you. The list can go on and on; indeed, almost anything that can be employed can be employed to generate soft power. The key factor is not the resources used but, in the specific case cited above, the kind attitude expressed by the supportive behavior.

More generally for soft power, it is the agent’s good qualities that, when perceived positively by the audience, cause the responses that confer soft power on the agent. Call these qualities the “bases” or “basic resources” of soft power, we will see that all other resources are no more than the vehicle that conveys these qualities, and this vehicle can be anything contingent upon the context. Nye has identified culture, values, and policies as three “primary” and “basic resources” not in the sense I use here but in the sense of the “most likely resources.”⁴⁷ A closer look at how culture, values, and policies are involved in the production of soft power reveals that they are rather instrumental than basic resources in the sense of the essential factors that cause attraction. Indeed, Nye has noted that culture produces soft power “in places where it is attractive to others,” values generate soft power

⁴⁶ Yun, “An Overdue Critical Look at Soft Power Measurement,” p. 11.

⁴⁷ Nye, *Soft Power*, pp. 8, 11; Nye, *Future of Power*, p. 84.

“when [the actor embracing them] lives up to them,” and policies give rise to soft power “when others see them as legitimate and having moral authority.”⁴⁸ Here the positive qualities that make a culture attractive, the commitment to values, and the commitment to values and causes that makes the policies embodying it legitimate and morally authoritative are more essential than the culture, values, and policies in the generation of soft power.

In short, soft power is caused by the attraction of agential qualities that are perceived positively by the audience. These qualities can be divided in three groups of virtues corresponding to three forms of subject-object relations in the social context: one in relation to people, another in relation to valued domains of activity, and the third in relation to inspirational entities such as values, identities, beliefs, and aspirations.⁴⁹ The key sources (or bases, or basic resources) of soft power include (1) the positive attitudes toward other people, qualities such as kindness, benevolence, compassion, and generosity; (2) the qualities that represent competence in valued domains of life; and (3) the qualities that represent commitment to values, identities, beliefs, and aspirations. These virtues—to use a shorthand for each of the three species: kindness, competence, and commitment—give rise to three variants of soft power, which I will call metaphorically “benign power,” “brilliant power,” and “beautiful power.”

⁴⁸ Nye, *Soft Power*, p. 11; Nye, *Future of Power*, p. 84.

⁴⁹ This “virtuous triad” is inspired largely by Jürgen Habermas’s distinction of interaction, work, and language as three forms of the subject-object relation, which in turn was influenced by Hegel’s trinity of love, work, and language. These three forms are likely to correspond to the Platonic triad of the good, the true, and the beautiful. See Habermas, “Arbeit und Interaktion: Bemerkungen zu Hegels ‘Jenenser Philosophie des Geistes,’” in Habermas, *Technik und Wissenschaft als ‘Ideologie’* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989), pp 9-47.

The basic process that gives rise to soft power runs through four stages: quality development, signaling, perception, and response. To put it in an equation, Quality (Kindness, Competence, Commitment) x Signaling x Perception = Soft Power. A response can be negative, neutral, or positive, but the response that confers power on the agent must be positive in the sense that it enhances the capacity of the agent to achieve outcomes. The audience may respond positively by aligning itself with the agent, behaving in a way that makes the environment friendlier to the agent, or propagating the agent's good reputation. Response reflects perception, which can be neutral, negative, or positive, but only positive perception leads to soft power; neutral perception leads to audience indifference, while negative perception leads to agent vulnerability. Both superior and inferior qualities can be perceived negatively. An example of negative perception of superior qualities is jealousy, which makes the agent vulnerable to hostile action by the jealous audience. An example of negative perception of inferior qualities is the 19th-century British imagination of India as a woman, a child, and a beast, which gave Britain an impetus to conquer and exploit India.⁵⁰

Perception results from audience reading of signals about a quality. Since the qualities that produce soft power are not directly observable, information about them is delivered to the audience by signals from the agent. Agents may signal their qualities actively or passively, purposely or unintentionally, by behaving in a specific manner, displaying a property, or uttering a thought. A signal may relate to its indicated quality in several ways. The literature on signaling has identified three major kinds of signals: index signals are inherently connected to their underlying quality because the quality is a

⁵⁰ Jacques E.C. Hymans, "India's Soft Power and Vulnerability," *India Review*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (2009), pp. 234-265.

prerequisite for producing the indicators or because the indicators are immune to manipulation by the agent; costly signals can reliably indicate the quality they signal because their production uses an excess of the quality; and conventional signals relate to their indicated quality by convention. The Marshall Plan was a costly signal of the United States' wealth and goodwill toward the Europeans. The Sputnik was an index and costly signal of the Soviet Union's scientific-technological prowess. The Obama Administration's "rebalance" policy sent a conventional signal about America's commitment to Asian security, allies and partners. Public diplomacy with its three dimensions of daily communications, strategic communication, and exchange programs is a multi-purpose tool that can broadcast information about any kinds of agent qualities and is not the only or the main tool of soft power in international politics. The audience can obtain information about agent qualities directly through signals or indirectly through reputation. In some sense, reputation is to signal what money is to merchandise.⁵¹ Reputation is the currency of social exchange. Audience response often functions as countersignal to the agent. Signals and reputation are to help actors to perceive and respond to one another, but they remain imperfect because humans have the ingenuity to fake any signals, and by extension, any reputation.

There is an inherent asymmetry between the agent and the audience with regard to agent qualities. The multidisciplinary literature on signaling typically frames this as the problem of asymmetric information: the agent knows more about his own quality than the

⁵¹ Martin A. Nowak, "Five Rules for the Evolution of Cooperation," *Science*, Vol. 314, No. 5805 (2006), pp. 1560-1563.

audience does.⁵² But that is not always the case: a math teacher may know more than a student about the student's competence in math. The real asymmetry is one of access and control: the agent has more access to and more control of his own qualities than the audience does. With more control, the agent can manipulate the signals of his qualities to his own advantage. This gives the agent the incentive to fake a quality he does not have, to inflate his positive quality, and to hide his negative quality.

Cheating, if successful, turns the nature of the power process from “soft” to “sly,” from attraction to manipulation. The subject's perception and response remain the same as in soft power, but the quality signaled is fake and the signal deceptive. The subject may respond positively and confers power on the agent, but what causes the subject's perception is the agent's trick, not his virtue. Not all distortion and framing of information changes the nature of the power process. A friend can say his expensive gift is cheap in order to persuade his partner to accept the gift, but the lie is harmless and does not fake his care for the partner. If exposed, the lie still signals the friend's kindness, and its divulgence does not negatively affect the partner's perception of the friend's virtue. Harmful lies and framing, contrarily, disqualify the ensuing process as soft power. The famous story of the Sirens' luring of Odysseus with their enchanting music and beguiling voices is a case in point.

⁵² Erik A. Gartzke, Shannon Carcelli, J. Andres Gannon, and Jiakun Jack Zhang, “Signaling in Foreign Policy,” in Cameron Thies, ed., *Oxford Encyclopedia of Foreign Policy Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Michael Spence, “Signaling in Retrospect and the Informational Structure of Markets,” *American Economic Review*, Vol. 92, No. 3 (2002), pp. 434-459; Eric A. Smith and Rebecca Bliege Bird, “Costly Signaling and Cooperative Behavior,” in Herbert Gintis, Samuel Bowles, Robert Boyd, and Ernst Fehr, eds., *Moral Sentiments and Material Interests: The Foundations of Cooperation in Economic Life* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), pp. 115-148; Simon M. Huttegger, Justin P. Bruner, and Kevin J.S. Zollman, “The Handicap Principle Is an Artifact,” *Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 82, No. 5 (2015), pp. 997-1009.

Honesty can be enforced by a variety of discipline devices, the most prominent of which include:

- the production costs, opportunity costs, and risk costs associated with producing the costly signals that are prohibitively expensive to fake;⁵³
- a mechanistic link between an index and its underlying quality;⁵⁴
- the invention of unusual indices that precedes their faking;
- a third party's presence or absence that provides incentives for honesty and disincentives for deception;⁵⁵
- monitoring, probing, punishment, and social norms, which also keep conventional signals, such as language, reliable;⁵⁶ and

⁵³ Robert Jervis, *The Logic of Images in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970); Michael Spence, "Job Market Signaling," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 87, No. 3 (1973), pp. 355-374; Alan Grafen, "Biological Signals as Handicaps," *Journal of Theoretical Biology*, Vol. 144, No. 4 (1990), pp. 517-546; Smith and Bliege Bird, "Costly Signaling." For critical views with alternatives, see Szabolcs Számadó, "The Cost of Honesty and the Fallacy of the Handicap Principle," *Animal Behaviour*, Vol. 81, No. 1 (2011), pp. 3-10; Kevin J.S. Zollman, "Finding Alternatives to Handicap Theory," *Biological Theory*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2013), pp. 127-132.

⁵⁴ Jervis, *Logic of Images*; John Maynard Smith and David Harper, "Animal Signals: Models and Terminology," *Journal of Theoretical Biology*, Vol. 177, No. 3 (1995), pp. 305-311.

⁵⁵ Joseph Farrell and Robert Gibbons, "Cheap Talk with Two Audiences," *American Economic Review*, Vol. 79, No. 5 (1989), pp. 1214-1223; Robert F. Trager, "Diplomatic Signaling among Multiple States," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 77, No. 3 (2015), pp. 635-647.

⁵⁶ Marian Stamp Dawkins and Tim Guilford, "The Corruption of Honest Signalling," *Animal Behaviour*, Vol. 41, No. 5 (1991), pp. 865-873; Michael Lachmann, Szabolcs Számadó, and Carl T. Bergstrom, "Cost and Conflict in Animal Signals and Human Language," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 98, No. 23 (2001), pp. 13189-13194; Charles K. Whitehead, "What's Your Sign?—International Norms, Signals, and Compliance," *Michigan Journal of International Law*, Vol. 27 (2006), pp. 695-741; Robin Clark and Steven O. Kimbrough, "Social Structure, Opportunistic Punishment, and the Evolution of Honest Signaling," *PLOS One*, Vol. 12, No. 12 (2017), e0188249.

- repetition that allows actors to communicate through feedback under the shadow of the future and eventually reach enforceable agreement.⁵⁷

Quality does not always precede signaling because the development of a quality can itself be a signaling process. Soft power qualities may be innate in the agent, or formed in the agent's socialization, or developed in the interaction between the agent and a specific audience, and the qualities of an agent may vary depending on the audience. Agents may receive feedback from the audience through reading its response, which serves as countersignal, and incorporate audience response into the development of qualities.

Benign Power: The Attraction of Kindness

The bases of benign power are the qualities that involve an actor's positive attitude toward another or others. Kindness, benevolence, compassion, and generosity are some of these qualities. They are manifested in prosocial behavior such as being nice, helping, support, caring, sharing, respect, and benignity. An actor may signal her kindness not just by giving room for others but also by letting herself bound by the rules. The hallmark of prosocial behavior is that it benefits another or others but inflicts a cost on self. Signals of kindness tends to be perceived in terms of the relative costs to the donor and the relative benefits to the recipient. In the second half of the 20th century, although China's aid to the non-communist developing countries was usually much smaller than Western aid, it was often more appreciated largely because China was a poor and developing country.⁵⁸ On the other

⁵⁷ Robert J. Aumann, "War and Peace," in Karl Grandin, ed., *Les Prix Nobel 2005* (Stockholm: Nobel Foundation, 2006), pp. 350-358; Patricia Rich and Kevin J.S. Zollman, "Honesty Through Repeated Interactions," *Journal of Theoretical Biology*, Vol. 395 (2016), pp. 238-244.

⁵⁸ John F. Copper, *China's Foreign Aid and Investment Diplomacy, Vol. I: Nature, Scope, and Origins* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 13.

hand, “a friend in need is a friend indeed,” as the old adage goes, because the same amount of help is more valuable to the recipient in times of difficulty than in times of ease.

The mechanism by which benign power occurs is the social exchange of kindness.⁵⁹ The participants of a social exchange contribute resources that benefit others to a virtual pool that they share without a specific formula for how to divide it. The resulting capacity is power-with, not power-over. Based on the kindness of each partner toward the others, benign power is a mutual attraction between partners, not a one-way power relation between “agent” and “subject.”

Why do people voluntarily engage in the social exchange of kindness? The motives behind this phenomenon follow, at a basic level, the three logics of consequences, appropriateness, and emotions.⁶⁰ In the logic of consequences, an actor may expect some future gains from a good relationship with a kind actor. The kind actor is comparatively more likely to help and less likely to hurt and is likely to take the other actor’s rights, interests, and self-esteem seriously.⁶¹ Also in the calculative logic, an actor may initiate or reciprocate a kind act because she cares about her social image—a reputation for goodness,

⁵⁹ A prototype of this mechanism is “reciprocal altruism,” first proposed by Robert L. Trivers, “The Evolution of Reciprocal Altruism,” *Quarterly Review of Biology*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (March 1971), pp. 35-57.

⁶⁰ For the logics of consequences and appropriateness, see James G. March and Herbert A. Simon, *Organizations*, Second edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993). For the logic of emotions, see Robert H. Frank, *Passions within Reason: The Strategic Role of the Emotions* (New York: Norton, 1988).

⁶¹ David K. Levine, “Modeling Altruism and Spitefulness in Experiments,” *Review of Economic Dynamics*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1998), pp. 593-622; Matthew Rabin, “Incorporating Fairness into Game Theory and Economics,” *American Economic Review*, Vol. 83, No. 5 (1993), pp. 1281-1302; Martin Dufwenberg and Georg Kirchsteiger, “A Theory of Sequential Reciprocity,” *Games and Economic Behavior*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (2004), pp. 268-298; Geert Dhaene and Jan Bouckaert, “Sequential Reciprocity in Two-Player, Two-Stage Games: An Experimental Analysis,” *Games and Economic Behavior*, Vol. 70, No. 2 (2010), pp. 289-303.

kindness, or decency, which will be rewarded by others.⁶² In the logic of appropriateness, an actor may initiate or reciprocate a kind act because she has internalized the norms according to which helping someone in need or returning a kind act is the right thing to do. Also in the normative logic, an actor may engage in an exchange of kindness because kindness or fairness is in her identity and she cares about her self-image as a kind or fair person.⁶³

An actor may initiate or reciprocate a kind act in the logic of emotions. Although emotions are usually deemed irrational, they do have their underlying logics.⁶⁴ Robert Frank has suggested that the emotions act as a commitment device that binds the subject of an emotion to a certain course of action and thus augments her credibility.⁶⁵ Compassion, sympathy, gratitude, indebtedness, guilt aversion, and shame aversion are the main emotional motives that drive actors to engage in the social exchange of kindness. The feelings of compassion and sympathy commit one to the concern for the welfare of others

⁶² Manfred Milinski, Dirk Semmann, and Hans-Jürgen Krambeck, "Donors to Charity Gain in Both Indirect Reciprocity and Political Reputation," *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London*, Vol. 269, No. 1494 (2002), pp. 881-883; Hisashi Ohtsuki and Yoh Iwasa, "How Should We Define Goodness?—Reputation Dynamics in Indirect Reciprocity," *Journal of Theoretical Biology*, Vol. 231, No. 1 (2004), pp. 107-120; Pat Barclay, "Trustworthiness and Competitive Altruism Can Also Solve the 'Tragedy of the Commons,'" *Evolution and Human Behavior*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (2004), pp. 209-220; Nowak, "Five Rules for the Evolution of Cooperation."

⁶³ Roland Bénabou and Jean Tirole, "Incentives and Prosocial Behavior," *American Economic Review*, Vol. 96, No. 5 (December 2006), pp. 1652-1678; Ernst Fehr and Klaus M. Schmidt, "The Economics of Fairness, Reciprocity, and Altruism—Experimental Evidence and New Theories," in Serge-Christophe Kolm and Jean Mercier Ythier, eds., *Handbook of the Economics of Giving, Altruism, and Reciprocity*, Vol. 1 (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006), pp. 615-691.

⁶⁴ Frank, *Passions within Reason*; Antonio R. Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: Avon Books, 1995); Jonathan Haidt, "The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment," *Psychological Review*, Vol. 108, No. 4 (2001), pp. 814-834; Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011).

⁶⁵ Frank, *Passions within Reason*.

and to the norms of compassion, urging one to initiate a kind act when seeing another in need.⁶⁶ Gratitude commits one to appreciation for kindness while indebtedness commits one to the norms of reciprocity, both urging one to return kindness.⁶⁷ We feel guilty and shameful when we violate norms that are constitutive of our identity and our social image. With regard to the exchange of kindness, guilt and shame commit actors to the norms of compassion and reciprocity based on the actors' commitment to their identity and reputation as a kind person, a generous individual, or a good member of a community.⁶⁸ If gratitude/indebtedness and compassion/sympathy motivate people to cooperation because they make them feel good, the aversion to guilt/shame urges people to do good because people do not want to feel bad.⁶⁹

There is a hierarchy of motives with regard to the automaticity of the actor's commitment to kindness. Participants in the exchange of kindness generally trust those moved by emotions more than those driven by normative motives, and they trust these people more than those motivated by cost-benefit calculations. At the level of states,

⁶⁶ C. Daniel Batson, *Altruism in Humans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Dacher Keltner, *Born to Be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life* (New York: Norton, 2009); Jennifer L. Goetz, Dacher Keltner, and Emiliana Simon-Thomas, "Compassion: An Evolutionary Analysis and Empirical Review," *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 136, No. 3 (2010), pp. 351-374.

⁶⁷ Michael E. McCullough, Marcia B. Kimeldorf, and Adam D. Cohen, "An Adaptation for Altruism? The Social Causes, Social Effects, and Social Evolution of Gratitude," *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (2008), pp. 281-285; Monica Y. Bartlett and David DeSteno, "Gratitude and Prosocial Behavior," *Psychological Science*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (2006), pp. 319-325; Robert A. Emmons and Michael E. McCullough, eds., *The Psychology of Gratitude* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁶⁸ Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *A Cooperative Species: Human Reciprocity and Its Evolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), pp. 186-194.

⁶⁹ Luke J. Chang, Alec Smith, Martin Dufwenberg, and Alan G. Sanfey, "Triangulating the Neural, Psychological, and Economic Bases of Guilt Aversion," *Neuron*, Vol. 70, No. 3 (2011), pp. 560-572; June Price Tangney and Jessica L. Tracy, "Self-Conscious Emotions," in Mark R. Leary and June Price Tangney, eds., *Handbook of Self and Identity*, Second edition (New York: Guilford Press, 2012), pp. 446-478.

domestic debates may reveal the motives of those who shape policies; knowledge of these debates can help foreign audiences to adjust their trust level.

Social exchange is vulnerable to exploitation. Greedy actors who free-ride on kind ones will upset the stability of the exchange. One way to deal with this problem is to be selective—humans are generally endowed with cognitive capabilities to detect and separate kind people from free-riders.⁷⁰ A universal solution to the problem of greed are norms of reciprocity and punitive mechanisms such as peer punishment, third-party punishment, shunning, gossip, ostracism, and some institutions of the state, to enforce those norms.⁷¹

To maintain the social nature of the exchange of kindness, participants have to guard against its sliding into a coercive, arragemental, or transactional form of power. For example, an actor may initiate an unwanted act of giving, driving another actor into a situation where she feels uncomfortable but obliged to reciprocate. The operative principle behind this behavior is the activation of norms of reciprocity by an actor that is able to evade or subtly transgress the same norms. This example also shows that norm is not a perfect solution to the problem of greed. Greedy actors can mobilize the norms of reciprocity for their own advantage, a phenomenon that Raymond Firth has called

⁷⁰ Leda Cosmides and John Tooby, “Adaptations for Reasoning About Social Exchange,” in David M. Buss, ed., *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, Second edition, Vol. 2: *Integrations* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2015), pp. 625-668; William Michael Brown and Chris Moore, “Is Prospective Altruist-Detection an Evolved Solution to the Adaptive Problem of Subtle Cheating in Cooperative Ventures? Supportive Evidence Using the Wason Selection Task,” *Evolution and Human Behavior*, Vol. 21 (2000), pp. 25-37.

⁷¹ Ernst Fehr and Urs Fischbacher, “Third-Party Punishment and Social Norms,” *Evolution and Human Behavior*, Vol. 25 (2004), pp. 63-87; Gintis et al., *Moral Sentiments and Material Interests*; Hisashi Ohtsuki and Yoh Iwasa, “The Leading Eight: Social Norms That Can Maintain Cooperation by Indirect Reciprocity,” *Journal of Theoretical Biology* Vol. 239, No. 4 (2006), pp. 435-444; Bowles and Gintis, *Cooperative Species*.

“indebtedness engineering.”⁷² If the agent puts himself under the same norms and the subject appreciates his kindness, we have a mutation from arrangemental to attractive power. But if the agent tries to evade or transgress the norms, he retains more control of the boundaries of their action than the subject. As this is a trap where the freedom symmetry of benign power slides into the freedom asymmetry of arrangemental power, we can see in real life donors try to protect the benign nature of their giving by indicating that they do not expect a return.

Due to the advantages of a higher level of trust and a longer natural endurance, which stem from the obviation of resistance, benign power is often misused as a disguise for transactional power, an instance of which is a bribe in a gift’s clothing. The difference between the gift and the bribe typifies the distinction between social and economic exchange. To signal that something is a social, not economic, exchange, donors have to indicate that the return can be postponed indefinitely and is not necessarily of equal value, an indication that the item donated is a gift, not a bribe.⁷³ A difference between inducement and benign attraction is that transactional power rests on what the agent *pays* for the partner’s compliance, which is measured by the *economic utility* of the bribe, whereas benign power hinges on how the agent is *disposed* toward the partner, which is signaled by

⁷² Raymond Firth, “Magnitudes and Values in Kula Exchange,” in Jerry W. Leach and Edmund Leach, eds., *The Kula: New Perspectives on Massim Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 89-102.

⁷³ For some discussions of the gift-bribe distinction, see Peter Verhezen, *Gifts, Corruption, Philanthropy: The Ambiguity of Gift Practices in Business* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009); and Abel Polese, “‘If I Receive It, It Is a Gift; If I Demand It, Then It Is a Bribe’: On the Local Meaning of Economic Transactions in Post-Soviet Ukraine,” *Anthropology in Action*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (2008), pp. 47-60. Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1922) observes that social and economic exchanges constitute a continuum stretching from “pure gift” through various gradations to “real barter.”

the *social meaning* of the gift. Social exchange conveys expressive value, over and above the instrumental benefits characteristic of economic exchange.⁷⁴ Unconditional gifts signal kindness, whereas gifts “with strings attached” is a form of inducement. Kindness may be selective but must be unconditional—it is not contingent on *what* the partner will return, though it is usually contingent on *whether* the partner will reciprocate. Indeed, inducement can only happen when there is already a promise of payment, but benign attraction can already happen when there is only a reputation for kindness.

Brilliant Power: The Attraction of Competence

The bases of brilliant power are the qualities that involve an actor’s superior competence in a valued domain of activity. Competence attracts because it is the ability to do something successfully or efficiently. The nature of the immediate benefits that a competency brings vary according to the domain of activity it is in. A competent actor in fighting can supply security benefits, while a competent actor in painting can provide artistic benefits. The knowledge, skills, and information that make up a competency also vary from one domain to another. Superior competence brings extended benefits as it allows the more competent actor to acquire more resources, a higher position, prestige, and glory.

The mechanism through which brilliant power works is the social exchange of deference benefits and coalition benefits for competence benefits. Competent actors often

⁷⁴ Linda D. Molm, Jessica L. Collette, and David R. Schaefer, “Building Solidarity through Generalized Exchange: A Theory of Reciprocity,” *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 113, No. 1 (July 2007), pp. 205-242; Peter P. Ekeh, *Social Exchange Theory: The Two Traditions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974); Russell W. Belk and Gregory S. Coon, “Gift Giving as Agapic Love: An Alternative to the Exchange Paradigm Based on Dating Experiences,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 20 (December 1993), pp. 393-417.

trade some benefits of their competence for income with their employers and their customers—this is what most people in the modern world do much of their time. But this is primarily a form of economic, not social, exchange, a form of transactional, not attractive, power.⁷⁵ As with benign power, brilliant power rests on an exchange without the equal-price mechanism, as if the participants pool their contributions into a fund that they share without a specific formula for the sharing. Their contributions consist of competence benefits from the competent agent, and deference and coalition benefits from his client. Competence benefits comprise both the immediate and extended benefits of competence and typically include: (1) information goods: the knowledge and information that constitute a competency; (2) expert goods: the benefits flowing from the expert efforts of a competent actor; and (3) superiority benefits: the benefits that flow from the superiority in competence of an actor, including those associated with prestige, status, and halo effects. These benefits are not public goods that everyone can enjoy; they are club goods that are accessible only to the competent agent and his clients—those with positive ties to the agent such as his allies, friends, partners, and followers. What the clients bring into the pool are the benefits flowing from their deference to and coalition with the agent. The clients typically pay respect to the agent; have more regard for his opinions, interests, and wishes; publicly praise him; spread his reputation; give him more attention and some privileges; support the agent; provide social approval to his action and opinion; and are more ready to cooperate with him. A client may be more competent than the agent in domains other than the one in question and may be more competent overall than the agent in the field of

⁷⁵ I say “primarily” because many of these transactions actually blend specific with diffuse reciprocity. George Akerlof, “Labor Contracts as Partial Gift Exchange,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 97, No. 4 (1982), pp. 543-569 provides an example.

activity where the agent excels. A master may be attracted to a talented disciple—he is more attentive to him and grants him some privileges—because he finds in him a capable ally and an interesting interlocutor.

The motives behind the client's provision of deference and coalition benefits to the competent agent follow the two logics of consequences and emotions. The calculative motives can be differentiated according to the type of competence benefits the client seeks from the agent: learning is to obtain information goods; outsourcing, to gain expert goods; and bandwagoning, to share in superiority benefits. As concerns learning, a client may seek knowledge and information constitutive of the agent's competence because he wants to learn from the agent and improve his own competence.⁷⁶ With regard to outsourcing, a client may seek expert goods from the agent because he wants the agent's help, which may be an advice, a service, a resource, or an alliance, based on the agent's expert competence. In terms of bandwagoning, a client may seek superiority benefits from the agent because he wants to share in the agent's prestige, standing, aura, or "spoils of victory."⁷⁷ The "contagion" of the superiority benefits may be the halo effect that, playing on a cognitive bias, allows someone with some connection to a prestigious actor to share in his prestige, which is the underlying logic of behaviors such as name-dropping.

In the logic of emotions, admiration drives people to pay deference and seek proximity, which can be physical, social, or psychological, to the superior competent actor.⁷⁸ The affiliation with the superior competent actor may exist only in the admirer's

⁷⁶ Henrich and Gil-White, "Evolution of Prestige."

⁷⁷ Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (1994), pp. 72-107.

⁷⁸ Henrich and Gil-White, "Evolution of Prestige"; Sara B. Algoe and Jonathan Haidt, "Witnessing Excellence in Action: The 'Other-Praising' Emotions of Elevation, Gratitude, and Admiration,"

thought and the admirer may respect the admired from afar. This is because, I hypothesize, admiration commits one to learning and bandwagoning.

Unlike benign power, brilliant power does not rest on the logic of appropriateness. Social norms that oblige a person to pay deference to a highly competent other, while also requiring the respected to provide some public goods, create an unequal playing field in favor of the latter by granting him more rights, more privileges, and more access to valued resources. If the norms of reciprocity and compassion are to level the playing field and restore symmetry, the norms of deference are to structure the playing field and stabilize asymmetry.

Deference to and affiliation with a superior competent agent may also be motivated by fear of punishment. This occurs when competence is marked by status, the ensuing status structures are not legitimate, and the associated norms of deference are enforced by social punishment, or alternatively, when the competence in question involves an ability to attack and the agent expects deference from the subject. These conditions point, in the former case, to the coercive force of illegitimate structure, and in the latter case, to the coercive force of intimidation, although the latter is sometimes also called, confusingly, “bandwagoning.”

Prestige and status emerge socially and evolutionarily to signal competence.⁷⁹ They yield two kinds of distribution: the non-zero-sum distribution of respect and the zero-sum

Journal of Positive Psychology, Vol. 4, No. 2 (2009), pp. 105-127; Cameron Anderson, Robb Willer, Gavin J. Kilduff, and Courtney E. Brown, “The Origins of Deference: When Do People Prefer Lower Status?” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 102, No. 5 (2012), pp. 1077-1088.

⁷⁹ Henrich and Gil-White, “Evolution of Prestige.”

status rank,⁸⁰ both entailing asymmetries of *negative* freedom. The symmetry of *positive* freedom can be maintained if the client retains control of agent qualification (the agent already controls his own quality). This can only happen if the client has freedom in evaluating the agent and is not bound by the norms of deference.

Humans use a myriad of indices and proxies to assess and signal competence. Success is perhaps the most universal and most effective index of competence. Contests, violent and non-violent alike, have many functions, one of which is to signal the excellence of the winner. Wars, through different mechanisms, generate both coercive and brilliant power (among other power effects). Rank, status, and prestige are other universal and effective indicators of competence. As people often rely on prestige and status to assess others' competence, there is a strong incentive for humans to seek and enhance prestige and status.⁸¹ In international relations, many major writers see prestige and status as a chief motivating force of state behavior.⁸² A universal strategy of signaling competence is to use prestige goods and status symbols to broadcast brilliance.⁸³ The tendency of the rich to pursue what Thorsten Veblen has called "conspicuous consumption" and the tendency of governments to build impressive monuments and

⁸⁰ Anderson et al., "Origins of Deference," p. 1078.

⁸¹ Robert H. Frank, *Choosing the Right Pond: Human Behavior and the Quest for Status* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Henrich and Gil-White, "Evolution of Prestige."

⁸² They are the major authors of the classical realist tradition, including Thucydides, Niccolò Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and several authors of the modern realist and constructivist schools, including Hans Morgenthau, John Herz, Raymond Aron, Robert Gilpin, Nicholas Onuf, and Richard Ned Lebow. For some discussions, see Daniel Markey, "Prestige and the Origins of War: Returning to Realism's Roots," *Security Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Summer 1999), pp. 126-173; T.V. Paul, Deborah W. Larson, and William C. Wohlforth, eds., *Status in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁸³ Aimée M. Plourde, "The Origins of Prestige Goods as Honest Signals of Skill and Knowledge," *Human Nature*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (December 2008), pp. 374-388.

weapons reflect this strategy.⁸⁴ An effective, but also costly, strategy is to advertise competence through an act of benevolence, as in the gratuitous provision of public goods.⁸⁵

Beautiful Power: The Attraction of Commitment

The bases of beautiful power are the qualities that involve an actor's commitment to a value, identity, belief, or aspiration. They find their expression in the authentic representation and heroic championing of identities, beliefs, visions, values, ideals, causes, missions, goals, and aspirations. They are manifested by people who uphold their values, represent their identities, articulate their beliefs, and pursue their aspirations in a dedicated way with strong confidence, unwavering conviction, high energy, courage, and perseverance. Risk-taking, devotion, and persistence are some universal signals of commitment. Commitment is also often inferred from embodiment and exemplification. An actor that represents a value, identity, belief, or aspiration in a genuine or eloquent way is usually thought to be committed to the same, albeit to various extents. Not only does the passionate devotion to a cause indicate commitment, but the eloquent articulation of a vision and the personification of an identity can also signal commitment. Commitment is the core of charisma, I argue, and the above-mentioned behaviors are not coincidentally characteristics of charismatic leaders.⁸⁶ Charisma can be conceived as a continuum running

⁸⁴ Thorsten Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Macmillan, 1899); Barry O'Neill, "Nuclear Weapons and National Prestige," Cowles Foundation Discussion Paper No. 1560, Yale University, 2006.

⁸⁵ Eric Alden Smith and Rebecca L. Bliege Bird, "Turtle Hunting and Tombstone Opening: Public Generosity as Costly Signaling," *Evolution and Human Behavior*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (2000), pp. 245-261.

⁸⁶ For typical behaviors of charismatic leaders, see Jay A. Conger and Rabindra N. Kanungo, *Charismatic Leadership in Organizations* (London: Sage, 1998); Boas Shamir, Robert J. House, and Michael B. Arthur, "The Motivation Effects of Charismatic Leadership: A Self-Concept Based

from ordinary behaviors that occur in everyday life to extraordinary acts of charismatic leaders. Indeed, leadership by example and homophily—the solidarity of people who share the same identity—are often too common to be noticed. Beautiful power can emanate from heroic acts and visionary inspiration as well as mundane behaviors, for example, when parents cultivate their children’s adoption of a moral value by exemplifying it with their daily behavior, or when “birds of a feather flock together.”

Beautiful power emerges from the resonance of commitments to shared values, identities, beliefs, and aspirations. The intrinsic valence, i.e., the goodness, attractiveness, and the power to motivate, of values, identities, beliefs, and aspirations depends on people’s commitment to them. Commitment to an object reduces doubt and increases confidence in that object. By setting examples and articulating visions, the committed actor helps define for the audience just what kinds of values it is good to embrace, what kinds of identity deserve espousal, what kinds of beliefs merit endorsement, and what kinds of aspirations it is worth pursuing.⁸⁷ If the audience has already adopted the object of commitment, the actor’s commitment helps boost the audience’s commitment to the same object. If the audience is searching for a new value, identity, belief, or aspiration, it tends to adopt the one that is courageously embraced and eloquently articulated. In either case, a resonance of commitments results from the fact that people’s commitment to a value, identity, belief, or aspiration enhances the intrinsic valence of the object of commitment.

Theory,” *Organization Science*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (1993), pp. 577-594; James McGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper, 1978); Bernard M. Bass, *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations* (New York: Free Press, 1985).

⁸⁷ Robert J. House and Boas Shamir, “Toward the Integration of Transformational, Charismatic, and Visionary Theories,” in Martin M. Chemers and Roya Ayman, eds., *Leadership Theory and Research: Perspectives and Directions* (San Diego: Academic Press, 1993), p. 95.

This resonance typically leads to either or both of two behaviors: (1) the pooling of energy for a common cause, and (2) the social exchange of coalition benefits and/or deference benefits for commitment. These behaviors can be subsumed as two variants of social exchange because values, identities, beliefs, and aspirations are constitutive of the extended self of an actor. Just as shared genes account for the genetic relatedness between individuals, shared values account for people's moral relatedness, shared identities for social relatedness, shared beliefs for ideological relatedness, and shared aspirations for teleological relatedness. This relatedness creates the common selves that people share with one another. Based on this relatedness, an actor's commitment to a value, identity, belief, or aspiration that she shares with another actor is also a commitment to their common self. One actor's heroism and eloquence that signal commitment render this part of the other's self salient; they can be perceived by the other in similar ways to what she perceives of a kindness to her self and a competence in expressing and promoting her self.⁸⁸ The more central this common self is in an actor's self-concept, the more the actor is susceptible to the commitment of another or others to this common self.⁸⁹

Similar to those behind benign and brilliant power, the motives driving positive responses to agent commitment to shared values, identities, beliefs, and aspirations also follow the three logics of consequences, appropriateness, and emotions. In the logic of consequences, the audience of beautiful power is driven by four distinct motives. An audience may think of its respect for and solidarity with the committed agent as an

⁸⁸ See Shamir, House, and Arthur, "Motivation Effects of Charismatic Leadership" for a seminal work on charismatic leaders motivating followers through implicating their self-concepts.

⁸⁹ Karl Aquino, Brent McFerran, and Marjorie Laven, "Moral Identity and the Experience of Moral Elevation in Response to Acts of Uncommon Goodness," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 100, No. 4 (2011), pp. 703-718.

investment—its support will help keep up and even increase her devotion to their common self. An audience may show respect and sympathy for the committed agent as well as contribute to the common cause because it cares about its reputation for fairness, solidarity, and commitment, which will be rewarded by others who share the same common self. A third motive rests on the audience's interest in expressing and promoting its self. The audience pays deference and seeks proximity to the committed agent because it regards her as its role model and wants to learn from her to improve its competence in expressing and promoting the common self it shares with her. A fourth motive is similar to that of bandwagoning with a highly competent actor. If an agent gains prestige and success with her commitment, an audience may exchange her deference and coalition benefits for a share in her prestige and aura.

In the logic of appropriateness, an audience may support the committed agent and contribute to the common cause because for it, solidarity with someone who shares a common cause and promoting the common cause is the right thing to do. An audience may also do so because fairness, solidarity, and commitment belong to its self-image; the agent's commitment has just made this part of its identity more salient.⁹⁰

Three kinds of emotions, including gratitude, aversion to guilt and shame, and the cluster of sentiments variously labeled as admiration, adoration, inspiration, and elevation, are involved in motivating the audience of beautiful power.⁹¹ An audience may support the

⁹⁰ Shamir, House, and Arthur, "Motivation Effects of Charismatic Leadership;" Aquino et al., "Moral Identity and the Experience of Moral Elevation."

⁹¹ Empirical and theoretical support for the propositions in this paragraph can be found in Sara B. Algoe and Jonathan Haidt, "Witnessing Excellence in Action: The 'Other-Praising' Emotions of Elevation, Gratitude, and Admiration," *Journal of Positive Psychology*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (2009), pp. 105-127; Ines Schindler, Veronika Zink, Johannes Windrich, and Winfried Menninghaus, "Admiration and Adoration: Their Different Ways of Showing and Shaping Who We Are,"

committed agent because it feels grateful for her commitment to its endeared value, identity, belief, or aspiration. An audience may show solidarity with the committed agent and contribute to the common cause because failure to do so will make it feel guilty or shameful—if solidarity and commitment are constitutive of its identity or reputation. The emotions of admiration, adoration, inspiration, and elevation motivate people to pay deference to, seek affiliation with, and emulate those who embody or communicate the meaning of a value, identity, belief, or aspiration in an excellent way. People admire heroism and eloquence; they respect the heroic and eloquent actor, tell others about her, feel closer to her, and want to build or strengthen relationships with her. An actor's courageous defense or authentic articulation of a value, identity, belief, or aspiration also inspires an audience who feels uplifted by the actor's exemplary behavior to a higher commitment to the same value, identity, belief, or aspiration.

Social exchange has four basic structures, two of which are related to benign and brilliant power while all of which are associated with beautiful power. One of the four

Cognition and Emotion, Vol. 27, No. 1 (2013), pp. 85-118; Ines Schindler, Juliane Paech, and Fabian Löwenbrück, "Linking Admiration and Adoration to Self-Expansion: Different Ways to Enhance One's Potential," *Cognition and Emotion*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (2015), pp. 292-310; Ines Schindler, "Relations of Admiration and Adoration With Other Emotions and Well-Being," *Psychology of Well-Being*, Vol. 4, No. 14 (2014); Jonathan Haidt, "Elevation and the Positive Psychology of Morality," in Corey L.M. Keyes and Jonathan Haidt, eds., *Flourishing: Positive Psychology and the Life Well Lived* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2003), pp. 275-289; Simone Schnall, Jean Roper, and Daniel M.T. Fessler, "Elevation Leads to Altruistic Behavior," *Psychological Science*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (2010), pp. 315-320; Simone Schnall and Jean Roper, "Elevation Puts Moral Values Into Action," *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (2012), pp. 373-378; Todd M. Thrash and Andrew J. Elliot, "Inspiration: Core Characteristics, Component Processes, Antecedents, and Function," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 87, No. 6 (2004), pp. 957-973; Todd M. Thrash, Andrew J. Elliot, Laura A. Maruskin, and Scott E. Cassidy, "Inspiration and the Promotion of Well-Being: Tests of Causality and Mediation," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 98, No. 3 (2010), pp. 488-506; and the literature on charismatic leadership.

variants is direct reciprocity; the other three are different forms of indirect reciprocity, including what are commonly termed “rewarding reputation” and “paying it forward” and a third variety that I will call “inspiration.” Direct reciprocity is based on mutuality and takes the form of “you scratch my back and I scratch yours.” “Rewarding reputation” goes “downstream” and is based on reputation: it occurs when B rewards A after observing or knowing of A’s good act toward C, where C may be an actor or an object and A’s good act toward C signals A’s kindness, competence, or commitment. While these two variants of reciprocity are present in all three species of soft power, the other two involve beautiful power only because they are based on an overlapping extended self. “Pay-it-forward” reciprocity moves “upstream” and occurs when B does a good act with regard to C, which may be a value, identity, belief, or aspiration, after receiving a good act from A. The process is an exchange, albeit indirect, because C belongs to a common extended self of A and B. This is also the reason why there is a third form of indirect reciprocity—inspiration—which runs “parallel” and occurs when B does a good act with regard to C after observing or knowing of A’s good act with regard to the same value, identity, belief, or aspiration. This third form of indirect reciprocity is discussed as an emotion in the psychological studies of inspiration and elevation, but it has not been recognized by the multidisciplinary literature on reciprocity because the literature conceives of C as a third party, not an overlapping extended self of A and B. From this perspective, indirect reciprocity is interpreted as a “misdirected act of gratitude” and paying it forward is extremely hard to understand.⁹² A recent study in sociology argues that reputation and

⁹² Martin A. Nowak and Karl Sigmund, “Evolution of Indirect Reciprocity,” *Nature*, Vol. 437, No. 7063 (27 October 2005), pp. 1291-1298. See also Wayne E. Baker and Nathaniel Bulkley, “Paying

gratitude are two bases of generalized exchange systems.⁹³ However, as discussed above, gratitude is only one of the many motives with which actors engage in indirect exchanges and the shared extended self of the actors involved provides a deeper basis for generalized reciprocity than gratitude, norms, and investment.

Another contribution of our theory to the larger, multidisciplinary literature on social relations concerns the sources of prestige, social rank, and status. Much of the literature thinks that prestige is based on competence, but our discussion suggests that kindness and commitment are also primary sources of prestige, rank, and status.⁹⁴ Actors with more benign, brilliant, or beautiful power can obtain more respect and higher status, resulting in an asymmetry of *negative* freedom. At the same time, symmetry of *positive* freedom can be maintained as long as the audience has the right and liberty to decide which agent deserves more respect and higher status.

Each of the pathways to power—coercion, arrangement, inducement, and the three modes of attraction—is a distinct and viable “pathway to the top” (high status and leadership), but their effectiveness varies according to the context. Beautiful power, together with brilliant power and benign power, appears to be more effective than the other pathways and represent the more sustainable mode of leadership in group settings. In the proverbial school yard, individuals can acquire rank and influence by bullying,

It Forward vs. Rewarding Reputation: Mechanisms of Generalized Reciprocity,” *Organization Science*, Vol. 25, No. 5 (September-October 2014), 1493-1510.

⁹³ Brent Simpson, Ashley Harrell, David Melamed, Nicholas Heiserman, and Daniela V. Negraia, “The Roots of Reciprocity: Gratitude and Reputation in Generalized Exchange Systems,” *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 83, No. 1 (February 2018), pp. 88-110.

⁹⁴ Cf. Joey T. Cheng and Jessica L. Tracy, “Toward a Unified Science of Hierarchy: Dominance and Prestige are Two Fundamental Pathways to Human Social Rank,” in Joey T. Cheng, Jessica L. Tracy, and Cameron Anderson, eds., *The Psychology of Social Status* (New York: Springer, 2014), pp. 3-27.

intimidating, and manipulating others. But in contexts where people are aware that they belong to a group with which they share a common identity, goal, value, or belief, those that signal superior competence and a strong commitment to the collective are generally given greater status and influence by other group members. If “force and fraud” are, as Hobbes has observed, “the two cardinal virtues” in conflict situations, value for the group is the fundamental source of sustainable leadership in group settings.⁹⁵

Conclusion

As power is the capacity to produce outcomes, it is rightly the currency of politics and social relations at the interpersonal and international level alike. However, our study and understanding of these fields is heavily biased in favor of power-over at the expense of power-with. Since the publication of Peter Morriss’s *Power: A Philosophical Analysis* in 1987, the more comprehensive and general notion of power-to has gained traction in the academic discourse, but it is still overwhelmingly viewed as opposed to, not subsuming, power-over, although, as Morriss has argued, “‘power-to’ is more basic than ‘power-over.’”⁹⁶ Our mapping of the power behaviors demonstrates not just *that* but also *how* power-to is more fundamental than power-over. Power-to entails in the social context

⁹⁵ Cameron Anderson and Gavin J. Kilduff, “The Pursuit Status in Social Groups,” *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, Vol. 18, No. 5 (2009), pp. 295-298; Robb Willer, “Groups Reward Individual Sacrifice: The Status Solution to the Collective Action Problem,” *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 74, No. 1 (February 2009), pp. 23-43; Cameron Anderson, Oliver P. John, Dacher Keltner, and Ann M. Kring, “Who Attains Social Status? Effects of Personality and Physical Attractiveness in Social Groups,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 81, No. 1 (2001), pp. 116-132; Dacher Keltner, “The Power Paradox,” *Greater Good*, No. 8 (Winter 2007-2008), pp. 14-17.

⁹⁶ Morriss, *Power*, p. xiii. For the contrarian view that power-to is reducible to power-over, see Pamela Pansardi, “Power to and Power over: Two Distinct Concepts of Power?” *Journal of Political Power*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (April 2012), pp. 73-89.

power-over and power-with, and soft power is a form of power-with, not power-over.⁹⁷

There are two broad ways to obtain outcomes where the realization of these outcomes depend on the agency of others: one way is imposition, the other is exchange. Soft power emerges from social exchange, which is “social” because the terms of reciprocity are “soft,” that is, diffuse.

Social exchange is far more prevalent in and important to international relations than the literature of international relations makes it appear. Social exchange is the crucible of trust and a main glue that keeps the world without a world government together.⁹⁸

Diffuse reciprocity is not a feature of multilateralism alone; it permeates countless different facets of international relations. The communications and the alignment between states, as well as peace and war, cannot be fully understood without the concept of social exchange.

The largely tacit “grand bargain” that maintained the peace and promoted prosperity in Asia for several decades following the U.S.-PRC rapprochement in the 1970s was in significant part a diffuse reciprocity in which China accepted U.S. primacy, the United States facilitated China’s economic development, and most regional states benefited from these conditions. The social exchange of kindness, competence benefits, deference benefits, coalition benefits, and commitment to shared goals, values, identities, and beliefs is far more common in and consequential to international relations than the extant literature

⁹⁷ Morriss himself has mentioned but not discussed power-with. The first author to have substantially engaged with the concept of power-with is Mary Parker Follett, followed more than 70 years later by Amy Allen, both framing it as collective power. See Henry C. Metcalf and L. Urwick, eds., *Dynamic Administration: The Collected Papers of Mary Parker Follett* (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 78-92; and Amy Allen, *The Power of Feminist Theory: Domination, Resistance, and Solidarity* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), pp. 126-129.

⁹⁸ For the nexus between trust and social exchange, see Blau, *Exchange and Power*; Elinor Ostrom and James Walker, eds., *Trust and Reciprocity: Interdisciplinary Lessons from Experimental Research* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003).

expects. Social exchange can potentially illuminate many phenomena that puzzle the current theories of international relations. For example, a perspective based on social exchange can explain why an alliance fails to form even when a common threat is clearly perceived, and why an alliance outlasts the common threat that has inspired its creation.⁹⁹

Of the sources of power, force and money are perhaps the most discussed, and the most recognized. Structures rose later to prominence; in the IR field, they came first with anarchy and polarity, then with institutions and norms, to name the most celebrated. It is doubtful that force and money are more frequently recognized because they are more frequently present. A closer look at our everyday life would reveal that we spend more time engaging in social exchange than using money or force. Force and money are more “popular” because they are more visible. Structures are more ubiquitous as sources of social power, but they are less recognized because they are less visible. Our theory of soft power identifies an even more hidden source of power: agential qualities. They give rise to social exchange, trust, and soft power. If social exchange is as pervasive as the use of carrots and sticks, agential qualities are as important as force and money and ought to be taken as seriously as the latter.

Agential qualities remain ineffectual if not recognized by the audience, and the audience perceive them by reading their signals. All soft power is signaling, as far as the eyes can observe. Actors build their soft power by signaling, and they confer soft power on their partners based on the signals they receive about partner qualities. Our theory suggests that in an international setting where actors interact with one another for an extended

⁹⁹ An example of the former is the current lack of a security alliance between the states that share similar perceptions of China’s threat in the Indo-Pacific. NATO is an example for the latter.

period of time, they exchange signals of their qualities nearly all the time in a continual, albeit mostly tacit, negotiation over their relationships. In this diffuse reciprocity, signals, reputation, and prestige, as zeroth- and higher-order beliefs about agential qualities, are the currencies of the negotiation.¹⁰⁰ This explains why reputation and prestige is a chief concern of states and that “face,” which China is thought to be obsessed with, is a universal issue, not an “Oriental” concept. Alas, the role of these informational entities in international relations has yet to be appreciated.

Most of the discussion of signaling in IR is focused on signals of intentions, resolve, and capabilities in disputes and crises.¹⁰¹ Our theory suggests to dig deeper to the level of qualities because 1) signaling operates more frequently at this level, 2) it is at this level that the relationships between actors take and change shape, and 3) much of the production of outcomes also occurs by signaling qualities. From this perspective, war and crises are *both* the very act with which actors produce outcomes *and* the signaling process through which actors demonstrate their qualities as well as negotiate their relationship. Our theory also suggests that signaling is a key process at work in many phenomena and situations beyond war, crises, and disputes.

The concept of soft power is central to the understanding of leadership and hegemony in international relations. If the hallmark of empire is the domination of a relationship, the essence of leadership is social exchange and the defining features of hegemony are a relationship based on reciprocity and an agenda dominated by the hegemon. Military might and economic wealth are important but not always the key to

¹⁰⁰ The idea that signals, reputation, and prestige are zeroth- and higher-level beliefs about qualities originates from O’Neill, “Nuclear Weapons and National Prestige.”

¹⁰¹ For a recent review, see Gartzke et al., “Signaling in Foreign Policy.”

leadership and hegemony. Leadership varies according to issue area and critically depends on the followers' recognition of the leader's superior competence in the issue area and strong commitment to the shared cause and the collective. Just as deterrence is the product of capability, intention, and signaling, leadership is the result of competence multiplied by commitment multiplied by signaling. Generally considered inferior to Sparta in military affairs, Athens was conferred *hegemonia* (leadership) by the Greek city-states "because of its courage and sacrifice on behalf of Hellas in the long struggle against the Persian invader."¹⁰²

Although the term "soft power" is a modern coinage, the behaviors it describes have been practiced by humans since time immemorial. Also, while Nye's "soft power" is sometimes misunderstood as a Western concept, its core idea can be found in ancient Asian texts, for instance. The ancient literature of Chinese statecraft, a rich repertoire of experiences gained from centuries of warfare, government, and diplomacy in times as diverse as ranging from "warring states" to "all under heaven," has identified several key sources of power, including the coercive *wu* (martiality), the institutional and normative *wen* (patterning, civility), and the structural *shi* (propensity of things, strategic disposition). Parallels to the three variants of soft power are abundant in this literature under the concepts of *en* (grace, favor), *wei* (awesomeness, majesty) and *de* (moral excellence, virtue). As it is so universal to human behavior, soft power can best be studied with an interdisciplinary approach, which helps to minimize parochial perspectives and maximize cross-fertilization.

¹⁰² Richard Ned Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics: Ethics, Interests, and Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 312.