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Facing the Intangible, Unobservable and Immeasurable: A Conceptual Analysis of Joseph Nye's *Soft Power*

Master's thesis in political science

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Preface (*The End is Nye!)*

Soft power is a wonderfully accessible intuitive idea. I have been smitten with the soft-power concept for years, and when I reached the point of a Master's thesis, I wanted to use it empirically; to study a case of soft power at work in international politics. That shouldn't be too hard, right? Soft power is at play *all the time*...

The problem with this was my sense of obligation to Joseph Nye – I was *not* going to cut any conceptual corners; I was going to treat soft power right.

To do that, I realized, I needed to spend some time with the concept itself; pin down where the *power* of it was, before I could hope to operationalize it with any accuracy.
Quite a lot of time, in fact.
All of the time, actually.
And then some..

(Oh, well. Accuracy *is* important.)

Acknowledgements

Professor Jennifer Leigh Bailey, my brilliant advisor – for guiding me, for putting up with me, and for *not allowing me to give up,* I cannot thank you enough. You're simply the best!

Takk til mamma og pappa (for mye det samme),
til Bente og Marthe for finfine friminutt –
og til TMDG (det er min eegen feil, folkens!)

Abstract

The soft-power concept, developed by Joseph Nye, has been put to frequent use since its coining some twenty years ago, and people disagree about its merits. Soft power means being able to achieve your aims by influencing others through attraction or co-option rather than coercion. Soft power is a complex and elusive term, and many have struggled with it, some to the extent that they question its relevance for political science. "Power" is *also* a complex and elusive term, and yet it is central to the study of politics. In this thesis, I ask the question *Does Joseph Nye's concept of soft power aid our understanding of power as such, and can political scientists use it as an analytical tool?* Concepts cannot be "checked" empirically, but they can be analyzed, and I perform a conceptual analysis to answer my question. My method is adapted from Baldwin's conceptual analysis of interdependence (Baldwin 1980), and involves evaluating the concept on 4 criteria:
(1) its accordance with "ordinary use" of power, (2) its consistency with surrounding concepts, (3) whether it draws attention to what might otherwise easily be overlooked, and (4) whether it is "operational in the broadest sense". I check soft power's validity as a power-concept by exploring and analyzing *power* based on Nye's own power-definition and epistemological vantage point, before relating the soft-power concept to this power-concept. The analysis is organized into three "dimensions" of power. Two of these – (i) power's structure/agency dimension and (ii) power's resources/behavior dimension – are established and conventional dimensions in the power literature. The *third* "dimension" of power is a compilation of central "leftover problematics"; *intensions, perspective, timing and epistemology,* that have consequences for how we understand power on the first two dimensions. I call this power's "dark-matter dimension" (iii). To evaluate soft power on the 4th criterion, I examine scholarly *operationalizations* of the soft-power concept.

The thesis concludes that overall, soft power is a "theoretically useful" power-concept which draws attention to something that might otherwise easily be overlooked, while being consistent with surrounding concepts and in accordance with ordinary use of power. Soft power is also very nebulous, occasionally confusing, and *very* difficult to operationalize. The problems with studying soft power are related to Nye's attempt to treat what is essentially interpretive subject matter in a naturalist epistemology. So are the benefits of soft power, however: Soft power refers to a real element of "power" that cannot be satisfactorily reduced to side-effects of *hard* power. The concept contributes a focus on the difficulties of the core political concept of power, in a language that is accessible to scholars who work within a positivist/naturalist epistemological framework. Soft power is a way to make sure that intangible factors such as "legitimacy" and "authority" are not automatically seens as subordinate to *tangible* aspects of political power. It is this overarching, comprehensive function of soft power that makest he concept stand out, and sets soft power apart from its surrounding concepts.

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1. Introduction: The ubiquitous and elusive concept of power is the *core* of politics

Power is one of the most central concepts in political science. Analyses of politics are always, in some way, analyses of power. While the ubiquitousness of power is certain, the *nature* of power is infamously elusive. Power is commonly understood as having the ability to make other people do what you want them to do – when they would not have done it otherwise. Wilson (2008: 114) writes that "in international politics, having 'power' is having the ability to influence another to act in ways in which that entity would not have acted otherwise". The same basic idea is found in Robert Dahl's seminal article, "The Concept of Power":

> A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do. (Dahl 1957: 202-3)

Political scientists typically use a variant of this definition of power, and it sounds simple enough on the surface. The problem comes when the analyst goes behind the moment, and tries to pin precisely down what qualities or resources A might possess that compel B to act. "Power politics" theorists notoriously resort to counting material resources; Mearsheimer (2009), Ferguson (2004) and Kagan (2002) are examples of this type of power-concept. Even so, theorists and empiricists smitten with the simplicity of counting troops and warheads usually acknowledge the importance of something more, some *elusive quality*. We intuitively understand that quantitative accounts of power resources do not account fully for the ability to wield power over others. Hobbes captured this intuition in *Leviathan*; that "*what quality soever* maketh a man beloved or feared of many, or the reputation of such quality, is power; because it is a means to have the assistance and service of many" (Hobbes [1651] 1996: 58, emphasis added). *Ignoring* the elusive aspect of power can easily lead to what Baldwin (1979: 163) labels "the paradox of unrealized power" – that in the real world, the strongest cannot always achieve their goals. According to Baldwin, "two of the most important weaknesses in traditional theorizing about international politics have been the tendency to exaggerate the effectiveness of military power resources and the tendency to treat military power as the ultimate measuring rod to which other forms of power should be compared" (ibid: 180). This tendency has been called the "concrete fallacy" (e.g. Nye 2006). Once you start looking into the meanings and

paradoxes of power, it is only logical to conclude that power – understood as the power to shape the behavior of others to your advantage – is ultimately a psychological phenomenon. Political scientists need a way of studying power that does not require mind-reading, *without* resorting to stripping the concept of power from its relational, ultimately psychological core. This is what Joseph Nye intends to achieve with the concept of "soft power".

(i) Capturing the elusive power of *attraction*: Joseph Nye's "soft power"

Power is the ability to make someone do what they would not otherwise have done. *Soft* power is the power of attraction; "If I am persuaded to go along with your purposes without any explicit threat or exchange taking place – in short, if my behavior is determined by an observable but intangible attraction – soft power is at work" (Nye 2004: 7). To illustrate the different means by which we can exercise power, Nye uses the Theodore Roosevelt's familiar advice to "speak softly and carry a big stick"; you should attempt to influence the behavior of others through gentle persuasion – but be prepared to back it up with force if necessary. Nye then adds another saying involving a stick – one which includes the option of the carrot, making force or bribery your choice of method. Mixing the proverbs leaves *three* distinct approaches to influencing the behavior of others: the stick, the carrot, and speaking softly. "Power is the ability to alter the behavior of others to get what you want. There are basically three ways to do that: coercion (sticks), payments (carrots), and attraction (soft power)" (Nye 2006).

In the world of international politics, the sticks of force and carrots of economic inducement are far easier to measure than the vague, intangible quality of *being liked*, but soft power can have very real and tangible consequences. For instance, argues Nye, "if the United states is so unpopular in a country that being pro-American is a kiss of death in that country's domestic politics, political leaders are unlikely to make concessions to help us. Turkey, Mexico, and Chile were prime examples in the run-up to the Iraq War in March 2003" (Nye 2004: 129). This run-up to the iraq war is a commonly cited example of what a difference soft power makes, and it stands in stark contrast to U.S. world standing in a different era: When the country was objectively less powerful (with fewer nuclear weapons, and challenged by the Soviet Union), Robert Kennedy wrote of DeGaulle, Adenauer and MacMillan that during the 1962 Cuban Missile crisis "they accepted our recitation of the facts without question and publicly supported our position without reservation" (Kennedy 1968: 93). If soft power is co-optive power, this should be an excellent expression of it.

Why should we be interested how the soft-power concept works as a *concept*? Because **soft power is a popular concept.** In recent years, soft power has become "a central analytic term in foreign policy discussions" (Wilson 2008: 114). The Presidency of G.W. Bush in particular seemed

to make the value of soft power apparent (by its absence); the dramatic drop in the international popularity of the United States under the second President Bush made US soft power seem like a concrete factor in international politics. Soft power became for some the favored interpretation for why the US international standing began to fall, and "Nye's claims about the importance of soft power have had an enormous impact on the theory and practice of American foreign policy." (Kroening et al 2010: 413). The soft-power concept has also (interestingly) been warmly received by *Chinese* academics and politicians, and it has made a considerable impact on Chinese foreign policy (Wang and Lu 2008). Soft power has been adopted by practitioners of public diplomacy, who use it to describe their goals and purpose. A typical example is the Swedish Institute for the Promotion of Swedish Culture, that references Nye and soft power on its website.[1] Efforts are also being made to analyze empirically soft power (e.g. Huang and Ding 2006; Arnulf 2008; Machida 2010; Datta 2009; Atkinson 2010). Furthermore, **soft power is an elusive concept** – and one that is frequently misapplied. Kagan (2002) and Ferguson (2004: 34**)** exemplify such misuse. In addition to being used incorrectly, the soft-power concept has met resistance on its own terms – objections that are often related to the concept's comprehensiveness. It has been argued that "Soft power as Nye presents it conflates attention, attractiveness, and persuasion, and each of these should be treated as distinct dimensions." (Womack 2005). Despite such misuses and objections, soft power seems to have become an established term; one that is no longer problematized. Political science, however, depends on having a conscious, critical relationship with the concepts it uses, and we need to develop "better *definitions and conceptualizations* of the meaning of *hard* and *soft* power (Wilson 2008: 114). Such definition and conceptualization is essential groundwork in any scientific endeavor, and my thesis aims to contribute to this groundwork by evaluating soft power as an analytical power-concept.

(ii) Research question

Soft power is the modern manifestation of an old intuition – and just *because* it has become our modern manifestation of this old intuition, soft power deserves our attention. The overarching research question of my thesis is *Does the concept of "soft power" aid our understanding of power as such, and can political scientists use it specifically as an analytical tool?* This is a general inquiry that can easily yield several large and unwieldy questions, and to clarify a direction for the work I split the inquiry in two: (1) does soft power serve a *theoretical* purpose? and (2) can soft power be used *practically*?

1. Is soft power theoretically useful?

1 http://www.si.se/English/Navigation/About-SI/Sweden-in-the-world/

The notion that soft power should be "theoretically useful" is related to soft power's status as a power-concept. Theories are tools to help us see the connections and mechanisms at work in the political sphere. Power is a contested concept, and the contestation is largely related to precisely those resources and behaviors of power that cannot be understood in military or economic terms. If soft power can be used to enhance the precision of these tools in some way, then the concept is theoretically useful. Alternatively, soft power may turn out to be more *confusing* than useful.

2. Is soft power practically useful?

That soft power should be "practically useful" is the extension of expecting it to be "theoretically useful": If we want our theories to inform – and be informed by – empirical observations, then the "practical usefulness" of soft power is closely related to its theoretical usefulness. While it is not possible to "measure" a *concept* empirically, the real-world *usefulness* of a concept can examined by investigating how it is used to gather empirical knowledge. My method for examining these two questions is found in chapter 2.

(iii) Conclusion: Continuity and change, and the *third* power

I end this introductory chapter with an observation about continuity and change in the nature of power in international politics. To illustrate the enduring validity of their principles, realists like to point out the continued (and perpetual?) relevance of the words of Thucydides, that "the strong do as they will and the weak suffer what they must". Power continues to be an unavoidable reality. However, the fact that there *are* such continuities in the theater of international relations, and we *should* identify them and recognize their continuing relevance, does not alter the fact that there are equally real and significant changes. There has certainly been a significant change in what are considered to be important political goals for states; "after all, Thucydides never worried about global debt, nuclear winter, or the depletion of the world's ozone layer" (Nye 1990: 178). The new issues on the international agenda are not issues that the hard dimensions of power are best suited for. Being able to woo popular opinion is also becoming an increasingly important power factor in international politics as the number of democratic regimes increases – giving publics an institutionalized say in policies, foreign and domestic. The combination of the heightened status of democracy and developments in communications technology makes "power over opinion" – the elusive *third* power – both more important and less manageable.

In our time, understanding soft power is crucial. The next chapter describes the method behind my contribution to this understanding.

2. Methodology and Method

This chapter explains the why and how of "conceptual analysis", the method used in this thesis. It describes this approach (2.2), explains the epistemic foundations of the concept of soft power (2.3), discusses the sources used in the study (2.4) and sketches the organization of the thesis (2.5).

2.1. Introduction: Why conceptual analysis?

The concepts that we use are the building blocks of political science. On the first page of this thesis is a quote from Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan:*

> The first cause of absurd conclusions I ascribe to the want of method; in that they begin not their ratiocination from definitions; that is, from settled significations of their words: as if they could cast account without knowing the value of the numeral words, *one*, *two*, and *three*. (Hobbes ([1651] 1996: 30)

By comparing words to numbers, Hobbes gives us a strikingly efficient reminder of the vulnerability of scientific inquiry to weaknesses of its concepts. How can we ensure that our concepts live up to our expectations of them? The purpose of this chapter is to present the explicit framework for evaluating a concept. Of course, we cannot test a concept empirically – "concepts are the basis for explanations and are not explanations as such. There might be theories involving power that can be checked empirically, but there are no concepts that can be checked in this way." (Guzzini 1993: 445). When the object to be studied is a concept, one *method* for such study is to perform a *conceptual analysis*. Conceptual analysis is interesting in its own right, but such work is also of great importance to empirical research. The value of conceptual analysis to empiricists is evident both in that analyzing concepts can provide "logical control of theories before they are applied to empirical material" (Guzzini 1993: 445-446), and in the sense that the counting and sorting of facts about the world makes no more sense than your categories allow for. As Sartori (1970: 1038) pointed out, the question of "how much?" that is so central to the quantitative methods is necessarily preceded by "how much in *what?*" Failing to define a concept properly is easily *the first cause of absurd conclusions.*

I have based my conceptual analysis of soft power on Baldwin's conceptual analysis of interdependence (Baldwin 1980). Rather than simply replicating Baldwin's analysis with soft power in place of interdependence, I adapted Baldwin's approach to my subject matter, and ended up with four criteria for an evaluation of soft power. Soft power should be (1) *In accordance with ordinary use of "power"*, (2) Consistent *with surrounding concepts*, (3) *Drawing attention to what might otherwise easily be overlooked*, and (4) *Operational in the broadest sense*.

2.2. Method: A Conceptual analysis of soft power

My guide in developing a framework for analyzing soft power has been the article "Interdependence and power: a conceptual analysis" (Baldwin 1980). Baldwin describes his article as "an exercise in conceptual analysis; an attempt to clarify and explicate the concept of dependence and related concepts such as 'interdependence' and 'dependency'" (ibid: 472). Baldwin's endeavor has clear parallels to my own ambitions for an analysis of soft power: Like interdependence was when Baldwin wrote his analysis, soft power is a relatively recently coined concept that is being used in different (and sometimes confusing) ways, and like interdependence is based on the concept of "dependence", soft power is based on "power".

In chapter 1, I distinguished between two types of use for the soft-power concept – that it should be useful (i) "theoretically" and (ii) "practically". Employing Baldwin's approach, I find that there is no clear line that separates the quest for an answer to (i) from that of an answer to (ii). The "practical usefulness" of a concept is an extension of its "theoretical usefulness" in the sense that a useful concept should be able to lead to a meaningful operationalization.

2.2.1. Conceptual analysis according to Baldwin (1980)

Baldwin developed his criteria for a conceptual analysis of "interdependence" on the base of compatible advice provided by the legendary Thomas Malthus and Baldwin's contemporaries Machlup and Oppenheim.[2] I have built my approach to soft power on the same base. While my analysis does not violate any of the advice given by either Baldwin or his inspiration, I find that some points are more relevant than others – as I will elaborate on shortly.

By opening with Hobbes, I wished to emphasize that the importance of conceptual discipline to academic inquiry is not a new development. Baldwin makes the same point, going back to 1827, and Malthus' four rules for "guidance in defining and applying the terms used in the science of political economy" (Baldwin 1980: 473):

1. Terms should be applied “as they are understood in ordinary use”.
2. When a new concept is introduced, the authority regarding the use of it should be its “principle founder”.
3. Changing the meaning of a concept is sometimes justifiable , if the concept is left "more

2 Baldwin cites Machlup, Fritz (1963) *Essays on Economic Semantics* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall; Malthus, T.R. (1827) *Definitions in Political Economy, preceded by An Inquiry into the Rules Which ought to Guide Political Economists in the Definition and Use of Their Terms; with Remarks on the Deviations from these Rules in their Writings* London: John Murray; Oppenheim, Felix E. (1975) "The Language of Political Inquiry: Problems of Clarification" in Greenstein, Fred and Nelson W. Polsby (eds) *Handbook of Political Science,* Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.

useful" – that is, if the alteration removes an objection to the use of the concept without creating other equal or greater objections.

4. Any new concept should be consistent with those surrounding concepts which "are allowed to remain."

He then supplements Malthus' commonsensical checklist with Oppenheim's more recent (1975) "six points for evaluating scientific concepts" to produce six criteria:

1. A concept should be operational in the broadest sense.

2. Definitional connections with other terms is to be preferred.

3. Drawing attention to what might easily be overlooked is desirable.

4. The concept should not preclude empirical investigation by making true "by definition" what is best left to empirical inquiry.

5. Concept should be close to ordinary language - that is, to "the set of rules that [people] implicitly follow when applying it to a given situation".

6. The concept should remain "open", in the sense that the possibility of change is never completely ruled out. (Baldwin 1980: 474)

It is from these lists that I have developed my analysis of soft power. The starting point for my analysis is found in Malthus' second rule; that the authority regarding the use of a new concept is its "principal founder". This is a good vantage point for analyzing soft power, as Nye is clearly the concept's "principal founder", and using Nye as the authority regarding the use of soft power ensures that my analysis does not end up battling straw men. In the same way, and for the same reasons, I use Nye's standards to define a reasonable limit for the depth of my metatheoretical analysis of soft power. I will explain this further in section 2.3.

With this starting point I have identified four broad criteria on which I evaluate soft power's conceptual contribution. Soft power should be (1) *In accordance with ordinary use*, (2) Consistent *with surrounding concepts*, (3) *Drawing attention to what might otherwise easily be overlooked*, and (4) *Operational in the broadest sense*. Before elaborating on these, I want to briefly address the elements from Baldwin's checklists that I have chosen to exclude from my analysis. One such item is Oppenheim's 6th point – that a concept should remain "open", in the sense that the possibility of change is never completely ruled out. This point is excluded from further analysis because it is a pragmatic recognition of the changes that occur in language over time, and has no direct relevance for my analysis of soft power, as the concept is still fresh. Rather than worry about it changing, I want to examine soft power as it is now. A related element that is listed above but does not reappear in my own list of criteria is Malthus's 3rd rule, concerning when changing the meaning of an existing concept is justifiable. This is a central point to bear in mind when we are discussing concepts, but it

does not directly relate to my evaluation of the soft-power concept. Soft power is a new concept, and not a change in the meaning of an old one.

The other criteria from Baldwin's lists that do not (at least directly) appear on my own list of criteria are Oppenheim's 2nd and 4th points; that the concept under scrutiny should have "definitional connections with other terms", and that it should not make true "by definition" something that should be assessed empirically. I do not focus on these criteria specifically because they overlap with some the points that I *do* focus on: Oppenheim's 2nd point is indirectly dealt with in both my second and third criteria, as they concern the relationship between soft power and its related terms, and Oppenheim's 4th point is so closely related to my fourth criterion – that a concept should be "operational in the broadest sense" – that I deem it unnecessary to treat it as a separate issue.

2.2.2. Four criteria for evaluating the soft-power concept

Baldwin's central message is that "conceptual analysis presupposes guidelines or 'rules of the game' in terms of which such undertakings may be judged." (Baldwin 1980: 473). By this he means that evaluating a concept requires establishing an explicit set of criteria for evaluation. These are the four criteria for evaluation that make up my conceptual analysis:

1. Accordance with ordinary use. ***Is soft power in accordance with ordinary use of power?***

This first criterion on which my analysis will evaluate the soft-power concept captures the point that was made by both Malthus (in his 1st point) and Oppenheim (in his 5th point); terms should be applied as they are understood in "ordinary use". As soft power is a conceptual innovation that is explicitly based on the power-concept, this criterion applies even though the soft-power concept is itself a new construct. Soft power should use "power" in a way that is in accordance with "ordinary use" of power. If I am to assess whether or not soft power is used in accordance with ordinary use of power, then I must first establish the "ordinary use of power" that soft power should be in accordance with. Analyzing the concept of power to define this "ordinary use" will be the first step in my process of analyzing soft power, and I do this analysis of power in chapter 3. There is much to be said about just what the ordinary use of *power* is, and quite a lot of it *will* be said, but for now the issue is what clues Baldwin can provide me with in the search for the "ordinary use" of a concept. Baldwin (1980: 476) specifies that "accordance with ordinary use" should be understood to refer to the ordinary *academic* use of the concept (according to "scholarly conventions"). This limits my inquiry into the power-concept to within the discipline of political science. The fact that I am using Nye as the "principle authority" regarding the use of the soft-power concept helps limit the analysis of "power" further. I base my analysis of power on the references to power-analysis that are

provided by Nye (2004).

It may be objected that a consequence of this approach of looking at Nye's conceptual innovation on its *own* terms is that I am, in effect, constructing a path of least resistance for soft power. It is true that basing my power-analysis on references made by Nye limits the range of the power-concept's "challenges" to soft power, but this approach also has clear benefits. On a general, practical level, it provides a systematic strategy for limiting the scope of my power-analysis – which I need because the literature is vast, and researching the power-concept without an anchor leads you in a myriad of directions, on countless levels. A more specific benefit to using Nye's power-concept as a starting point is that it ensures that I evaluate Nye's accordance with *himself* (rather than set up a straw man of power, so to speak). I am assessing the internal validity of soft power, and I do not run the risk of detaching the analysis from Nye's epistemological underpinnings. I return to the issue of epistemology in 2.3.

In any case, the literature on power that Nye makes reference to *is* central in the field, and I have surveyed this literature enough to conclude that it is reasonable to assert that a power-concept derived from this work is in accordance with "scholarly conventions". I have also included other central perspectives on power, though this is chiefly done to help me evaluate soft power on the *second* and *third* criteria. In fact, the four criteria around which I have concentrated my conceptual analysis are often overlapping. In my treatment of these criteria I have therefore to some extent sacrificed neatness and order in exchange for flow and logical coherence. My analysis of *power* is neatly located in chapter 3, however, and my conceptual analysis of soft power on the first three criteria is concluded in chapter 5.

2. Consistency. *Is soft power consistent with its surrounding concepts?*

The first criterion concerns soft power's accordance with ordinary use of *power*, and must not be confused with the second criterion; *consistency with surrounding concepts.* This is Malthus' 4th rule, and means that in addition to being in accordance with the power-concept as it is understood in ordinary use, a "theoretically useful" concept of soft power should also be logically consistent with surrounding concepts "which are allowed to remain".

The consistency-criterion is more vaguely defined than my other three criteria. I still want to include the criterion, because it is a good approach to an important potential *problem* with soft power – that the concept might confuse the established way to understand its subject matter. To say that soft power is "consistent with surrounding concepts" means to say that the soft-power concept does not contradict the concepts that surround it; that soft power can "co-exist peacefully" with other terminology that might be used in the same situations. Hegemony, authority, and legitimacy

are examples of soft power's "surrounding concepts". Determining which of soft power's "surrounding concepts" to pay attention to in this analysis has been a process similar to determining the ordinary use of power – I have targeted those "surrounding concepts" that are either being used by Nye, or that have been drawn attention to by others when they were addressing the subject of soft power. Because a category of soft power's "surrounding concepts" has the potential to spin wildly out of control (it could easily include ideas like civic pride, national character, and moral integrity, along with many, many others), I will not demarcate a concrete set of surrounding concepts. The *evaluation* of soft power on this criterion is mostly (though not solely) based on examining the way in which soft power has been received by other scholars, which I do in the first sections of chapter 5. A concluding evaluation of this criterion, along with those of the 1st and 3rd criteria, is done in the last section of chapter 5.

3. Draw attention to what is otherwise easily overlooked.

My third criterion is the one that is stated in Oppenheim's 3rd point; that drawing attention to what might easily be overlooked is a desirable quality in a new concept. It might go without saying that a "theoretically useful" conceptual innovation should be more than a superfluous "reinvention" of an established concept. Rather, the new concept should provide new insight, and/or draw attention to factors that can easily be overlooked. This is clearly Nye's ambition with soft power, and assessing soft power's contribution in this regard is in one sense very easy: the popularity of Nye's concept certainly suggests that many feel that the concept *does* draw attention to aspects of social reality that have been overlooked. My analysis, however, aims to move beyond this observation, and concretize soft power's ability to draw attention these.

To evaluate this ability, I use the power-analysis as a starting point. Analyzing "power" gives an impression of the kind of emphasis the "mainstream" power analysts put on the intangible, "soft" aspect of power. Do they give adequate attention to this aspect of power? If not, then it is reasonable to postulate that this is something that is easy to overlook. There is also a part of answering whether what soft power draws attention to is otherwise easily overlooked which overlaps with the consistency-criterion: Deciding whether soft power is consistent with its surrounding concepts involves assessing what it is that makes soft power stand out; what keeps soft power apart from those surrounding concepts. In the same way, to draw attention to something that is easy to overlook *without* the concept, soft power should be *distinguishable* from related concepts.

4. Operational in the broadest sense.

The fourth and final of Baldwin's criteria on which I will evaluate soft power is Oppenheim's 1st point: Scientific concepts should be "operational in the broadest sense". This is where the "theoretically useful"-part of my research question runs into the "practically useful"-part: Good definition should clear the path towards a good operationalization. In addition, I want to point to three good reasons for looking into the soft-power concept's potential for application to empirical observations and naturalist research. *First*, political science, at the end of the day, addresses concrete, real-life problems. *Second*, Baldwin's approach to conceptual analysis recommends such assessment, and *third*, assessing soft power's practical usefulness is also made salient by the "principal founder's" ambitions for the concept. Empirical research that makes use of the soft-power concept is a goal for Nye himself. According to Knutsen (2007) soft power is embedded in a naturalist epistemology, so on his own terms, Nye wants to be empirically verifiable. As observation is a central part of a naturalist epistemology, it is important to also examine soft power as a "measurable" phenomenon.

The criterion that a concept should be "operational in the broadest sense" should not be understood to mean that it must be *easy* to operationalize, however. When working with an abstract concept, says Baldwin, we *will* have to make do with "necessarily imperfect operational definitions" (Baldwin 1980: 506). The same point is made by Robert Dahl in his analysis of power; that "in practice, the concept of power will have to be defined by operational criteria that will undoubtedly modify its pure meaning" (Dahl 1957: 214). In short, there is a difference between defining a concept and applying it" (Baldwin 1980: 475).

A clearly defined generic concept of soft power, then, should be useful for developing lower level generalizations that can be applied to the real world. The approach to evaluating soft power as "operational in the broadest sense" is set somewhat apart from my approach to the other three criteria. As mentioned, the criteria for evaluation of soft power will often overlap each other in my analysis. The criterion concerning operationalization, however, gets a chapter of its own (chapter 6). That way, readers get the benefit of assessing operationalization in light of the analysis of soft power on the previous three criteria. As Nye writes in a naturalist epistemological tradition, and is trying to arrange a base for the empirical investigation of soft power, it is not surprising that on several occasions, Nye's concept *has been* operationalized and used in empirical analysis. The question then becomes whether and how the indicators that Nye suggests capture significant aspects of Nye's definition of soft power, which is a question that I can address by comparing researchers' presentations of their indicators to Nye's presentation of soft power. This will get me an *indication* of just how and in what ways soft power is useful or confounding for researchers.

In evaluating others' use of the soft-power concept in empirical research, the interesting inquiry is: When people use this theoretical concept of soft power practically – *how far do they stray?* Do empirical approaches to soft power that follow Nye's directions end up violating the definitional core that is identified by a theoretical analysis of the concept? I have chosen empirical studies that exemplify quantitative and qualitative approaches to examining soft power. The studies have in common a stated ambition to study soft power *as Nye defines it*, and if they run into similar – and *serious* – problems, this suggests that soft power is researchable only with considerable difficulty.

2.3. Epistemology, power, and *soft* power

Having already made reference to Nye's epistemological environment on a few occasions, I will now expand on the subject and its significance to my analysis. Knutsen (2007) places soft power in a naturalist as opposed to a constructivist "sociology of knowledge", referring to the definitions in Moses and Knutsen (2007). This means that soft power is intended for use within the confines of a naturalist knowledge system. However, when the subject matter is this intangible, *soft* power, adapting it to a naturalist approach is a considerable challenge. The classifications of "naturalist" and "constructivist" epistemologies are of particular interest when analyzing the soft-power concept because soft power is a concept that seems to belong somewhere in between. Soft power is an expressedly naturalist concept that is intimately linked to a concept – power – that keeps evading the confines of naturalist stringency.

Before I leave the subject of epistemology, 2.3.2. addresses an issue that more or less *forces* itself into this conceptual analysis – the "essential contestedness" of power.

2.3.1. The naturalist approach and its constructivist counterpart

As an approach to what is "knowable" for a social scientist, naturalism is quite rigorous. Moses and Knutsen (2007: 9) give the following five defining features of the naturalist approach:

- There exist regularities or patterns in nature that can be observed and described.
- Statements based on these regularities can be tested empirically according to a falsification principle and a correspondence theory of truth.
- It is possible to distinguish between value-laden and factual statements (and facts are, in principle, theoretically independent).
- The scientific project should be aimed at the general at the expense of the particular.
- Human knowledge is both singular (in the sense that there is *one* right answer) and cumulative (in the sense that we accumulate these answers over time).

This naturalist epistemology is modeled on established ideals for accumulating knowledge about the world from the natural science. The *constructivist* approach is less rigidly defined, but its central tenet is that it "recognizes the important role of the observer and society in constructing the patterns that we study as social scientists" (ibid: 10). In other words, a constructivist analysis does not start from a general agreement that knowledge is singular and cumulative, because even if *the world* exists independently of the observer, our *knowledge* about it does not. Knowledge is *intersubjective*.

There is an interesting tension between a constructivist perspective on social reality and the soft-power concept: In a sense, a concept of "soft" power becomes superfluous for constructivists. This is because, from a constructivist perspective, society really *is* all "power":

> Power must play a crucial role in the construction of social reality. Power, in short, means not only the resources required to impose one's view on others, but also the authority to determine the shared meanings that constitute the identities, interests and practices of states, as well as the conditions that confer, defer or deny access to 'goods' and benefits (ibid: 336).

The societal origins of power that are so central to a constructivist agenda are not Nye's concern. To a constructivist, because the structures that have become reified and taken for granted are not true *a priori*, "Constructivist theory *must* be able to address the question of which interpretations and whose interpretations become social reality" (Adler 1997: 337, emphasis added). Naturalism and constructivism clearly part ways there, but they have in common an adherence to a "correspondence principle" for scientific knowledge.[3] Adler (1997: 322) defines constructivism by its recognition of the "ontological reality of intersubjective knowledge" – which is to say that the "constructed patterns" that social scientists study are patterns of "intersubjective meaning", and that this "meaning" *defines* social reality (ibid: 327). Because most subject matter of the social sciences (e.g. institutions, states, organizations) undeniably *is* socially constructed rather than naturally given, there is arguably no dramatic epistemological *break* between naturalist and constructivist approaches to social science, but rather a gliding transition, from a focus on observation and description and towards focusing on context and interpretation.[4] The difference between the two can partly be expressed in terms of *method* – naturalist methodological stringency prescribes a "hierarchy of methods", where experiments are the ideal approach, followed by statistical methods, comparative studies with a smaller number of observations, and finally single-case studies (Moses and Knutsen 2007: 51-52). This hierarchy has less relevance for constructivists, who typically take more interest in contextual factors.

3 At least according to Adler. "Constructivism", unlike "naturalism", is a very fluent concept with many, sometimes only distantly related uses.

4 The actual *break* happens at the "far end" of constructivism – which is where the poststructuralists take over and start doubting *everything*... Unlike the poststructuralists, "constructivists are *not* condemned to interpret discourse." (Adler 1997: 326)

2.3.2. The essential contestedness of power

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the role of power in the study of international politics can hardly be underestimated, and yet there is no general agreement on just what it is. Whether or not it is even *possible* to agree on the semantic content of the word "power" is a specific issue that concerns this conceptual analysis. Lukes (1974) famously described power as "essentially contested", which suggests that there is no definitive agreement to be reached.[5] Barnett and Duvall (2005: 41) put it in this way: "power is an essentially contested concept. Its status owes not only to the desire by scholars to agree to disagree, but also to their awareness that power works in various forms and has various expressions that cannot be captured by a single formulation." Guzzini (1993: 446-448) describes, and I paraphrase, three reasons why the concept of power is "essentially contested":

(i) The *counterfactual* element of power: Power always implies an element of counterfactual reasoning, as "the judgment of the significance of a given set of abilities presupposes an implicit statement about the unaffected state of affairs" (ibid: 446). As power implies potential for *change*, there is always a counterfactual implication of potential *continuity*; (ii) The *normative* element of power: Power cannot ultimately be disentangled from normative discourse.[6] (iii) Power is embedded in different *epistemological "clusters"***:** Guzzini's third reason for the essential contestedness of power concerns established differences in approaches to ("scientific") knowledge. As "concepts are not self-sufficient", but rather "derive their meaning from the theories in which they are embedded" (ibid: 448), "power" will be given a significantly different meaning depending on whether you rely on a naturalist or an interpretivist (constructivist) epistemology. This point is illustrated by the account of power's centrality to constructivist analysis in 2.3.1.

The contested meaning of power has implications for a conceptual analysis of power. One implication is that social power cannot be "cleansed" of counterfactual reasoning or normative content. In that sense, the naturalist ideal is out of reach. However, as discussed in 2.3.1, this ideal is really *unavoidably* out of reach for the social sciences. The observation that different philosophies of science yield different images of power that cannot be hierarchically arranged by validity is important because if "power" is essentially contested, then the various understandings of power do

5 Note that the essential contestedness of power as purported by the likes of Lukes, Guzzini, and Barnett and Duvall, is disputed by MacDonald (1976) and Swanton (1985). Their objections go quite deeply into the philosophy of language, though, and, though they make some intriguing points (worth reading!), the debate on the essential contestedness of power is an issue for another thesis.

6 This assertion concerns the relationship between power and our individual and collective "interests". "Interests" can be limited to subjective interests, but you can also formulate interests in the aggregate, such as social classes. Both approaches describe part of reality, and deciding between e.g. a "pluralist" concept of power and a "radical" concept of power [see 3.2.2., pp. 27-28] ultimately becomes a question of values and norms. This was Lukes's (1974) main concern when he described power as essentially contested.

not necessarily need to be *inter*coherent to be accurate denotations of "power" – they only need to be *intra*coherent. The fact that power is a contested concept does not mean that power is a concept without boundaries, but it *does* mean that these "boundaries of power" need to be clearly defined. The point of this conceptual analysis is to perform a check on the internal validity of Nye's argument. The analysis of power in this thesis will be consistent with Nye's "ontological and epistemological choices," and the test is thus for soft power's "internal validity", rather than for consistency with the power-concept as such (in all its contested glory).

2.4. Comments about my sources and research

The material under investigation in this thesis is all textual. This section provides some comments on these texts, aimed at explaining the judgments that lie behind my selection of them.

Researching Nye: This first comment on the texts behind the thesis regards my work with Joseph Nye; *How have I selected from within his texts, and why do I deem that I have produced a fair version of his work?* To be fair to Nye's soft-power authorship, I have done extensive reading of his work. In addition to reading his books *Bound to Lead* (1990), *The Paradox of American Power* (2002a) and *Soft Power* (2004),[7] I have also read a range of Nye's articles about soft power (Nye 2002b; 2003; 2006; 2008b; 2009; 2010; 2011b; Nye and Owens 1996). Based on the insight that this has given me into the subject matter, I am confident that I give a good presentation of Nye. Since I began work with this thesis, Nye has published *The Future of Power* (Nye 2011a). This book did not make it into my substantial analysis of Nye. I have perused the book, however, and I have read later articles by Nye. I feel confident that my analysis of the soft-power concept is not based on an outdated presentation of the concept.

Researching others' use of soft power: In a world where the overwhelming amount of material that is available electronically means that research is never objectively completed, the choices of where to draw the line ultimately come down to personal judgment. In deciding which "non-Nye" uses of the soft-power concept to include, my judgments have been these:

To ensure that I am looking at *academic* writing and soft power, I have searched academic databases (Bibsys, Jstor, and Google Scholar), using a wide variety of search keys (including "Joseph Nye", "power", "soft power", and "public diplomacy"). While my research has been quite extensive, the database searches were made in 2009 and 2010. There are new developments around soft power happening continuously, and if my main focus for analysis was the *uses* of soft power in academic writings *as such,* then my work would already be outdated. This weakness is ameliorated

7 And, by the way, *The Power to Lead* (Nye 2008) – which turned out to be of more relevance to CIOs than political scientists..

by the fact that I focus on a deeper level, so to speak – drawing on long lines of analysis of the power-concept. At its core, my conceptual analysis does not depend on its more recent literary contributions. Concerning the contemporary debate about soft power that is important in chapter 5 *and* the examples of empirical uses of soft power in chapter 6, however, I would ideally want to do a new round of research and analysis in 2012.

To make sure that I have found critiques that are central to the work with soft power, I have used texts that are frequently referenced by others. Because I have traced references, I am confident that I have chosen critiques that represent central issues of contestation regarding soft power. I have also essayed to not stray far from the intended audience for Nye's writings. It would be fair to say that by tracing references I have not cast a very wide net. On the other hand, I have *consciously* chosen this approach, because the aim of my analysis is to evaluate the internal validity of soft power. I am most interested to hear the objections from Nye's immediate surroundings. I use the criticism of soft power as a way of determining which surrounding concepts soft power should be consistent with. This is a good strategy for moving from the vague task of determining consistency to the carrying out of the task in a more concrete way, as it makes my choices less random.

As a final note on my use of sources, I would like to explain the occasional glaring absence of page numbers. Some of the texts I use are electronic publications that do not *have* page numbers. This is the case with Hackbarth 2008, Kagan 2002, Knutsen 2007, Nye 2006, and Womack 2005. These however, are all rather short texts, and the quotations in question will not take very long to locate.

2.5. Conclusion: A note on the organization of the thesis

To ameliorate the confusion that might follow from the many overlaps in focus throughout the analysis and specify where in the main text my four criteria are addressed, I conclude this method-chapter with an overview of the organization of the thesis. The chapters are organized in the following way:

Chapter 3, "Power", establishes the ordinary use of power that *soft* power should be in accordance with (the 1st criterion). I begin by diving into the problematic nature of power, and traditional strands of dealing with it. This serves my project in several ways. For one, it is a good a way to show effectively that the power-concept *is* problematic. Moreover, looking at power in depth is also helpful in determining whether soft power is a concept that covers something which is otherwise easily overlooked. I present two traditional approaches to power – tripartite power and hegemony – that are relevant context to soft power: Nye belongs in an established "tripartite" tradition of writing about three kinds of power. I have also looked into the hegemony-tradition of

power, because of its close (but mostly unstated) kinship to soft power. I have organized my analysis of the power-concept in chapter 3 according to the same dimensions as Nye. Nye (2004) describes two dimensions of power; power as structure/agency and power as resources/behavior. Because I found that there are some central aspects of power that are not sufficiently covered by the structure/agency- and resources/behavior dimensions, I have added a third dimension that addresses these "leftover-problematics"; I call it the "dark matter" of power. To facilitate the reading of commonly themed pieces of the analysis, I have organized the chapters parallelly according to these, though they do, at times, overlap. **Chapter 4, "Joseph Nye's Soft Power",** has the important function of taking us back to Nye's original text. The chapter is a detailed, descriptive presentation of Nye's soft power, and how Nye addresses the problematics of power that were presented in chapter 3.

Chapter 5, "Soft Power Revisited". I have endeavored to confine as much of the conceptual analysis of soft power as possible to Chapter 5, and the final section in chapter 5 *concludes* my analysis of the first three criteria. I start the chapter off with a reminder of the criteria and approach of my conceptual analysis. After the recap I discuss relevant problems that have surfaced in the scholarly reception of the soft-power concept. Probing the *criticisms* of soft power is a good way to identify the problems that soft power may have with meeting my criteria for a scientific concept. Those criticisms of Nye that I do not deem to be attacks on the core idea of soft power as "power" primarily serve my 2nd and 3rd criteria, while the objections of critics that think Nye is misapplying the power-concept are more central to my evaluation of the 1st criterion. After dealing with Nye's critics, I compare power and soft power along the three dimensions structure/agency, resources/behavior and "dark matter". This also takes me back to the first three criteria; *accordance* with ordinary use of power, *consistency* with surrounding concepts (this time as it relates to power-concepts), and *attention* to what is otherwise easily overlooked. **Chapter 6, "The 4th Criterion: Soft power as operational in the broadest sense"** centers on just one of my four criteria; that soft power should be operationalizable. This chapter presents, assesses, and concludes my analysis on the 4th criterion. In **Chapter 7, "Conclusion",** I sum up my findings, give some further reflections regarding the practical use of the soft-power concept, and suggest an area for empirical inquiry into soft power.

3. Power

Chapter 3 places Nye in the power-literature, and sets out the main issues within the concept of power that run through much of the literature (as well as this thesis), and that Nye is addressing.

This chapter establishes the ordinary use of the concept of power by first probing the problematics of the concept (**3.1**). It examines the tripartite division of power, the concept of hegemonic power (**3.2**), and the analytical power-concept behind soft power (**3.3**). This is important because of the conceptual analysis' criterion that Nye's use of the term power should be in accordance with standard (academic) usage, and also because it is necessary background for examining Nye's critics in chapter 5. The threads of the discussion are tied together in the conclusion (**3.4**).

3.1. Introduction: *Problematics of power*

The meaning of "soft power" rests on the meaning of "power", and understanding the contested nature of power is essential for recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of soft power as a power-concept. To illustrate the pervasiveness of the difficulties with power, I introduce the different approaches to power taken by two of the earliest among those classified as "modern thinkers": 16th century Florentine Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) and 17th century Englishman Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679). Their work contains the seeds of a basic division between a naturalistic approach and a more interpretive approach which permeates the writing on power up to the present day, and exploring their contrasting approaches to power leads me on to the relationship between power and the realist discipline in International Relations. This is a digression from the theme of soft power, but a useful one, as realism is a good place to start when looking for manifestations of the difficulties of power. Within the field of international politics, this is the literature that most explicitly and directly discusses power – in fact, the link between political scientists who belong to the realist schools of thought and the power-concept is so prevalent that "a concern with power in international politics is frequently interpreted as a disciplinary attachment to Realism" (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 40). Looking at realists' uses of the power-concept effectively illustrates that power, in its most ordinary use by political scientists, remains an elusive concept.

3.1.1. Machiavelli, Hobbes, and the concept of power

Clegg (1989) uses Hobbes and Machiavelli as starting points for two distinct traditions of understanding the central relationship between power and agency. Contrasting Machiavelli's and Hobbes' approaches to power helps explain the power-concept's challenges to political analysis by demonstrating the clash of legislative and interpretive *logics* that lurks in the background, foreshadowing the more modern discussions on power. Hobbes and Machiavelli both "took an analytical and empirically oriented stance towards power, rather than the primarily religious or ethical stance adopted by their forebears" (Clegg 1989: 21). They also both wrote about "power" as something that a power-holder (agent) could *use* to achieve desired results, but the function of the

agent within their conceptualizations of power is quite different: "Where Hobbes and his successors may be said to have endlessly legislated on what power *is,* Machiavelli and his successors may be said to have interpreted what power *does*" (ibid: 5)." Legislating what power *is"* means describing power in terms of rules and causalities, while "interpreting what power *does*" means being less concerned with causal *mechanisms* and more concerned with (pragmatic) *strategies*; "Hobbesian" agents try to observe and apply general rules of power, and "Machiavellian" agents try to interpret the specific environment and from that work out the best strategy for obtaining power.

Hobbes – agency power as "mechanistic" causality: Clegg (1989: 37) identifies the Hobbesian project of "legislating on what power *is"* as the "foundational tradition" of power analysis. This project is the equivalent of a naturalist approach to knowledge, as it was described in epistemological terms in chapter 2. The underlying *metaphor* for Hobbes' scientific approach to power is one of *mechanistic causality*. Hobbes' world is in one in which "causal power relations occur between individuated and atomistic entities 'whirling through a social void', a world 'comprised of matter in motion, of forces in collision, of bodies pushing ... and being pushed'" (Clegg 1989: 42). Within this metaphor, Hobbes' concern with power was a concern with sovereignty – with understanding the "Leviathan" as a rightful locus of power. Hobbes' conception of sovereignty served to give moral reason to the practical reasons for loyalty to a monarch; and "the premises of [this] moral order were grounded on the universal claims of science's rational intelligence" (ibid: 24). Clegg juxtaposes the Hobbesian, scientifically legislative and mechanistic approach to understanding power with:

Machiavelli – agency power as "organic" strategy: It would be difficult to write about the history of power and politics without making reference to Machiavelli, who may be *the* historic thinker who is most extensively cited by later writers on power. Machiavelli, of course, wrote before the modernist project of science, and the desire for a mechanistic legislation of the workings of power that runs through Hobbes' *Leviathan* does not appear in Machiavelli's *The Prince.* To Machiavelli, the means by which power is achieved are found by understanding the *context* of power-wielding; in the *interpretation* rather than the *identification* of the "rules of the game". In contrast with the mechanistic causality-approach of Hobbes, the Machiavellian approach is a strategy-approach, and "organic", in the sense that it builds on the "radical discontinuities" that inhere in "the flux of life" (Clegg 1989: 33). "It is in the very prosaic refusal of any grand theory or meta-narrative, above all, that Machiavelli's distinctiveness resides", writes Clegg (ibid). In *The Prince*, power is no Leviathan;

> power is simply the effectiveness of strategies for achieving for oneself a greater scope of action than for others implicated by one's strategies. Powers is not any thing nor is it necessarily inherent in any one; it is a *tenuously produced and reproduced effect* which is contingent upon the strategic

competencies and skills of actors who would be powerful. (ibid: 32-33, emphasis added.)

From this Machiavellian, strategic perspective, the key to understanding power is understanding the different ways in which power can be wielded – and recognizing that the resources cannot dictate behavior, because the "rules of the game" do not necessarily stay the same. Because Machiavelli does not provide us with "grand theories or a meta-narrative", I illustrate the Machiavellian approach to power with a well-known passage an example from Machiavelli's writings:

> There are two ways of fighting: by law or by force. The first way is natural to men, the second to beasts. (...) a prince must know how to act according to the nature of both, and that he cannot survive otherwise. (Machiavelli [1532] 2003: 56)

Man also needs to adopt of the natures of more than one beast; "one must be a fox in order to recognize traps, and a lion to frighten off wolves" (ibid: 57). The point Machiavelli is making, both here, and by means of various other anecdotes and historical examples throughout *The Prince,* is that power is situational: it is not the nature of your resources that should guide your behavior. Rather, the right approach must be found in relation to your goal.

Clegg sees this contrast between Hobbesian and Machiavellian power as a matter of epistemology. Machiavellian relationships of power tend to be fluid, and ultimately require interpretation. The unwillingness to "anchor" power to a predictable pattern of cause and effect is not compatible with the view of science expressed by Hobbes:

> Whereas sense and memory are but knowledge of fact . . . science is the knowledge of consequences, and dependence of one fact upon another; by which, out of that we can presently do, we know how to do something else when we will, or the like, another time: because when we see how anything comes about, upon what causes, and by what manner; when the like causes come into our power, we see how to make it produce the like effects. (Hobbes ([1651] 1996: 31)

Science as "the knowledge of consequences, and dependence of one fact upon another" is the approach taken by "mainstream" power writers in their efforts to identify the workings of power. Hobbes' definition of science also parallels the naturalist epistemology discussed in chapter 2.
Clegg describes the Machiavellian approach to power as an *epistemological* counterpart to this. He sees the Machiavellian epistemology in the works of poststructuralists, like Foucault: "Foucault's 'post-modern' world of flux and discontinuity [shares with Machiavelli] an analytical focus on and fascination for shifting, unstable alliances, a concern for military strategy and a disinclination to believe in any single, originating and decisive centre of power" (Clegg 1989: 7).

Because Nye's writings on soft power belong in the mainstream literature, and thus run in the Hobbesian vein, I have not pursued the epistemologically poststructuralist track of power analysis. The basic distinction between treating power as a mechanism and locating power in strategy is no

less relevant for that, however: These are the seeds of a basic division between a naturalistic and a more interpretive approach to power which permeates the uses of the power-concept up to the present day. It is tough to separate attempts to "legislate on the mechanisms of power" from the many contingencies that make power such *interpretive* subject matter, and this recurring issue is always an epistemological problem for those who want to be *naturalists*.

This point can be illustrated by a venture into the landscape of **realism and power**: As noted above, the academic discipline of realism has a particular affinity for the power-concept. In fact, it can generally be said about realist theories of international relations that power is *the* decisive factor in an anarchical world, where "the strong do as they will, and the weak suffer what they must". Beyond that there are important differences between realist approaches, and in particular between classical realism (here denoted "realism") and *neo*realism[8] which combine to reflect the differing power traditions. Three central differences are: (i) Realism is primarily an inductive theory, providing unit level (or bottom-up) explanations. Neorealism focuses on the effects of the anarchical structure, treating states as comparable units. (ii) To realists, power is an end in itself. To neorealists, power is the combined capabilities of a state that position it in the international system. (iii) To realists, anarchy is a condition of the system. To neorealists, anarchy *defines* the system. All states are similar units and experience the same constraints by anarchy. Neorealists explain differences in policy by differences in power or capabilities (Lamy 2001: 185-186). In a near parallel to Clegg,[9] the interpretively inclined Robert Cox (1992) describes the difference in terms of epistemology; the epistemological foundations of classical realism are "historicist and hermeneutic." (Cox 1992: 168), while neorealism's epistemology is "positivist, [and] lacks a dimension of historical structural change" (ibid: 169). This is interesting because by explaining the different variants of realism in terms of epistemologies, Cox is presenting the issue as a *clash of logics*. When *realists* clash over whether to locate "power" through historicism and hermeneutics or by taking a scientifically positivist approach, they mirror a clash within the concept of power itself. One of the things that this conceptual analysis of power will show is that trying to scientifically "legislate what power is" repeatedly runs into problems of interpretation that work themselves out in slightly different ways for different approaches. I have used realism and neorealism as an example here, but the point applies more broadly: Keeping a simultaneous focus on both ideas of

8 It feels appropriate at this point to mention that neorealism is intimately associated with Kenneth Waltz (1979).
9 Note that the distinction between Hobbesian "mechanistic causality" and Machiavellian "organic strategy" is not in any sense a distinction between "Hobbesian realists" and "Machiavellian non-realists". Hobbes and Machiavelli are both *central* figures in realist thought, and it has been argued that it is precisely the interpretive side to Machiavelli that makes him a central figure in (classical) realism; that "critical analysis of Classical Realism is the process of discerning the meaning of events within [these] historically determined frameworks for action, and that Machiavelli "may be accorded the status of first critical theorist of European thought" (Cox 1992: 168-169).

scientific causality and strategic skill is an enduring challenge to the conceptualization of power. Before I move past the introductory section of chapter 3, I introduce the three themes – or *dimensions* – of power around which I have organized my analysis of the power-concept.

3.1.2. Three dimensions of power analysis

I organize my analysis of the power-concept on two quite specific and one less demarcated and more nebulous recurring dimensions of power: (1) the structure/agency dimension, (2) the resources/behavior dimension, and (3) a "dark-matter dimension". I was led to focus on the first two dimensions by Nye's use of them in *Soft Power* (Nye 2004), and I have supplemented his two dimensions with a third, "residual" dimension to address central aspects of power that cause problems for the first two.

The dimensions are not just central to *Nye*, but central to *power* – and before coming to a further description of the three dimensions, I have a brief comment to make on this tradition of power-analysis. Compared to Hobbes and Machiavelli, the tradition of power-analysis explicitly invoked by Nye in *Soft Power* is relatively young. Baldwin (1979) and Clegg (1989) both identify Lasswell and Kaplan (1950) as a watershed "between the older, intuitive and ambiguous treatments of power and the clarity and precision of more recent discussions" (Baldwin 1979:[10] 161). The "watershed" with Lasswell and Kaplan was that a new level of precision was embraced, in which the goal was a behavioral, causal power-concept (Clegg 1989: 42). The backdrop of soft power is the scholarship that came *after* this, and that Guzzini (1993: 450) refers to as "the power debate in political theory". Centrally placed in this debate are the seminal works of Dahl (1957, 1958) and Bachrach and Baratz (1962, 1963) that Nye (2004) makes use of. The realization that power must be analyzed contextually soon revealed the blind spots of the behavioral and causal power-concept, and made people like Bachrach and Baratz pay attention to the problems with power that were excluded when the focus was on observable behavior. I return to their work in section 3.3. The point I wish to make here is merely that this period took the discussion of the classic problems in a new direction and the different approaches to power began to be laid out in the way we recognize them today.

10 For a good overview of this power literature from the fifties through the seventies, see Baldwin 1979.

(1)The structure/agency dimension: Power structures and agent[11] power

We think of power in terms of what agents do, but we can also think of power as something that is present in the environment of these agents – as *structures* of power. How you approach this structure/agency dimension of power has consequences for what aspects of power you can pay attention to, as can be *illustrated* by Guzzini's (1993) critique of neorealism: According to Guzzini, neorealism operates with a concept of power that only allows for *rational agents in a set structure*. One consequence of this is that power must be intentionally wielded (Guzzini 1993: 456), which is inherently limiting: "exclusion of nonintentionality privileges the manipulative actor's (or power holder's) view and leaves the analysis with a specific blind spot, namely, the tacit power of the strong." (ibid: 461). This blind spot can only be avoided by recognizing that "power" itself can be present in structures as well as in agents.

(2) The resources/behavior dimension: Power resources and power behavior

The second dimension concerns the relationship between power resources and their use. In the realist tradition, a focus on power is usually a focus on power resources, the idea being that power resources are measurable assets that can then be wielded (by agents) to achieve their goals. Sometimes this is apparently straightforward, other times it leads to gross miscalculations of power relationships. The "concrete fallacy" and the "paradox of unrealized power", both described in chapter 1, are examples of this. An alternative to recognizing the shortcomings of measuring power in terms of resources is to resort to explanations of incompetence in explaining paradoxical outcomes, but this cuts the analysis of "power" short. Baldwin writes that "emphasis on skill and will in conversion processes [from resources to behavior] makes it all too easy for the power analyst to avoid facing up to his mistake" (Baldwin 1979: 170). Again, *power* is not so easily located by a focus on resources and behavior in isolation.

Trying to capture the concept of power within these two dimensions leads the mind to a myriad of recurring problematics. As a way to address some of the more pervasive ones in this analysis, I have added a third dimension:

(3) The "Dark-matter dimension": Intentions, perspective, timing, and epistemology

The problems that come with understanding power in terms of structure and agency, resources and behavior, all have in common an intangible, ultimately psychological, element of *context*. The

11 Note that the terms agent, actor, and agency will be used interchangeably throughout the thesis. There can be good reasons to distinguish between these terms – Clegg, for instance, consistently uses "agency", because agency is "something which is achieved" (Clegg 1989: 17), but my other sources mostly speak of actors or agents to refer to the notion of agency, and some stones must be left unturned..

image of this as "dark matter" is meant to illustrate how this is an element that we cannot see, and yet it *must* be there, because without it, we cannot make sense of the phenomenon we call power, and the analogy should not be stretched further. In particular, I find that accounting for the structure/agency- and resources/behavior dimensions of power yields problems in the areas of intentionality, perspectives, and timing. Power's inherent "epistemological clash" will also be more prominent in the dark-matter dimension, though it certainly concerns all three dimensions of power.

3.2. The tripartite tradition and hegemonic power

Before I go deeper into the three analytical dimensions, I want to put in place some of soft power's important background ideas:

Section 3.2. gives an insight into two traditions of writing about power that are important background for Nye's soft-power concept: The 20th century conceptualizations of hegemonic power as structural dominance, and the agency-oriented "tripartite tradition" which treats power as stemming from three distinct bases – a military base, an economic base, and *an other one*. Both the tripartite tradition and the hegemony tradition highlight that perennial struggle within the literature, between the elements of power that you can see and count and that *other* thing. Both traditions take the dark matter of power seriously, but each tradition provides a distinct perspective on the relationship between tangible and intangible power. The hegemony tradition most explicitly sees power as a *structural* phenomenon. The tripartite tradition focuses on the *agency* of exerting influence, which in turn places the resources/behavior dimension of power center stage. Furthermore, insight into tripartite tradition of power is insight into the power-concept as it is (predominantly) understood in mainstream scholarly use of the concept. This is the tradition to which Nye belongs, and examining earlier formulations of tripartite power is beneficial to the examination of *Nye's* tripartite power in chapter 4.

3.2.1. The tripartite tradition of power

As I explained in chapter 1, Nye's soft power does not stand alone, but complements two other types of power: "military" and "economic" power. Knutsen (2007) places Nye's soft power in an established tradition of writing about power in this way: the "tripartite"-tradition . Knutsen describes tripartite power in terms of punitive, remunerative, and normative resources: "Power is a function of activating punitive, remunerative and normative resources to make an actor do what he would not otherwise have done" (Knutsen 1999: 80). In terms of behavior, the three parts that make up power correspond to *military* (punitive), *economic* (remunerative), and *societal* (normative) interaction (ibid: 2). Another example is Mead (2004), who draws from Nye and writes about the

three types as "sharp", "sticky", and "soft" power. In Barnett and Duvall's language, the same tripartite resource base of power is formulated as three behaviors; "the threatened or actual deployment of violence, nonviolent sanctions, and normative pressure" (Barnett and Duvall 2005:51). These formulations all show that the tripartite approach focuses on the *agency* behind exerting influence.

In reference to the tripartite tradition, Nye (2004: 8) draws attention to E.H. Carr. Carr certainly recognized "power" as a matter of more than just military force and money – he included a third "power over opinion" (Carr ([1946] 2001: 102). Carr (ibid: 131, fn. 11) got his tripartite description of power from Bertrand Russell's intriguing take on power. In *Power. A New Social Analysis* ([1938] 1992), Russell gives a presentation of power that, according to Knutsen (2007), is still the classical version of agency, influence power. Russell defines power as "the production of intended effects" (Russell [1938] 1992: 25). He then classifies the three manners of influence by which these intended effects can be produced:

> Any individual may be influenced: A. By direct physical power over his body, e.g. when he is imprisoned or killed; B. By rewards and punishments as inducements, e.g. in giving or withholding employment; C. By influence on opinion, i.e. propaganda in its broadest sense. (ibid)

Though Carr credited Russell for his tripartite power, there is a difference between the *third* powers of Russell and Carr. Rather than speak of "influence on opinion, i.e. propaganda in its *broadest* sense", Carr took a narrower and more instrumental approach; he focused on how the third aspect of power – propaganda power – is a power-resource insofar as state propaganda can shape popular opinion (Carr [1939] 2001: 120). Carr saw this as an important part of power, but he also warned against "the apotheosis of public opinion" (ibid: 32), that is, the danger of putting too much weight on public sentiment in matters of the state. Russell was more concerned with emphasizing the *centrality* of the *third,* psychological*,* "power over opinion" (Russell [1938] 1992: e.g. 94)

Russell distinguished psychologically between three bases of power; traditional, revolutionary, and naked power (ibid: 28). Two points are key here: (1) While power based on tradition rests on "force of habit" and revolutionary power has to justify itself, *both rest on consent from their subjects.* Traditional power can rely on public opinion to a much greater degree than new power, but "[s]ince [traditional claims to power] have no better source than habit, criticism, once aroused, easily disposes of them" (ibid: 55). (2) Power is naked only when it is *not* based on tradition or assent (ibid: 27). This emphasis on the subjective element of submission or defiance means that the same *instance* of power can rest on different *types* of power depending on the subject; "where persecution exists, the power of the Church is naked in relation to heretics, but not in relation to orthodox sinners." (ibid: 29). The *three types of influence*, too, can be traced back to

different bases of power in different contexts. Russell sees economic power, for instance, as derivative power; "ultimately derived from law and public opinion" (ibid: 85), and like the power of the Church regarding persecution, economic power can be naked or traditional (ibid: 69-70). Most power, however, ultimately rests on the consent of those who experience it.

The tripartite tradition of power carries an implicit objection to hard-power skewed approaches to power in its core message that the *third* power in the tripartite tradition is *not* reducible to military and economic power. Russell explicitly warned that though "military and economic power have become scarcely distinguishable" (ibid: 89), economics alone is misleading in a wider study of power (ibid: 92). The *third* power, power over opinion, is *also* essential to power – indeed, economic power is even *derived* from public opinion.

The tripartite tradition of power has the following – rather neatly encapsulated – perspectives on the structure/agency- and resources/behavior dimensions of power: On the structure/agency dimension, the tripartite tradition of power is focused on *agency*, and the point of organizing power into three types is to examine how actors wield punitive, remunerative, and/or normative resources to make someone else do what they would not otherwise have done, through military, economic, and/or societal interaction. *This is the mainstream approach to power*, and is practical, as it is a model that can be filled with the concrete actors, resources, and behaviors of instances of power. At the same time, the tripartite approach to power reveals how the *third* power is difficult to understand in terms of agents, resources and behaviors, and it seems that a focus on agency and behavior can get in the way of our view of the intangible aspects of power. The upcoming section on hegemony tells the rather different story of absolute *structural* power.

3.2.2. The all-encompassing power of hegemony

In the perennial struggle within the literature between emphasizing the power of the things you can see and count and emphasizing the power that resides elsewhere, works that focus specifically on structural power have a shorter history than accounts of agent power – possibly because the idea that "power" can reside in structure rather than in agency is, as I will come back to in chapter 3.3, not entirely uncontroversial. At the same time, the claim that there is a structural side to power is reasonable; actors are not equally endowed, and the alternative to incorporating structural factors into our understanding of *power* is to put these differences down to luck or destiny – which is hardly analytically satisfying. Perhaps the most widely used terminology for structural power dominance is that of hegemony. The hegemony-tradition is central to understanding soft power because it so definitively asserts that the intangible aspect of power is important – not only important enough to be separated out and given a new name (hegemony), but so important as to be

superordinate to other manifestations of power.

Hegemony is yet another expansive concept with several uses, and requires some specification: To begin with, hegemony means an overwhelming power preponderance. How overwhelming this power preponderance needs to be varies. In *The Rise and Fall of World Orders* (1999), Knutsen describes different uses of hegemony, ranging from mere "preponderance of material resources", through also being militarily dominant over other states, and to a position of uncontested physical and normative dominance (Knutsen 1999: 59-63). Knutsen refers to the uses of hegemony to describe mere economic or physical *strength* as "vulgarizations" of the term (ibid: 62), and holds that "preeminence in wealth and force is a necessary but not a sufficient precondition of hegemony" (ibid: 11). According to Knutsen, "A hegemonic condition is one in which a great power is tolerated as *primus inter pares* because it is perceived as legitimate" (ibid: 60). In other words, "hegemony is maintained to the extent that social consent takes precedence over coercion" (ibid: 62).[12] As the focus of my thesis is on the intangible, psychological aspects of power, it is this latter, consent-based version of hegemony that is of interest. This version of hegemony has also been invoked by Nye in early definitions of soft power (Nye 1990: 32).

The central point about hegemonic power and perceived legitimacy is that hegemony involves power over *people's perceptions of their own interests*. This notion of hegemony follows the Italian Antonio Gramsci. Cox writes that hegemony in the Gramscian sense is "a structure of values and understandings about the nature of order that permeates a whole society" (Cox 1992: 179). Consensual power is at the core of Gramscian hegemony, and "throughout Gramsci's work, Egemonia (...) is always associated with equilibrium, persuasion, consent, and consolidation" (Williams 1960: 591). An influential writer whose work is infused with a Gramscian perspective on hegemony is Steven Lukes (1974). For Lukes, consent does not mean the absence of power:

> Extremely crudely, one might say that the liberal takes men as they are and applies want-regarding principles to them, relating their interests to what they actually want or prefer, to their policy preferences as manifested by their political participation. The reformist, seeing and deploring that not all men's wants are given equal weight by the political system, also relates their interests to what they want or prefer, but allows that this may be revealed in more indirect and sub-political ways – in the form of deflected, submerged or concealed wants and preferences. The radical, however, maintains that men's wants may themselves be a product of a system which works against their interests, and in such cases, relates the latter to what they would want and prefer, were they able to make the choice (Lukes 1974: 34).

In the first ("liberal") dimension of power, the object of study is the directly observable influence behavior of A towards B in overt conflict. In the second ("reformist") dimension, power can also

12 In *On The Social Contract,* Rousseau provides a famous, earlier example of this line of thought*;* "the strongest is never strong enough to be forever master unless he transforms his force into right, and obedience into duty" (Rousseau ([1762] 1997: 43)

manifest itself, not as political behavior, but as non-behavior, so to speak – a non-decision is the (non-)event taking place when B, knowing that A would not accept his or her demand, refrains from coming with it. Conflict is *covert*. In the *third* ("radical"), conflict is not even covert - conflict is only *latent*. This is because people who are shaped by "a system which works against their interests" may not be able to recognize the conflicts, as they do not know their own "real" interests.

Before leaving the subject of hegemony I want to make a comment on its relationship to the tripartite tradition of power: According to Knutsen (2007), The important difference between the early tripartite theorists and the hegemony theorists in the Gramscian tradition is that hegemony theorists are aware that the three types of power "sometimes reinforce and sometimes interfere with each other" whereas the tripartites "seem to assume that hard and soft power [only] reinforce each other". The latter observation is a good description of Carr's view of tripartite power (e.g. Carr [1946] 2001: 102, 119). Russell, however, emphasized that hard and soft power *can* interfere with each other; for example:

> Except when due to foreign conquest, the collapse of traditional powers is always the result of its abuse by men who believe, as Machiavelli believed, that its hold on men's minds is too firm to be shaken even by the grossest crimes (Russell [1938] 1992: 49).

There *is* considerable difference between the tripartite- and hegemony-understandings of influence power, but rather than seeing it as a difference between power as tripartite and indivisible and power as hegemonic and messy, it might be more helpful to think of it as a structure/agency-difference – that is, as the difference between a "structural-trinity-power" of hegemony that focuses on how an interplay between the influences of power structures people's subjective perceptions of their own interests, and an "agency-tripartite-power" that isolates the psychological power as an elusive *third* form of influence power. Russell's "power over opinion" *is* power over the mind, but not in the Gramscian sense – the *third* power is far more fragile when it is seen in isolation than when it is seen as the essential power that shapes your perceptions of your own self.

Hegemony is a central part of the backdrop for soft power because like soft power, hegemony is a concept that requires us to take the dark matter of power seriously. Hegemony – especially in the Gramscian version – goes even further than soft power in identifying the troublesome aspect of what makes humans *consent* to being decided over – as the *core* of power. The relationship between hegemony and soft power as approaches to this aspect of power is discussed in chapter 5.

3.3. The analytical power-concept behind soft power

Chapter 3 has so far been concerned with the big field of literature about power, centered on key issues for soft power. Section 3.3. differs from the previous sections by exploring the specific

theorists of power that Nye is using. I begin by looking into the *definition* of power behind soft power. The starting point for the analysis is Nye's power-definition, and the references to conceptual analysis of power that are found in *Soft Power* (Nye 2004). Note that Nye defines power as "the ability to influence the *behavior* of others to get the outcomes one wants" (Nye 2004: 2), and yet, "soft power rests on the ability to shape the *preferences* of others" (ibid: 5, emphases added). The difficulty with connecting soft power to *behavior* is a striking illustration of how the power-concept is bound up in elusive, intangible and ultimately psychological aspects of social relationships, an observation that will resurface frequently as section 3.3. examines the power-concept closely on the three dimensions of *structure/agency*, *resources/behavior*, and *dark matter*.

3.3.1. Defining the power behind *soft* power

In *Soft Power*, Nye lays out the power-concept by first citing Robert Dahl and David Baldwin (Nye 2004: 2). He references Dahl to define power as compelling someone to do what they would otherwise not do, and points out the key difficulty with this: we then need to know their preferences. Nye (ibid) uses Baldwin (1979) to emphasize that power always depends on the *context* in which the relationship exists. Nye *criticizes* Dahl's classical power-definition, found in the seminal article "The Concept of Power" (Dahl 1957), that

> A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do. (Dahl 1957: 202-3)

This behavioral, causal power-concept is too narrow for Nye, whose power-concept also encompasses the "second face of power" (Nye 2004: 5). His "second face of power" hails from another *very* influential article, this one by Bachrach and Baratz (1962). In fact, Nye describes the soft-power concept as a *development* of this "second face" of power (Nye 2004: 150n.). The similarities and differences between these two definitions power (Dahl and Bachrach and Baratz) are crucial for understanding how Nye envisions power, and are well worth a closer examination:

The intuitive, underlying idea of power that Dahl wants to capture is formulated in the definition cited above, and the project of his article is to capture this idea in an operationalizable concept of power. To achieve this, Dahl's approach is explicitly behavioralist and event-oriented; power is seen in the *exercise* of power. It is also relational, in that the power is located in the relationship between A and B. To be a power relation, the relationship must satisfy three properties: (1) There must be a time lag between A's actions that are said to exert power and B's responses. (2) there must be some connection between them; "no action at a distance", and (3) the probability of A's success must be stated in terms of what B would otherwise have done – *power* is found in the difference between the probability that B does X without A's influence, and the probability that B

does X with A's influence (ibid: 204-205; roughly restated).

Dahl's behavioralist, agency perspective that requires traceable connections makes his definition of power quite narrow. In the real world, "Power can produce a situation in which there is little or no behaviourally admissible evidence of power being exercised, but in which, none the less, power is pervasively present" (Clegg 1989: 77). Adhering to Dahl's method for analyzing power means that this cannot be taken into account, which is why Nye dismisses Dahl and brings another seminal viewpoint on power to the fore with his references to Bachrach and Baratz (1962, 1963, in Nye 1990: 266n; 2004: 150n). Bachrach and Baratz reformulated Dahl's definition of power, to say that "[a] power relationship exists when (a) there is a conflict over values or course of action between A and B; (b) B complies with A's wishes; and (c) he does so because he is fearful that A will deprive him of a value or values which he, B, regards more highly than those which would have been achieved by noncompliance" (Bachrach and Baratz 1963: 635). The essential contribution of Bachrach and Baratz, though, regards the *setting* in which the conflict between A and B exists:

> Of course power is exercised when A participates in the making of decisions that affect B. But power is also exercised when A devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to A. To the extent that A succeeds in doing this, B is prevented, for all practical purposes, from bringing to the fore any issues that might in their resolution be seriously detrimental to A's set of preferences (Bachrach and Baratz 1962: 948).

This "second face" of power *does not have to be consciously used* to be power, moreover; "to the extent that a person or group – consciously or unconsciously – creates or reinforces barriers to the public airing of conflicts, that person or group has power" (Bachrach and Baratz 1962: 949). Because this is a core problematic of the structure/agency dimension of power, the second face of power will be elaborated on in section 3.3.2.

With his use of Dahl and Bachrach and Baratz, Nye presents a power-concept at the base of soft power which follows the (naturalist) tradition aimed at legislating on what power *is* as described on p. 19, and incorporates both an *agency*- and a *structural* face of power. To capture Nye's power-concept in a single, general definition of power, I turn to Barnett and Duvall (2005). Their concept of power is a continuation of the tradition of Dahl and Bachrach and Baratz, and their definition of power makes room for both agency and (conscious or unconscious) structural power in a way that is both comprehensive, and neatly compatible with Nye's power-concept. Barnett and Duvall (2005: 42, emphasis added) define power in the following way: **"In general terms, power is the production, in and through social relations, of effects that shape the capacities of actors to determine their circumstances and fate"**. This definition looks wide, but is actually quite

specific – it leaves out any causality that does not "shape the *capacities* of actors to determine their circumstances and fate", such as persuasion.[13] This is important, because power and causality are two different things, and there is an obvious risk of losing the distinction between power and causality associated with working with the idea of "power to change preferences" – as the *preferences* subsequently serve as "causes". As power produces effects "in and through social relations", Barnett and Duvall leave power defined both as acts of wielding power *in* social relations, and as constraints and possibilities in the actors' structural environment (e.g. non-decisions) *through* social relations. This is the base understanding of power for the thesis. Barnett and Duvall's analysis of power also provides me with terminology for describing the situations in which soft power is not easy to understand as "power" in this sense.

The *focus* of the analysis of power is the "workings of power", that is the, distinctions between power *resources* that are *wielded* (behavior) by *agents*, and power that manifests itself as *structures,* in which there is no discernible agent in control. The rest of section 3.3. is organized according to the three dimensions of power outlined in section 3.1.2.

3.3.2. Agents and structure: Who, if anyone, is exercising power?

It is clear by now that the structure/agency dimension of power is important in the power-literature, and that it is important to the definition of power that forms the basis of my investigation of Nye. The bigger point of going into the level of detail that I do in this chapter is that details are needed for the analysis of soft power as a power-concept in chapter 5; to evaluate the value of adding soft power to our toolbox of power-concepts, we need to understand precisely where soft power intersects with its mother-concept on this central dimension.

The specifics of the differences between Dahl's and Bachrach and Baratz' treatments of the structure/agency dimension are a natural starting point. As the previous section explained, Dahl's behavioralist power-definition only covered *agent* power. Bachrach and Baratz brought forth their second face of power in response to Dahl's "Critique of the Ruling Elite Model" (Dahl 1958). In this work Dahl tested the common claim that societies have a "ruling elite" by using an elite model based on *his* concept of power and his three criteria (described on p. 29). He subsequently dismissed the claim as "quasi-metaphysical" and unscientific (Dahl 1958: 463-464). Bachrach and Baratz, however, argued that Dahl was blinded by his focus on the observable instances of agents making decisions; "*we cannot be certain that the 'unmeasurable elements' are not of decisive*

13 Note that Dahl's (1957) general definition of power does not, *technically*, leave out persuasion – or indeed trade: A, by giving B money, gets B to do what B would not otherwise have done, i.e. give A goods or services. Specifying scope and domain to such a situation and calling it power would be a bit silly, however, and Dahl would *not* approve. -There *is* a word for this, he'd probably say; -it's trade..

importance" (Bachrach and Baratz 1962: 948, emphasis added). While they also dismissed the "ruling elite"-hypothesis, they were not entirely pleased with Dahl's solution, observing that "there are two faces of power, neither of which the sociologists see and only one of which the political scientists see" (ibid: 947). Bachrach and Baratz described the relationship between the second face of power and Dahl's face in the following way:

> As is perhaps self-evident, there are similarities in both faces of power. In each, A participates in decisions and thereby adversely affects B. But there is an important difference between the two: in the one case, A openly participates; in the other, he participates only in the sense that he works to sustain those values and rules of procedure that help him keep certain issues out of the public domain. True enough participation of the second kind may at times be overt (...) but the point is that it need not be. (ibid: 948fn. Emphasis added)

Power's second face is a conceptualization of power that can explain significant limitations on the potential outcomes of power behavior – by including as "power" instances of non-decisions; "the practice of limiting the scope of actual decision-making to 'safe' issues by manipulating the dominant community values, myths, and political institutions and procedures" (Bachrach and Baratz 1963: 632). The second face of power that Dahl missed is manifested when Bs do not even attempt to achieve their goal, because they understand that it is not in line with what the dominant community A(s) would allow to happen.

The idea that what we call "power" can be described as residing in structure independently of *any* agency is not acceptable to all. Guzzini, for instance, argues that the power-concept should not be separated from agency entirely. Guzzini (1993: 462) points out that non-decisions can refer to both the *inherent* bias of any organization that benefits some more than others, and the *conscious manipulation* of the bias to advantageously affect outcomes – which Bachrach and Baratz (1962: 949) call the *mobilization* of bias.[14] Guzzini asserts that the concept of power should include the possibility of *unintentional* power but exclude *impersonal* power; Guzzini's solution to the problem of power without agents is to not use the word "power" at all to describe these effects, but rather to speak of agent "power" and impersonal "governance" (ibid: 471). In short, Guzzini argues that "mobilization of bias" should be described as power, but "inherent bias" should not. Bachrach and Baratz (1963) have *similar* reservations. Though they *do* use the power-concept to describe this "inherent bias" – and the second face of power *need not be consciously used* to be "power" – they also argue that for *analytical* purposes, power must be distinguishable from other influence-concepts such as force and authority (Bachrach and Baratz 1963: 641). The relationship between the soft-power concept and the idea of impersonal power will be discussed in chapter 5. At this point, I want to return to the power-concept of Barnett and Duvall (2005), and their definition of power as

14 Bachrach and Baratz got the formulation "mobilization of bias" from E.E. Schattschneider (1960) *The Semi-Sovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, p.71.

"the production, in and through social relations, of effects that shape the capacities of actors to determine their circumstances and fate":

Whereas Guzzini worries about overloading the concept of *power* and wants to sort out any impersonal effects into a concept of *governance*, Barnett and Duvall argue that structures *can* produce *impersonal* power – without stretching the concept of power beyond their definition. Arguing that "[n]o single concept can capture the forms of power in international politics" (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 67), they introduce four "conceptual types" of power: *compulsory* power, *institutional* power, *structural* power, and *productive* power. These map on to two dimensions: "(1) the *kinds* of social relations through which actors' capacities are affected (and effected) and (2) the *specificity* of those social relations" (ibid: 46, emphasis added), as illustrated here:

Relational specificity

Power works Through (relations of)	Direct	Diffuse
Interactions of specific actors	Compulsory	Institutional
Social relations of constitution	Structural	Productive

Fig. 3.3.2. a) ***Taxonomy of power*** (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 48)

The figure illustrates how Barnett and Duvall deal with the structure/agency dimension of power by distinguishing between agent and structural power as "kinds of social relations": power works through either "interactions of specific actors" (agency), or "social relations of constitution" (structure).

Barnett and Duvall then add a second layer of distinction – the "relational specificity" of power – which can be "direct" or "diffuse". The distinction between *direct* and *diffuse* "interactions of specific actors" is easily explained as the distinction between an agent A's direct, traceable power over B, ("compulsory power"), and A's control over B at a distance; through rules and procedures mediating between A and B ("institutional power"). **Compulsory power** is the equivalent of what Dahl (1957) set out to measure; an example of this (paraphrasing Dahl 1957) is the power of a teacher to compel his student to read a book under threat of a failing grade. **Institutional power** is akin to the "mobilization of bias", and can be observed e.g. in the way in which powerful states can

shape the policies of others by setting the agenda in international institutions. Barnett and Duvall choose to draw a distinction between compulsory and institutional power rather than treat institutional power as an *instrument* through which you wield compulsory power because "whereas compulsory power typically rests on the resources that are deployed by A to exercise power directly over B, A cannot necessarily be said to 'possess' the institution that constrains and shapes B" (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 51). This concerns the resources/behavior dimension of power, and will be addressed in that section.

The distinction between *direct* and *diffuse* "social relations of constitution" concerns distinctions *within the realm of structural power*, and needs more explanation. Importantly, Barnett and Duvall identify *two* layers of structural power that they place in the category of *direct* social relations of constitution:

> Structural power shapes the gates and conditions of existence of actors in two critical ways. One, structural positions do not necessarily generate equal social privileges; instead, structures allocate differential capacities, and typically differential advantages, to different positions. (...) Two, the social structure not only constitutes actors and their capacities, it also shapes their self-understanding and subjective interests. (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 53)

Barnett and Duvall describe these two types of structural power as "direct" and "mutual" "constitution of the capacities of actors" (ibid: 52). Following this, I use the terms "direct structural power" and "mutual structural power" to refer to Barnett and Duvall's two distinct structural powers. **Direct structural power** corresponds to "unconscious" structural power – or *inherent* bias; it concerns the constraints and advantages that structures (of norms, rules, procedures) place on already-constituted actors. **Mutual structural power** works on both those actors that are empowered by the structures and those disadvantaged by it; it is the power that *mutually constitutes* the actors themselves. Mutual structural power is the equivalent of the Gramscian concept of hegemonic power described in 3.2.2., in that it is power that is *shaping your perception of your own interests* in a way that is not necessarily to your advantage.[15] Note that this means that "*direct* structural power" refers to only one part of the *directly constitutive*, or "structural", square in the figure.

The bottom right square of the figure, **productive power**, is epistemologically distinctive. There is a sliding transition, yet an epistemological leap, from mutual structural power to the category of power through diffuse social relations of constitution: Mutual structural power concerns the co-constitution of subjects through "the production and reproduction of internally related positions of super- and subordination" (ibid:55). This subject matter forms what we can call the

15 This mutual constitution that shapes "self-understanding and subjective interests" is where Lukes (1974) puts the blame for the fact that people may not know their "real interests" (see p. 28).

"constructivist end" of the "Hobbesian" epistemology. "Productive power" is *poststructural*; it concerns the discourses and practices that produce *all* social identities and capacities and give meaning to "the socially advantaged and disadvantaged alike, as well as the myriad social subjects that are not constituted in binary hierarchical relationships" (ibid: 56). "Productive" power encompasses what Clegg identified as the *Machiavellian-epistemological* strand of "poststructuralist flux" (see p. 20). This perspective on the power-concept lies outside the epistemological scope of my analysis.

The agency- and structural conceptual types of power described in section 3.3.2. can be arranged along a line, from agent power to structural power:

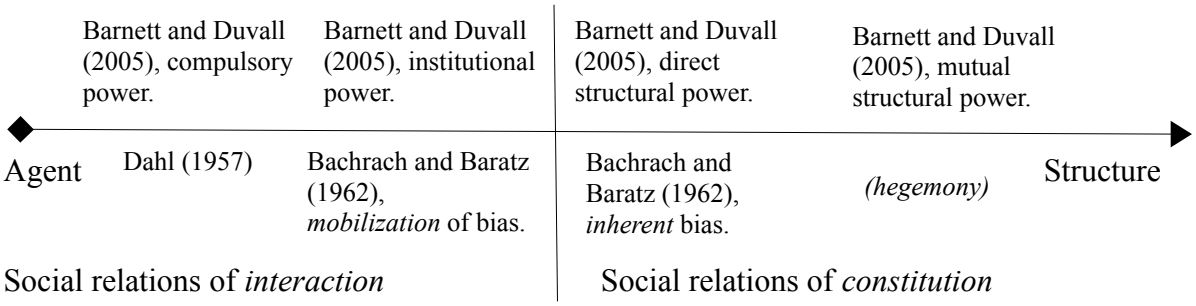


Fig. 3.3.2. b) Agent- to structural power concepts

Figure 3.3.2.b) illustrates that Barnett and Duvall's taxonomical categories and other power concepts describe a *continuum* – from simplified to more complex understandings of "power" at work. As the power-concepts that have been addressed in this chapter move from Dahl's compulsory power, via the *two* "second faces" of Bachrach and Baratz, and to Barnett and Duvall's mutual structural power, it becomes increasingly challenging to determine where the line between power and *other* social interaction should be drawn. The development also roughly parallels the epistemological backdrop of the power-concepts, with naturalist approaches at the agency-end and constructivist approaches at the structural end. I return to this in 3.3.4.

From the perspective of my conceptual analysis, section 3.3.2. makes two particularly important points . The first is simple: The structure/agency dimension of power is based on a definitional difference between "power" in *relations of interaction* and "power" in *relations of constitution*: Structures are not agents and agents are not structures.

The second point is that as the structural component of power becomes more prominent, the distinction between agents and their structure is gradually harder to perceive. Dahl and Bachrach and Baratz provided innovative and distinct formulations of this structure/agency-problem, but they have not *solved* it: Dahl's approach *evades* the problem by focusing exclusively on compulsory

power, while Bachrach and Baratz' approach – which is the expressed backdrop of Nye's soft power – *focuses on* the power that comes from structural constraints and opportunities, but provides no equivalent to Dahl's clear description of the *exercise* of power. Bachrach and Baratz' structural power may be "of decisive importance", but *using* it still evades description as "power" *at all*.

3.3.3. Power resources and power behavior – *having* and *wielding* power

The resources/behavior dimension of power concerns the distinction between *having* power resources and *wielding* them. This follows naturally from power's structure/agency dimension, as agent power is typically described as working through the "behavior" of wielding "power resources".

Section 3.2.1. on the tripartite tradition of influence power described how power resources differ in both tangibility and fungibility; "punitive" and "remunerative" power resources are such things as tanks and money. "Normative" power resources can mean such "things" as a good reputation, and even personal charisma. Power behaviors *also* take different forms – most obviously depending on the resources that are utilized – but the relational aspect of power behavior is far more comprehensive than that. To be wielded successfully, some power resources depend on the specific agent, some require a specific structure, and they must all be chosen in relation to a specified goal. Baldwin communicates the point efficiently by analogy:

> Although it might seem that the predictive value of power resource inventories is impaired by insistence on prior specification of scope and domain (or policy-contingency framework), the opposite is true. The accuracy of our estimate of whether an architect has "adequate" raw materials to complete his project is likely to improve if we first ascertain whether he plans to build a birdhouse or a cathedral (Baldwin 1979: 165).

If what constitutes a power resource and the wielding of power is to a significant degree determined by the relationships between agents, resources, and the structure surrounding them – in short, by the "policy-contingency framework" – then this framework *must* be specified when one uses "power" as an analytical tool. As whether a given resource is a *power*-resource or not will vary from one policy-contingency framework to another, power *resources* themselves are not "power", they are merely power *potential*. Given the complexity of the interplay between resources, behavior, and context, moreover, even the task of "specifying the scope and domain" of power is not a straightforward one. This is easily seen by considering how a relationship of power in a specific situation can look very different depending on whether or not you are the more powerful party.

From A's perspective, A has power over B if:	A acts with the intention to influence B (*behavior*)	+ A has the ability to influence B (*resources*)	+ the effect of A's influence on B is the one desired by A

Table 3.3.3. a) Power from split perspectives: A's perspective

Using the resources/behavior dimension to describe an instance of power is straightforward enough from A's perspective, as "power" can easily be understood as the intentional use of some resource – tangible or intangible – to achieve a desired outcome. For A to have *wielded* power, A must have both have *intended* to do so, and have been successful at it (as a power that does not achieve its aims is not very powerful). Whether or not B *wanted* to comply has no necessary place in A's assessment of its own power.

From B's perspective, conversely, it makes no sense to emphasize A's intentions, into which B does not necessarily have an insight. For B, A's power looks more like this:

From B's perspective, A has power over B if	A influences B, through resources and behavior, intentionally or unintentionally.	+ this influence leads to an outcome that is *not* desired by B.

Table 3.3.3. b) Power from split perspectives: B's perspective

It does not matter much to B whether A intended to influence the outcome, but rather *that* the outcome was influenced, and that B did not get its way. In other words – from B's perspective, A has power over B if A's influence shapes B's "capacities to determine their circumstances and fate" (Barnett and Duvall 2005). From B's perspective, A can "wield power unintentionally". When A does not experience itself as having wielded any resources, such unintentional power can from A's perspective only be said to exist as structural power. If we then want to understand the relationship between A and B in terms of the resources/behavior dimension of power, *structural power* can be an "unintentionally wielded resource". Conversely, even if A *is* exercising power as an agent, it is possible that B experiences it as one experiences structural power. Does that mean that A is *intentionally* wielding "structural resources"?

This exercise of looking at the resources/behavior dimension of power from different perspectives introduces the dark-matter topics of *intentions* and *perspective*, as they influence what is seen to be someone's power resources and -behaviors. Moreover, there is a central difficulty with combining the resource/behavior dimension and structural power: When your starting point is to treat power as an attribute that is possessed and can be knowingly used by an agent, intangible structural advantages must either *play the part of an attribute*, or be left out of the inventory of an agent's power. Deciding to take structural power seriously brings with it the problem of finding out how it can be understood as a "wieldable" attribute. Barnett and Duvall address this problem when

they distinguish between "compulsory" and "institutional" *agency* power by whether the resources can be said to be "possessed" by the wielder (see p. 34). They do not *elaborate* on that description of structural resources as resources that can be wielded but not possessed *at all*, however, which is revealing of how pervasively troublesome the notion of "wielding structural power" *is*.

The resources/behavior dimension of power's central contribution to the conceptual analysis is the insight that power's resources/behavior dimension is straightforward as long as you only focus on the agency-side of the structure/agency dimension – but doing so can be dramatically misleading in *other* ways. Resources and behaviors of power are context-dependent, and the "dark matters" of intentions and perspective lurk right beneath the surface – the resources/behavior dimension demonstrates how the power-concept is bound up in elusive, intangible, and ultimately psychological aspects of social relationships. I provide a "dark-matter dimension" of power as a way to account for some of these aspects.

3.3.4. Dark matter of power – *Intentions, perspectives, timing, and epistemology*

Understanding power as a matter of resources that are wielded by agents, or power manifested as "structures" can certainly be useful, but underneath the structure/agency- and resources/behavior dimensions of power, many unresolved issues lurk. The dark-matter dimension of power addresses the problems that arise when we see understand that power is *relational,* and ultimately, a psychological relationship.

Importantly for analyzing the soft-power concept, this dark matter tends to become more prominent when you conceptualize *structural* power. In the analysis of power's structure/agency dimension, the move towards the structural end of the continuum (fig. 3.3.2.b) makes it increasingly difficult to draw the line between what should and what should not be considered instances of power. Bachrach and Baratz (1963: 636) enter the dark-matter dimension when their analytical framework leads them away from the inclusive concept that is aimed at capturing power's *second face,* and towards defining situations that might be thought of as the "wielding" of structural power as something other than power; "*manipulation* is an aspect of force, not of power", and *authority* – while closely related to power – is "in fact, antithetical to it." (ibid: 638). Structural power is real for Bachrach and Baratz, but when structural advantages are used to achieve a political goal – such as by invoking authority – the "power" is lost somewhere on the way, because achieving a goal by structural means tends to ultimately depend on the state of mind of the recipient. The intangible, broadly psychological, elements that *must* be there if we are to account for the power-concept are what I call the "dark matter" of power, and regardless of what approach you take, they simply will not go away. The dark matter is not *just* an amorphous lump of X, however, or the "miracle" that

makes power work – and some categorization of the dark matter benefits the conceptual analysis of soft power because it can give us a deeper understanding of *why* social power is so difficult to capture with anything resembling scientific precision. In the following, I focus specifically on the relationship between intentionality and perspective, and the relationship between structures, agents, and timing. The section ends with an investigation of the relationship between power and epistemology, which is often at the core of the dark matter dimension's challenges to the concept of power.

Dark matter of intention sand perspectives

My (partial) illumination of the dark-matter dimension begins where 3.3.3. ended, with what happens to the resources/behavior dimension of power when you look at an "instance of power" from different perspectives. Because power is a relational concept, "actual or potential power is never inherent in properties of A, but rather inheres in the actual or potential relationship between A's properties and B's value system" (Baldwin 1979:171). Power hinges on the intentions and perspectives of both A and B, and nuances of intentions and perspective play a significant part for how we perceive a power relationship: If A intentionally "wields structural power" over B, then B may not report the presence of power at all, yet A certainly exercised power. If something that A does shapes the capacity of B to "determine his circumstances and fate", then to B, it does not matter whether or not A *intended* to influence B. There are numerous possible combinations of A's behavior and B's experience, but if both perspectives are equally valid, then equating power with "producing intended effects" is not of much help; intentions, after all, are only directly available to those who have them. What determines when you are looking at an instance of power?

The analysts I draw from suggest somewhat different answers to this. Barnett and Duvall offer unintentional *agency* power: Compulsory power is *one actor directly controlling the circumstances of another*, and "because power is the production of effects, arguably compulsory power is best understood from the perspective of the recipient, not the deliverer, of direct action." (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 50). To the victims of "collateral damage" in a bombing raid, for instance, power is felt as surely as if they were an *intended* target. The bomber, however, is not very likely to report that he felt that he was wielding power when he made the mistake; he did not intend to compel his victims. From his perspective, power was not wielded at all, but the power experienced by the bombed is compulsory, and in no way structurally determined. Does it always make sense to understand power from the perspective of those who undeniably feel its effects? Does it *ever*?

Recall that when I introduced the structure/agency dimension, I referenced Guzzini's assertion that a definition of power must allow for the possibility of unintended influence because exclusion

of nonintentionality leaves the analysis with a specific blind spot for the tacit power of the strong (Guzzini 1993: 461). Guzzini thus has ambitions to include *unintentional* power in his power-concept. At the same time, he excludes *impersonal* power – he only acknowledges part of the structural power concept as "power" – namely the power to cause "change in the environment that defines the situationally relevant power resources." (ibid: 456). This is a rejection of Barnett and Duvall's "mutual structural" power, and it is not without reason. Is it wise to attempt to *unite* a conception of power as the causal mechanism in a relationship, and the idea that you can be looking at instances of power where no one can be said to *cause* anything? This judgment will ultimately depend on which perspectives you choose to focus on; B certainly *can* experience effects of power even when no intentional act by A can be pointed to, and when power works through social relations of *mutual constitution* (see p. 34), power works on both A *and* B.

Dark matter of time: Structures as embodied past action

The basic distinction between structure and agent is very simple: "agents" operate within pre-established "structures". The structure/agency dimension gets more complex when you add the observation that agents are also *producing* structures; as in what Barnett and Duvall describe as a mutually constitutive power-concept (*mutual structural* power). Established structures did not just pop into existence, moreover – the structures through which power works in a "direct structural" power-concept were produced once, too. *Agents produced, and are producing, the structures.* This means that timing can be crucial variable in power analysis – especially when structural elements of power are under investigation.

Interestingly, Russell gives the "dark matter of time" a significant part to play at the "agency-end" of power's structure/agency dimension as well. Russell draws attention to the importance of timing to power when he makes what he calls a "very necessary distinction" between *traditional* and *newly acquired* power (Russell [1938] 1992: 27). Traditional power has the "sanction of immemorial custom" (ibid), which is to say that it depends on *established* structures of power. Traditional power was, however, once *newly acquired* power. Newly acquired power "requires much more vigorous and active popular support than is needed by a traditional authority" (ibid: 28), and "many forms of unjust power which are deeply rooted in tradition must at one time have been naked." (ibid: 71). The interesting thing about Russell's concern with the idea of "immemorial custom" as *power* is its relationship to the concept of hegemonic power as the "colonization of the individual mind". The "power over opinion" that is created and recreated as time passes is a central element of Russell's agency-oriented tripartite understanding of power, but the consent of the individual can be quite fragile. According to Russell, long-lasting power typically

goes through three phases – first revolutionary, then rapidly traditional, and finally, the phase in which "power, being now used against those who reject tradition, has again become naked" (ibid: 57). For the hegemony-theorists, whose equivalent of traditional power is a force which shapes subjective interests, power does not become naked. The structures that are produced and reproduced through history pre-empt a perception of the injustices that they cement, and any objections to these injustices that *should* have been aroused (according to Lukes' "radical view"; see p.28) will not surface because they do not take shape in the minds of those who *should* have felt the need to object. This corresponds to the difference between structure as *direct* and *mutual* constitution of actors, and Russell's focus on how individual agency precedes (and succeeds) structures of power is central to the difference between the tripartite- and hegemonic approaches to power.

Timing, and the idea of structure as *embodied past action*, can function as a way to let structure be both the resource wielded by an agent and the goal of the agent's behavior. If structures are the embodiment of past action, then *wielding structural power requires recognizing the importance of power's foundations:* The process by which structures of power are established may be both intentional and unintentional, and "intentionally wielding structural power" means recognizing that structural advantage can be cultivated. This is not some abstract notion far removed from reality, it is a natural element of a strategic approach to power. Machiavelli ([1532] 2003: 23), for example, advices his prince to lay "solid foundations" for future power.

Finally, describing structure as embodied past action means recognizing that the relationship between structure and agency is circular: Structural power involves some *acceptance* of (or at least resignation to) power from those who are disadvantaged by it. There is intangible power manifest in structures. How did this power get there? Through some earlier, intentional or unintentional wielding of *agent* power.

Epistemology and the dark matter

It should come as no surprise that the epistemological assumptions from which you proceed are often decisive to how you view the aspects of power that lurk in this dark matter. I will make two related – but distinct – points regarding the dark matter of epistemology. The first has to do with the naturalist power-concept's "epistemological slide" into constructivism, and the second concerns the two approaches to power described in chapter 3 as "Hobbesian" and "Machiavellian"[16] –whether you aim at the causal mechanisms of power or at the interpretation that provides you with the best *strategies* for power.

16 Note that I am refering to the two *logics* – not to Clegg's two *epistemologies.* The *Machiavellian approach* refers here to taking an interpretive approach to power *within* a naturalist/constructivist epistemic framework, and not to Clegg's (poststructuralist) "Machiavellian epistemology".

In chapter 2, I explained that the epistemological foundations of this analysis are *naturalist* – but that due to the nature of the subject matter, the principles of *constructivist* epistemology are never far away. I also described the two epistemologies as more a matter of *degree* than as a dichotomy of opposites. The difference between directly and mutually constitutive structural power described in this chapter (p. 34), for example, is also an *epistemological* difference: Moving from direct to mutual constitution means moving from more naturalist to more constructivist underpinnings, as the subject matter becomes steadily more interpretive and contextual in nature. Epistemologically, all the power-concepts that have been explored in chapter 3 are naturalist and constructivist approaches; they move from pure, behavioral observational criteria to more explicitly interpretive observation, but they stay on the naturalist-constructivist continuum described in chapter 2 rather than take the "epistemological leap to poststructuralist flux" described in 3.1. The difference between *hegemonic* power and *tripartite* power, for example, can be explained in terms of such epistemological choices. Where the *constructivist* approach of hegemony takes the search for the core of power to its ultimate consequence of a "colonization of the mind", the tripartite power-concept retains the agency focus that is typical for naturalist approaches to power. Power over the body, power over the purse, and power over opinion, derive from three resource bases that are separate, but real – and *not* reducible to either material strength alone or a combination of material strength and the way "the system" colonizes our minds. The tripartite approaches to power have in common a desire to move *beyond* the strictly hard, measurable power-concept, and into a system of knowledge where the paradox of unrealized power may be avoided. They do this by describing the intangible, and ultimately *psychological*, definitional traits of "power" in terms of intangible resources that are analogous to tangible ones.

The context-dependence of power is problematic in more ways than one when the aim is a naturalist power-concept. In response to the idea of "unintentionally wielded resources", for instance, I concluded my section on the resources/behavior dimension of power by saying that understanding power as something that is bound up in resources and realized through behaviors can easily become meaningless. How much interpretation do we make room for within the confines of a naturalist epistemology? Can a naturalist power-concept incorporate the idea of "wielding structural power", or *must* naturalist approaches to power, as Guzzini (1993) suggests, draw a line between what is "power" and something else between the active *mobilization* of bias and the mere existence of an *inherent* bias? These are open questions.

Two logics of power – approaching power in terms of "legislation" or "interpretation": The contrasting approaches of Machiavelli and Hobbes can help explain the power-concept's challenges to political scientists by demonstrating the clash of legislative and interpretive logics that

lurks in the background. This tension between "legislating" and "interpreting" power – or between a focus on causality and a focus on strategic skill – runs through the power literature. It works itself out in slightly different ways, but it is never *resolved*. This implies that both approaches belong in a narrative of political power, but neither can be elevated to an overarching *epistemological* principle – when you approach power as a causal concept, you repeatedly run into trouble over power's intangibles, but approaching power in an entirely interpretive way, without a "guiding meta-narrative" (Clegg 1989, see p. 19), is decidedly not a workable alternative within a mainstream, naturalist/constructivist epistemology that is based on a correspondence theory of truth (see p.12).

The "clash of logics" has clear parallels to the differences between the emphases of naturalism and constructivism. The point of adding Hobbes and Machiavelli to this narrative is to illustrate that the two logics *are not* parallel to the distinction between structure- and agency approaches to power; Hobbes and Machiavelli both wrote about power as it related to *agency* and *wielding*; as some actor's means to an end. Their differences are instead echoed in the contrast between those approaches to power analysis that (more or less) equate power with force – which has the benefit of observable causality – and those who focus on the significance of the particular relationship of power, in which the *power* of A depends on the reaction of B. The distinction between the Machiavellian and Hobbesian approaches to power parallels Cox's descriptions of classical realism as "historicised and hermeneutic" and neorealism as positivist, illustrating how conflicting uses of the power-concept can be traced back to the different weight given to the interpretive side to power.

Finally, I have a note on the connections between the dark-matter dimension and the rest of the chapter: As chapter 3 delved deeper into the power-concept, the image of what constitutes the "ordinary use" of power got increasingly intricate, and many of the intricacies were ultimately left unresolved; "for the dark-matter dimension to sort out". The dark matter of power is *still* elusive, however – and may be unresolvable. The value added by including this dark-matter dimension in the conceptual analysis is the *categorization* of different elements of this dark matter. This can be demonstrated by revisiting the challenging idea of "wielding structural power": When you present structural power as "embodied past action", the wielding of structural power is a *circular* process of building and invoking structural advantages. When you focus on intentionality, "wielding structural power" becomes a question of whether or not the more powerful party *intended* to wield power, and when perspectives are placed center stage, wielding structural power becomes a question whether or not the less powerful party recognizes that power is being wielded at all.

3.4. Conclusion: Summing up the dimensions of power and revisiting the criteria for analysis

The structure/agency dimension: The typical approach to power is to primarily focus on agency

power, and how agents always operate *within* structures that may be constraining or conducive to their goals. This is challenged by approaches to power that consider the interests of individual agents to be *determined* by structure to such an extent that agents are not said to have "power" over their own circumstances. This description applies to the absolute hegemonic power of a "colonization of the individual mind"; where the "power" is decisively located in social structure rather than in individual agency.

The resources/behavior dimension: In a typical agency-approach to power, the power of an agent is described in terms of resources and behavior: Agents *wield* power – that is, they exercise power through their *behavior*, by means of the *resources* that are available to them. Potential power resources differ in nature. There is a prevalent "tripartite tradition" of dividing power resources into three categories. The military resources and economic resources – money and weapons – are tangible resources that can be *counted*, and you may uncontroversially state that one country has more of such a resource than another. It is a practical advantage of the power-concept that is typical for *realist* theories of international relations that their main emphasis is on such concrete, tangible power-resources. At the same time, ignoring important aspects of power that are *not* concrete and tangible is often misleading (the concrete fallacy). The *third* category of resources in the tripartite tradition of power encompasses the means by which agents can wield power *without* the use of material resources. In tripartite conceptualizations of power, this *third* power is a "power over opinion", or "normative" power, that is *not* reducible to a side-effect of military and economic power.

Another central insight is that what we call power resources are not the "power", they are merely power *potential*; they are context dependent. All power analysis, then, must include a specification of the scope and domain of the agent's power. If this is not done, then outcomes in which the party with the most material resources does not succeed cannot be explained (the paradox of unrealized power). *All* three parts of tripartite power are context-dependent, but context is especially salient regarding power resources of the intangible, *third* kind.

The dark-matter dimension: Problematizing power in terms of agency -structure and resources -behavior, only scratches at the surface of the power-concept. The tripartite tradition's approach to the resources/behavior dimension of power, for instance, shows how thinking of the three parts of power as parallel types can lead you astray. While the first two parts are defined by their material resources, the third is defined by whether or not *any* potential resource produces the intended effects. The *third* "resource" is therefore not a resource, but a vaguely defined "way of influencing."

To get closer to some of the intangibles of power, I supplemented the structure/agency- and

resources/behavior dimensions with a third dimension that made explicit reference to intentions, perspective, timing, and epistemology as central complications for the two dimensions above. In short, I used the dark-matter dimension to show how the *relational* nature of "power" means that any scenario of A's power over B ultimately hinges on the intentions and perspectives of both A *and* B, and also to describe structures as embodied past action. "Power" can depend on intentions and perspective, meaning that whether an instance of power is seen to be agency power or structural power depends on who you ask. Since B can be compelled by effects that are unintentionally produced by A, compulsory power *may* be better understood from B's perspective. Conversely, A can wield structural power intentionally, without B experiencing it as power at all.

Looking into the dark matter of time, I described structures of power as embodied past action. The relationship between structure and agency is circular. If structural power is embodied past action, then laying the foundations for future structural power is one way of "wielding structural power"; another is working to maintain your *traditional* power. In other words, structure can be both the resource and the objective to be attained by the power behavior of "wielding structural power". I also used the dark-matter dimension of power to discuss the relationship between power and epistemology. Following Nye I kept any recourse to a poststructuralist epistemology at arm's length. The tension between naturalist- and constructivist epistemologies is pervasively present, however, and the difference between approaching power "legislatively" and "interpretively" is a recurring theme in this conceptual analysis. Epistemological choices can greatly affect the impact of power's dark matter – and what is the *best* epistemological choice in a specific situation will often be a demanding judgment call.

Revisiting the four criteria for evaluation of the soft-power concept

Before moving on to the presentation of Nye's soft power in chapter 4, I have some hints about how chapter 3's analysis of "power" concerns the first three criteria for evaluation of soft power. *(i) Accordance with ordinary use of "power"*: It is a premise of this conceptual analysis that to understand soft power, you must first understand what "power" is. Chapter 3 has established that while power is not *a singular concept,* the concept still has an "ordinary (academic) use" to which we can compare soft power. *(ii) Consistency with surrounding concepts*: The point of this criterion is that soft power should not "clash" with other concepts that surround it. The criterion is not directly addressed in this chapter that is entirely about "power", but "hegemony" will be revisited from the angle of examining its co-existence with soft power. *(iii) Draw attention to what is otherwise easily overlooked.* Chapter 3 has demonstrated that there are good reasons why those "realist" uses of the concept of power that downplay the role of human perception in power

relationships have long dominated the IR-fields: it is far easier to count material things, and we struggle considerably with the idea of wielding structural power. The psychological elements of power are not easily avoided, however, because they are so central to the idea of what power *is*. If this discussion has shown anything, it is that the *third* part of power is perspective-dependent, context-dependent, not necessarily intentional, intangible – but it is certainly power. To find out whether "soft power" is a good way to deal with power's intangibles, we must first take a closer look at the soft-power concept.

4. Joseph Nye's Soft Power

> More than four centuries ago, Niccolo Machiavelli advised princes in Italy that it was more important to be feared than to be loved. But in today's world, it is best to be both. (Nye 2004: 1)

These are opening words of Joseph Nye's *Soft Power. The Means to Success in World Politics* (Nye 2004). To Nye, who dates his coining of "soft power" to his 1990 book *Bound to Lead*, soft power is a term for capturing the intangible power of *attraction*. Nye's starting point for developing a soft-power concept is the notion that "proof of power lies not in resources but in the changed behavior of nations" (Nye 1990: 174). His focus is on power relationships, and on the difficulties inherent in identifying the specific causes of this change in behavior. Regarding Nye's ambitions for his concept, the subheading of the book *Soft Power* says it all: soft power is presented as "the *means* to success in world politics". If this description is accurate, then being able to recognize soft power as something distinct from hard power is vital for the success of policymakers.

Nye has written several books and articles revolving around soft power. In *Bound To Lead* (1990) his aim was to explain the U.S.' continued dominance at a time when many predicted its demise. The main argument is that the so-called declinists of the day were misapplying the power concept by overlooking the soft, "co-optive" dimensions of power that are every bit as real as hard "command" dimensions of power. By the time of Nye's next soft-power book, *The Paradox of American Power* (2002a), soft power had become a commonly used term in International Relations scholarship and among foreign policy analysts. *The Paradox of American Power* argues that the U.S. is still going strong, but that it is in danger of undermining its international power by ignoring its soft power. In *Soft power. The means to success in world politics* (2004), Nye uses the length of a book to elaborate on the concept and its boundaries.[17] I am using *Soft Power* (2004) as my main text in analyzing what Nye has to say about soft power.[18]

I should point out that soft power is meant to function as a universal concept rather than as an analytical tool for understanding the successes and failures of the United States. Though the concept was described in universal terms from the beginning, it was also, in practice, intimately linked to the U.S.; *Bound to Lead* (Nye 1990) is about America's power in the world, and the soft-power concept was shorthanded the article "America's Information Edge" as "the attraction of

17 Nye has also published a book in 2011, *The Future of Power*, which I have not read – but I *have* read several of his more recent articles (Nye 2009, Nye 2010, Nye 2011b), and the soft-power concept does not appear to have changed in any significant way since Nye 2004.

18 To save some space, the subheading will be left out of future references.

American democracy and free markets" (Nye and Owens 1996: 20). Between *Bound to Lead* (Nye 1990) and *Soft Power* (Nye 2004) Nye develops the universal applicability of the concept. While the main focus remains on the U.S., *Soft Power* also includes a 25-page chapter (Nye 2004: 73-98) discussing the soft power of other states and non-state actors in the international political arena.

The rest of chapter 4 is a detailed presentation of Nye's soft-power concept, with an eye to his strategies for recognizing and examining soft power. I begin by fleshing out Nye's definition of soft power as it relates to the *other* types of power.

4.1. The hard-soft-continuum and the three types of power

It is important to note – and to not lose sight of – the fact that the soft-power concept *was never meant to stand alone.* Nye defines soft power by its relationship to the other elements of power. Soft power is at one end of a power-spectrum; it goes hand in hand with hard power, and "the distinction between [hard and soft power] is one of degree, both in the nature of the behavior and in the tangibility of the resources" (Nye 2004: 7). The juxtaposition of hard and soft power as a *dichotomy* is a short cut to understanding two ends of a *continuum* of power, one which goes from the easily identifiable, tangible use of force to the intangible, but nevertheless real, power of attraction. To illustrate the relationship between hard and soft power, Nye (1990) presents this scale:

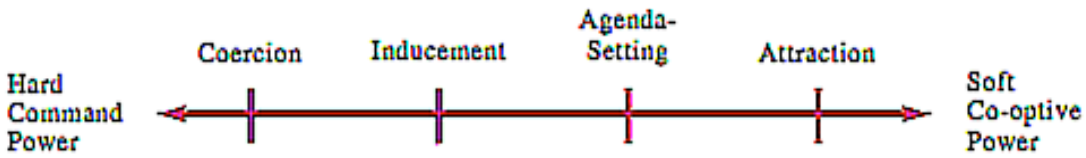


fig. 4.1.a) Nye's continuum of power (Nye 1990: 267 *endnote.*)

While the scale does nothing to help us create a decisive definitional demarcation line between soft and hard power, it effectively illustrates the continuum of strategies of power along which that line should be imagined. The scale also implies another important aspect of the soft-power concept: the line is just as vague and hard to place in terms of where hard power *ends* as in terms of where soft power *begins*. Nye is careful to stress that hard power is *not* synonymous with hard *force*, and that soft power does *not* cover any and all power that does not include actual or threatened physical violence. Economic power can be hard power even without being *coercive* in nature. We find the carrot – inducement – on the hard side of the scale; the defining feature being that you are not *loved* for your bribes. Labeling economic power as "soft" is a frequent misuse of Nye's soft-power

concept (Nye 2006). Soft power is the power of *attraction,* and with soft power, you can get others to do what you want without using your money.

As the concept developed over time, so did the figure illustrating it. In *Soft Power* (2004), this is how it looks:

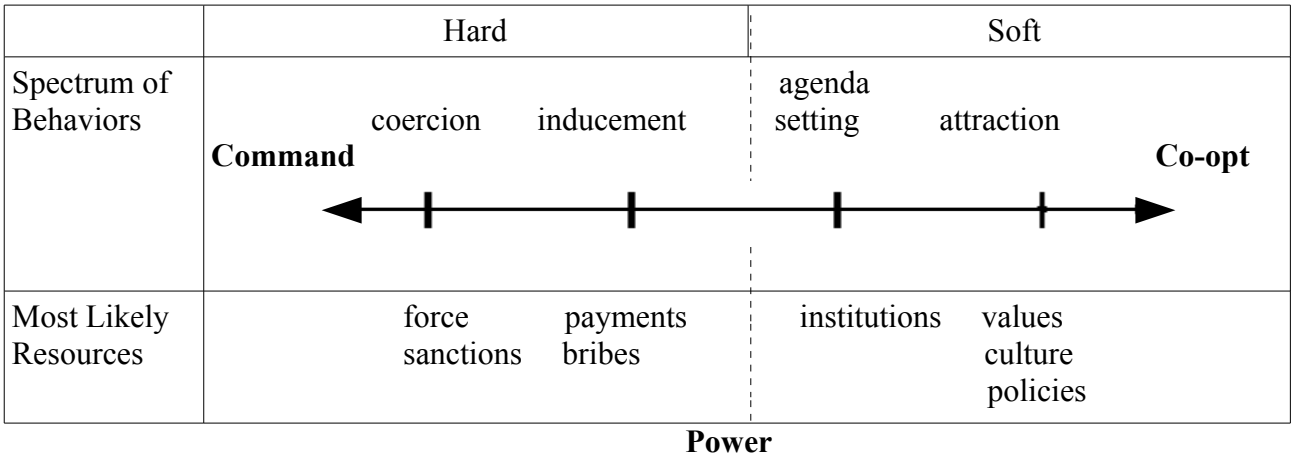


Fig. 4.1. b) Power (Nye 2004: 8)

Here, Nye has added power *resources* to match the "spectrum of behaviors" – making this figure an illustration of the resources/behavior dimension of soft power. The distinction between power resources and power behaviors is used throughout *Soft Power* (2004); this development establishes the relationship between soft power and soft-power resources as a parallel to that between hard power and hard-power resources, an idea to which Nye returns frequently.

In addition to presenting power as a continuum, Nye also explains soft power as part of a tripartite power-concept. The three types of power are military power, economic power, and soft power, and the ways in which they manifest themselves as resources and as behavior in international politics, are summed up in this table:

	Behaviors	Primary currencies	Government Policies
Military Power	coercion deterrence protection	threats force	coercive diplomacy war alliance
Economic power	inducement coercion	payments sanctions	aid bribes sanctions
Soft Power	attraction agenda setting	values culture policies institutions	public diplomacy bilateral and multilateral diplomacy

Table 4.1. Three types of Power (Nye 2004: 31)

These three types of power are on the whole self-explanatory, especially in light of the presentation of the tripartite power tradition in chapter 3, but there are other things about these figures and the table that require elaboration. I will refer back to them in the upcoming section, which outlines Nye's approaches to the three dimensions of power that run through the thesis.

4.2. Three dimensions of soft power

This section communicates what Nye has to say about soft power in relation to the three dimensions of power that are the focal points for my analysis. To keep the structures of the corresponding themes parallel throughout the thesis, I begin with the structure/agency dimension, though this dimension does not get much attention in Nye's presentation of soft power.

4.2.1. Soft power on the structure/agency dimension

In addition to describing soft power in terms of resources and of behavior, Nye introduces the distinction between power residing in agents, and structural power. I have already mentioned in chapter 3 how Nye (2004) draws on Bachrach and Baratz (1962) to describe soft power as "power" even though what *identifies* soft power as power lies outside the realm of agency. In *Soft Power* (2004), "structural power" is Nye's defense against accusations that power through co-option cannot be called power, and he uses "structural power" almost as a synonym to his soft (co-optive) power:

> The skeptics who want to define power only as deliberate acts of command and control are ignoring the second, or "structural", face of power – the ability to get the outcomes you want without having to force people to change their behavior through threats or payments (Nye 2004: 15).

While he states clearly that the soft-power concept is a structural power-concept, Nye does not spend more time on the *nature* of structural power in *Soft Power* (2004). The distinction between agency power and the "second, or 'structural' face of power" is central to many of the difficulties inherent in working with soft power, and will be returned to (with a vengeance) as the pieces of the analysis are brought together in chapter 5. The next theme for elaboration is the way in which Nye develops – and distinguishes between – "soft-power resources" and "soft-power behaviors".

4.2.2. Soft power on the resources/behavior dimension

Soft-power resources: As described in chapter 3, power resources are often generalized as potential power, or the "currencies" (Nye's term in table 4.1.[19]) that can be used to achieve a goal. For the inherently intangible soft power, the resources in question tend to elude specification: "In behavioral terms, soft power is attractive power. In terms of resources, soft power resources are the assets that produce such attraction" (Nye 2004: 6). What are the assets that produce attraction? Unlike hard power resources, which are fairly easy to compare, what counts as a soft-power resource must be decided in specific situations. The potential soft power resources of a state are, according to figure 4.1.b) and table 4.1., its *values*, *culture*, *policies*, and *institutions*. Nye explains the sense in which these are resources in the following terms:

Culture as a soft-power resource: In many instances, when others use the soft-power concept is it is taken to mean the "power" you might achieve through the dispersion of your popular culture (Nye 2006). This use of the concept is incorrect (ibid). According to Nye, international distribution of popular culture is an important source of influence, but soft power should *not* be thought of as a synonym to this infamous phenomenon:

> Of course, Coke and Big Macs do not necessarily attract people in the Islamic world to love the United States. The North Korean dictator Kim Jong Il is alleged to like pizza and American videos, but that does not affect his nuclear programs. Excellent wines and cheese do not guarantee attraction to France, nor does the popularity of Pokémon games assure that Japan will get the policy outcomes it wishes. (…) American films that make the United States attractive in China or Latin America may have the opposite effect and actually reduce American soft power in Saudi Arabia or Pakistan (Nye 2004: 12).

In fact, the soft-power potential of having a widely distributed culture depends on both the audience and the culture. Nye describes a culture that has a widespread appeal – that is "universalistic" – as an important soft-power resource, and asserts that "the United States benefits from a universalistic culture" (Nye 2004: 11). You possess the soft-power resource of a "universalistic culture" if your culture "includes universal values and [policies which promote] values and interests that others share" (ibid). This means that an internationalized culture is cultural *power* when it is not merely commercially successful enough to be internationalized, but also communicates an understanding of the world that resonates with others.

Compared to the U.S., the soft-power potential of other states is limited by their lack of a universalistic culture. Nye argues that this is the reason why, for example, the considerable international spread of Japanese popular culture or Indian Bollywood cinema are, while not

19 There is a difference between the words "resource" and "currency" that Vuving (2009) makes use of in his understanding of soft power, but outside this table, Nye uses "resources" for the same purposes as the table's "currencies"-category.

insignificant, of far more limited value for Japanese and Indian soft power than the spread of Hollywood movies is for the U.S. Japanese culture is "too inward-oriented" (ibid: 88), and India is limited by a tarnished democratic reputation (ibid: 89). This harms India's soft, cultural power because a culture's soft power depends on something coming *prior* to it – namely the shared values – in "a world where the norm of democracy has become the touchstone of legitimacy" (Nye 2002a: 108).

A natural follow-up, then, is **Values as a soft-power resource:** Another aspect of soft power which is *at least* as central to Nye as the popular culture with which he is frequently associated is the power of values. This can be described as the power of being a good (as in morally good) example to others. Democracy and human rights are values that produce soft power (Nye 2004: 55). **Policies** are **a soft-power resource** when they are seen to be consistent with such good values, and when they appear to be providing global public goods rather than being self-serving. Having a solid democracy at home, working well with others in international institutions and promoting peace and human rights in foreign policy are policy-sources of soft power (ibid: 11). While all soft-power resources matter, foreign policy is especially important – because this is the resource that is "both the most volatile and the most susceptible to government control" (ibid: 68).

Finally, Nye includes having a **position of strength in international institutions** as an important **soft-power resource** because this provides an opportunity to shape the preferences of others (ibid: 10-11). Institutions are closer to the hard end of the spectrum, but the line between hard and soft is certainly unclear when it comes to institutional power – you can also wield economic power though a strong position in international institutions, for instance. The fact that the line in fig. 4.1.b) is stapled rather than solid is a noteworthy statement. Nye puts a strong position in international institutions on the soft side of the scale because of the possibilities such positions create for agenda setting.

These are the soft-power resources that Nye emphasizes. The rest of this section about soft power's resources/behavior dimension concerns soft-power *behavior* – or how soft power is "wielded".

Soft-power behavior: Just as soft power resources are hard to pin down, identifying the "wielding" of these soft power resources is also a difficult task. The subject matter for which soft power is developed in *Soft Power* (Nye 2004) is that of international relations, but Nye presents soft power as a concept that is in principle no more linked to the behavior of *states* than the hard power of an armed robber is linked to states by the fact that the states also have weapons. Soft power *resources* are not state assets on par with money and guns, and "soft power" is not a new word for "public diplomacy", but rather a way to describe everything from the force that makes people

donate money to charities, to the force of the intangible appeal that makes one state *want* to co-operate with another. The soft-power *behavior* covered in Nye's works certainly concerns the behavior of states, however. For instance, adapting the soft-power concept to the concrete options of states makes it difficult to treat popular culture as a *resource* – as something which can be "possessed", but this difficulty is less of an issue when considering soft power *behavior*: State actors may not be well suited for creating something like popular culture, but if they happen to have one with an international appeal, they can certainly promote it.

Comparing states' soft power- to their hard-power behavior, it is clear that what a state *can* do specifically to nurture and develop its soft power is invest in diplomacy. Soft power is wielded by means of international communication:

Hard-power behavior	**Soft-power behavior**
-bribes -threats -physical coercion	-public diplomacy -bilateral and multilateral diplomacy

Table 4.2.2. Hard- and soft-power behaviors of states (adapted from table 4.1.)

The soft-power behavior of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy is traditional state-to-state diplomatic relations, while *public* diplomacy is directed towards the civil society of other states. Nye (2004: 107-109) describes three dimensions of public diplomacy: (1) daily communication, or "explaining the context of your domestic and foreign policy decisions", (2) strategic communication (like what occurs in a political or advertising campaign), and (3), developing "lasting relationships with key individuals over many years through scholarships, exchanges, training, seminars, conferences, and access to media channels".

Besides the references to diplomacy and public diplomacy, the behavior-side of soft power's resources/behavior dimension is rather vague. Recall that "in behavioral terms, soft power is attractive power", and that the "soft-power behaviors" in figure 4.2. and table 4.1. are listed as "attraction" and "agenda setting". The table's hard-power behaviors of coercion and inducement are easy to define by their links to the hard-power resources guns and money, while what, exactly, constitutes "attractive" behavior and its relationship to soft-power resources is harder to get a grip on; Nye merely asserts that "in general, soft-power resources are slower, more diffuse, and more cumbersome to wield than hard-power resources" (Nye 2004: 100). Still, he leaves no room for doubt that such behavior exists, and that soft power is "a form of power – a means of obtaining desired outcomes" (ibid: 129). In other words, soft-power resources *can* be used to achieve specific objectives, but the "mechanisms" at work when soft power is wielded tend to elude explanation.

The vagueness of the resources/behavior dimension of soft power is a good segway into the dark-matter dimension of soft power.

4.2.3. Soft power's dark matter: *Intentions, perspectives, timing, and epistemology*

In chapter 3, I developed a dark-matter dimension of *power* as a way to explicitly deal with power's complicating factors of intentionality and perspective, timing, and epistemology. This subject matter is not explicitly discussed by Nye in any comparable way, but it is, presumably, *at least* as essential to soft power as it is to power. The full analysis of soft power's relationship to my dark matter dimension will be left for chapter 5. To facilitate the analysis of soft power and the dark matter that is to come in that chapter, this section aims to illuminate central areas where the dark matter lurks beneath Nye's presentation of soft power.

The difficulty with determining how soft power can be understood as *the means to an end* is riddled with dark-matter problematics. A main obstacle on the resources/behavior dimension of soft power, for instance, is determining what constitutes a *resource*. What counts as a soft-power resource must be decided in specific situations. This does not subtract from the *relevance* or the *reality* of soft power, and as Nye rightly points out (e.g. Nye 2004: 6; 19), whether or not hard power resources really function as power resources *also* depends on situational factors – this is the "paradox of unrealized power": that the bigger arsenal does not necessarily win the war. The context-dependence of soft-power resources nevertheless poses a considerably bigger challenge than that of hard-power resources; "the same messages are 'downloaded' and interpreted with different effects by different receivers in different settings. Soft power is not a constant, but something that varies by time and place" (ibid: 44). This means that soft-power resources are contingent on the dark matter of *perspective*; the perspective of the target for soft-power wielding determines the soft-power resources.

Soft-power behavior as the "production of intended effects" is also tricky. Soft power "often works indirectly by shaping the environment for policy" (Nye 2004: 99), but soft power as the intentionally wielded "means to an end" is obscured by the fact that soft power typically refers to *structural* power. Nye's concept is a recognition that power is not just what states positively *do*, it is also about what they *are* – and the resources/behavior- and structure/agency dimensions of soft power are often interwoven. When Nye describes structural power in terms of resources and behavior, there is no way to distinguish between soft power as a power that is intentionally wielded to change someone's actions (as, for example, pointing out breaches of established norms to shame someone into changing their ways) and the soft power that changes the actors *themselves*, which is what co-optive power – changing someone's perception of their own interests – *is*.

The "dark matter" of *timing* is another related factor that may be more important to soft power than it is given credit for. As soft power is structural power, then "wielding soft power" depends on the pre-established structures that can be invoked. You can "wield soft power" by building and nurturing your soft-power resources – which clearly has elements of both past action and future benefits to it.

Finally, the soft-power concept's relationship to the dark matter of *epistemology* seems to be a sort of "slide" into the epistemological territory of constructivism. Nye writes from a naturalist perspective, but the subject matter of soft power makes it next to impossible to *stay* naturalist. This last dark-matter topic is related to the operationalization of soft power, which is also the next topic – I now move from the definitional aspects of soft power to a more precise description of what, according to Nye, are the *operationalizable indicators* of soft-power resources and -behavior.

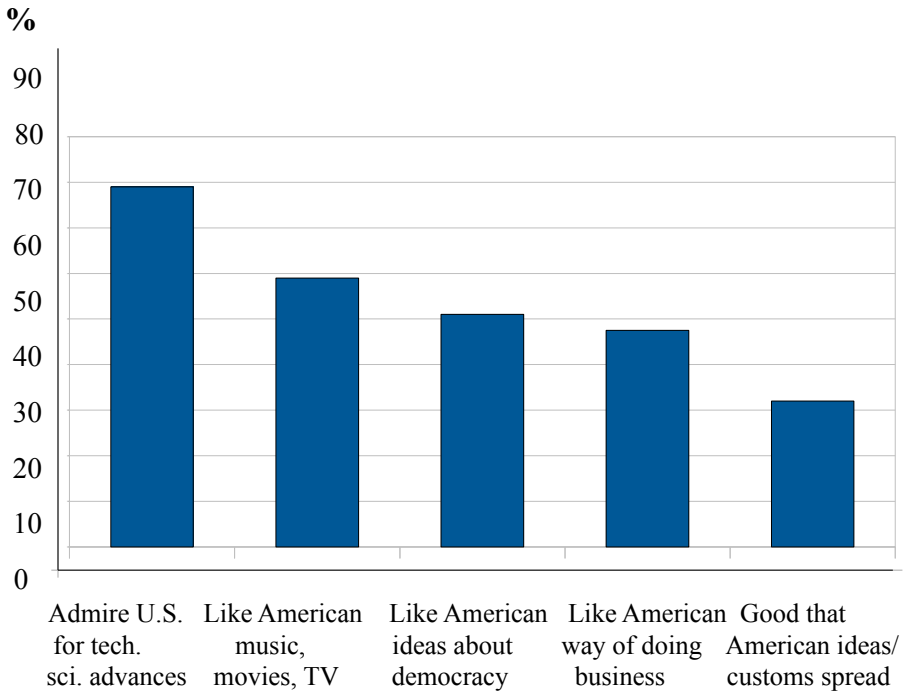
4.3. Nye's operationalization of soft power

To Nye, soft power is very real, and something that, like hard power, can be identified and wielded – and be *the means to success in world politics.* Counting guns and money is easy enough, but how do you observe and measure your soft power? Because the 4th criterion of the conceptual analysis is that soft power should be "operational in the broadest sense", I will elaborate on this topic as it is treated by Nye. Indirectly, the subject of operationalization has already been broached in Nye's listings of soft power resources and behaviors: To observe soft-power resources and -behavior, you need to specify the resources that have the potential to build the nebulous soft power – and acknowledge the highly contextual aspect of it all. As indicators for measuring the soft power of the United States, Nye (2004: 33-43) uses

- opinion polls on the international popularity of American culture and policy;
- statistics on trade and economy;
- statistics on foreign students choosing to come to US universities;
- statistics on scientific innovation and Nobel Prize winners.

Nye does something of the same for other countries: a potential soft-power resource for France, for instance, is its first rank in Nobel Prizes for literature (ibid: 76), and Japan, which Nye describes as having "more potential soft power resources than any other Asian country" (ibid: 85), has the soft-power resource of ranking first in the world in number of patents (ibid).

As an example of the level of detail at which opinion polls can be used to study soft power, I reproduce one of Nye's illustrations – this bar chart of what he calls "Dimensions of American attractiveness".



Source: Pew Global Attitudes Project, *What the world thinks in 2002.* Median measures of 43 countries surveyed.

Fig. 4.3. Dimensions of American attractiveness (Nye 2004: 36)

Like most indicators in social sciences, such polls are mere approximations of the power of attraction that Nye wants to capture. Still, for measuring a country's *popularity*, polls are concrete and reasonably precise indicators, just like arsenals are a good indicator for a country's potential for physical destruction. Nye emphasizes that there is a difference between measuring the potential for soft power and measuring the "cause-and-effect"- side to soft power, however. Soft-power *potential* can be demonstrated by the above indicators, but observing the processes of soft power necessarily requires more detailed analysis: "whether a particular asset is a soft-power resource that produces attraction can be measured by asking people through polls or focus groups. Whether that attraction in turn produces desired policy outcomes has to be judged in particular cases." (Nye 2004: 6).

I have located my evaluation of soft power as *operationalizable* in its own chapter toward the end of the thesis (chapter 6). This is because further insight into the intricacies of soft power as a power-concept is helpful to a discussion of why and how the operationalization of soft power has

proved difficult.

4.4. Concluding the presentation of Nye's soft power

Because chapter 4 is *mainly* meant to familiarize the reader with soft power rather than to problematize the concept, there are issues that either have not come up, or not been given enough emphasis, in the above. These are addressed in section 4.5.1. Section 4.5.2. sums up Nye's message about soft power, and gives an overview of the points made in chapter 4 as they relate to the four criteria for conceptual analysis.

4.4.1. Final points

The first issue I want to emphasize here is that **soft power is not supposed to be an American phenomenon.** Soft power was first conceived and applied as a tool for understanding the U.S.'s place in the world. However, there is nothing specifically American about its application. The United States may be *dominant* in soft power – but other countries, too, have values (and popular culture) and the means to communicate them to the world. Soft power is available to all, and many "use soft-power resources to 'punch above their weight' in international politics" (Nye 2004: 89).

My second point is that although Nye has developed soft power with a main focus on the soft-power resources and behaviors of *states* in the theater of international politics, soft power is **essential to many transnational nonstate actors.** The wider distribution and lower cost of information technology means that NGOs that rarely possess much hard power are becoming increasingly important.. They can develop new norms and "alter public perceptions of what governments and firms should be doing", and "governments have to take NGOs into account as both allies and adversaries". Religious movements, IGOs like the UN and the WTO, and transnational terrorist organizations also possess soft power (Nye 2004: 90-95).

Third, I want to emphasize again that the soft-power concept was **never meant to stand alone**, a fact which does not undermine it, but does mean that a key to understanding soft power and figuring out how to use it lies in the contrast to *hard* power – in figuring out when power the power being exercised is *not* hard.

This leads to the fourth and final issue to get a mention in this section, which is by far the most comprehensive. Whereas hard power depends on concrete, comparable, and to some degree fungible assets, **soft power is by nature intangible, infungible, and highly context-dependent.** This difference between "hard" and "soft" power is the source of most of the difficulties that present themselves when working with soft power. Wielding your soft-power resources sensibly is a tricky task in many ways: One obvious reason is that it must be grounded in shared values. U.S. soft

power will not help the U.S. win over someone who is attracted to Osama Bin Laden's soft power. Furthermore, soft power's relationship to the two hard forms of power varies with context. A hard-power resource can be a soft-power resource, too. This is obviously the case with economic power and its inherent attractiveness, but also with physical strength; a strong military can be a source of attraction. Nye quotes Bin Laden to make the point: "When people see a strong horse and a weak horse, by nature, they will like the strong horse" (Nye 2004: 26). Furthermore, hard-power resources can also be damaging to a country's soft power. Nye, for instance, notes that the fact that United States is strong in hard power is also a source of "anti-Americanism": "the disproportion in power engenders a mixture of admiration envy, and resentment" (Nye 2004: 38).

Summing up the relationship between the hard-power resources and their potential costs and benefits to soft power might look like this:

Hard-power resources	**Potential soft-power benefits**	**Potential soft-power costs**
Economic strength	Admiration, immitation	Resentment, competition
Military power (force)	Attraction ("the gleam on the sword")	Fear, resentment, immitation

Table 4.4.1. Hard-power resources: effects on soft power

Potential hard-power resources can produce soft power, and typical soft power resources can be irrelevant to, or even harm, soft power. Culture will not give you soft power over people who do not recognize the understandings and authorities from your culture, and the spread of your culture will even *harm* your soft power where the culture is perceived as downright immoral (ibid: 96). This does not imply that someone with a different cultural background is necessarily a "lost cause" for soft-power policies; Where there is *ambivalence* about your culture, there is room for changing the ratio of this ambivalence by means of soft power (ibid: 53).

Even when there are shared values present, the communication of these values and the culture that goes along with them does not necessarily produce soft power. Recall from fig. 4.4. that whether you *like* American ideas and culture and whether you think it is "Good that American ideas/customs spread" are different dimensions of American attractiveness. The numbers also differ considerably, from the ca 80 % of respondents who "admire the U.S. for technological and scientific advances", via the ca 50 % who "like American ideas about democracy" to a mere ca 30 % who like the spread of American ideas and customs. In short, there are many different possible constellations of relationships on the soft-power spectrum, including resentment, admiration, indifference, attraction.[20] The point of soft power is to realize that whatever the relationship, the "soft-spectrum"

20 Nye does not imagine the idea of *negative* soft power, however. Soft power is "power", after all, and negative power – while certainly imaginable – think of the reaction of a sleepy child when *ordered* to go to bed – is "inconsistent with

is always present, that it *matters* for the state that wants to get anything done, and that its *power* can be built and nurtured intentionally.

4.4.2. Reviewing the *four criteria for evaluation*

Boiled down to its essence, Nye's message about his soft-power concept is that

- •Soft power is "the power to attract";
- •Soft power is universal;
- •Soft power is *one* part in a tripartite understanding of power;
- •Soft power is important, and should be actively nurtured and used.

Nye also establishes that he wants to be empirical, but he has a concept that is not easily verifiable. This relates to the *fourth* criterion of the conceptual analysis that soft power should be "operational in the broadest sense" and will be addressed in chapter 6. An observation at this point, however, is that Nye is very good at pointing out the *difficulties* of working empirically with soft power, which is a good indication that he takes the task seriously. In chapter 5, I will focus on the relationship between "soft power" and "power", and evaluate soft power on the three first criteria of the conceptual analysis. I round off *this* chapter by briefly reviewing the criteria from the perspective of chapter 4, looking for hints as to where problems may arise.

The criterion that seems the least troublesome in chapter 4 is the *third* criterion, concerning whether soft power draws attention to something that is otherwise easily overlooked. Convincing people to pay more attention to non-coercive power relationships is Nye's motivation for developing a concept of soft power in the first place, and he is on solid ground here.

The *second* criterion asks whether soft power is consistent with its surrounding concepts. Chapter 4 does not offer any clear strategies for the evaluation of soft power on this point. This is a consequence both of my decision to not demarcate a concrete set of "surrounding concepts" for soft power, which leaves the consistency-criterion more vaguely defined than the others, and of the fact that Nye does not spend much time on soft power's conceptual vicinity. It is first and foremost the *external* view of "soft power" that makes the consistency-criterion salient. To get the process of evaluating soft power on the second criterion started, chapter 5 *begins* by examining Nye's critics – a process which brings several of soft power's surrounding concepts to the fore.

The *first* criterion concerns soft power's accordance with (ordinary use of) power. Chapter 5 will evaluate soft power on this criterion by investigating whether Nye's soft-power concept uses the three dimensions of the power-concept in an "ordinary" way. This involves comparing the resources/behavior-, structure/agency-, and dark-matter dimensions of *soft power* that were

my definition of power as the capacity to produce desired outcomes" (Nye 2004: 150, n8).

presented in chapter 4 to the respective dimensions of *power* that were presented in chapter 3. The criterion is overarching for the conceptual analysis of soft power as a power-concept, and even on his own terms, Nye leaves room for discussion here – *every* dimension has a potential weak point regarding the relationship between the definitions of power and *soft* power:

The structure/agency dimension of soft power is potentially problematic because it is left largely unspecified. The soft-power concept depends on a recognition of power as a structural phenomenon, as Nye uses the distinction between structural and agency powers to get the point across that "power" can be "wielded" even when the power is inherent in the social structure rather than in the hard-power resources physically possessed by the wielder. This is straightforward enough, but the relationship between *acknowledging* structural power and *using* this power is not explored further in the abstract, and Nye's message regarding when "power" inherent in structure becomes "power" as possessed by the soft-power savvy agent is left unclear. Soft power has related problems on the resources/behavior dimension. The soft-power resources are *power* resources in the sense that they can be used by agents to achieve foreign policy goals, but they are dependent in this on structural conditions in ways that are rarely specified. The dark matter of soft power *revolves* around the question of where to draw the line between what *is* and what is *not* an instance of power, most strikingly in the tension between soft power as a structural phenomenon and the intentional *wielding* of soft power. In short, chapter 4 has indicated that Nye's soft-power concept is a good candidate for closer scrutiny on these criteria.

5. Soft Power Revisited: Conceptual analysis of soft power

Chapter 3 made it clear just how intricate the concept of power is when it stands alone. It also became clear that power in ordinary use means more than just force or coercion, and that Nye's choice of organizing power resources and behavior in three complementing dimensions – military, economic, and *the other thing* – is well precedented. Furthermore, with the multiplicity of meanings baked into the word "power", the fact that soft power is *also* a difficult concept to grasp is not a reason to discard it. Chapter 4 has given an insight into the soft-power concept along the same dimensions that were under investigation in chapter 3. What remains to be seen, however, is whether Nye's conceptual innovation can stand up to evaluation according to the criteria for conceptual analysis that were defined in chapter 2. This is the main objective for chapter 5.

This evaluation of soft power will use the power-analysis from chapter 3 to revisit the soft-power concept presented in chapter 4. Specifically, this chapter tackles the *theoretically useful*-part of my research question, i.e. the first three criteria in chapter 2:

(i) *Is soft power in accordance with ordinary use of power?*

(ii) *Is soft power consistent with the concepts that surround it?*

(iii) *Does soft power draw attention to something which is otherwise easily overlooked?*

Chapter 5 evaluates soft power according to the *first* criterion by investigating whether Nye's soft-power concept uses the three dimensions of the power-concept in an "ordinary" way. I compare the resources/behavior-, structure/agency-, and dark-matter dimensions of *soft* power that were presented in chapter 4 to the respective dimensions of *power* that were presented in chapter 3. The logic behind this is straightforward for the first two dimensions, as they are explicitly employed by Nye as well as established dimensions in the mainstream scholarship on power. The dark-matter dimension is bit of a maverick; it is my own composition, and its function is not entirely analogous to that of the other two. Its purpose in the analysis of soft power's accordance with power is to allow the comparison between the two concepts to go *deeper* – as both power *and* soft power seem to evade capture by the first two dimensions alone.

The chapter begins with a look at some of the criticism that soft power has encountered; an inquiry which provides me with valuable input for assessing soft powers performance as a power-concept on all three criteria. My evaluations of soft power on the *second* and *third* criteria are *mostly* (though not solely) based on this criticism. To evaluate whether soft power is "consistent with surrounding concepts," I assess whether soft power contradicts the concepts that surround it; that is, whether soft power can "co-exist peacefully" with other terminology that is used in the same

situations. Relatedly, to draw attention to something that is easy to overlook *without* the concept, soft power should be *distinguishable* from such related concepts. Looking at *criticisms* of soft power can help me to assess both criteria. The explicit conclusions drawn from this analysis on all three criteria are presented in the final section of chapter 5.

5.1. Three common objections (and why they're minor)

In light of the problems with *power as such*, it should come as no surprise that the concept of *soft* power is not universally embraced by Nye's colleagues. Critics of soft power agree in the main about the concept's problems which can be summarized as *gleam on the sword*, *U.S.-centric*, and *fuzzy*.. Before proceeding, a quick reminder of what the critics are objecting to is helpful. Recall Nye's definitions of soft power:

> In behavioral terms, soft power is attractive power. In terms of resources, soft power resources are the assets that produce such attraction. (…) If I am persuaded to go along with your purposes without any explicit threat or exchange taking place – in short, if my behavior is determined by an observable but intangible attraction – soft power is at work. (Nye 2004: 6 - 7).

This intangible power has yielded the following recurring strands of objection from Nye's readers in the political science community:

5.1.1. Gleam on the sword

The name of this category of soft power criticism is taken from an article by Womack (2005), who writes of soft power that "[p]erhaps it is only the halo of hard power, the gleam on the sword." This is an argument that soft power is actually a reflection of hard power –nothing more substantial than the "gleam" on the "sword" that is hard power:"[i]f power attracts, then the pursuit of attractiveness is not a separate issue." (Womack 2005).[21] There is also a more "moderate" version this argument. Cooper (2004) writes that "Soft power is the velvet glove, but behind it there is always the iron fist" (Cooper 2004: 179). Cooper is more nuanced than Womack, but still sees soft power as a tag-along of hard power. This is a contrast that parallels Cox's distinction between realism and neorealism in chapter 3.1.: Cooper is far less dismissive of the *power* of soft power, even though he would presumably rather have the iron fist. Cooper's is a typical *realist* (as opposed to Womack's *neorealist*) take on power, and it illustrates how realists, too, by focusing on the sword, are at risk of committing the (concrete) fallacy of *automatically* subordinating the intangible power resources available in a situation being examined to the tangible ones.

21 This is recognizable as a *neorealist* idea of power, and Womack's article is invoked by Hackbarth (2008) when he writes that "some neorealist critics argue soft power may simply be the 'halo of hard power' or the 'gleam on the sword.'"

Of course, realists are not blind to this danger. When Ferguson (2003) dismisses soft power as a factor, for instance (on the grounds that it is *soft* – which will be examined further in section 5.2.3.), he also emphasizes the importance of factors such as psychological power, religious power, moral power, credibility and legitimacy (Ferguson 2003: 23-24) – all of which belong under the soft-power concept. Ferguson, in other words, does not believe that psychological power is merely the gleam on the sword. Instead of dismissing soft power as he intends to do, he unwittingly ends his article by emphasizing the *increasing* importance of soft power, if soft power is correctly understood. Misunderstanding – or mis*applying* the soft-power concept is a frequent backdrop for dismissing or undervaluing it. Womack (2005), for instance, ends up describing soft power as mere "power of persuasion", which is not Nye's intention, as chapter 4 clearly showed. I return to this in section 5.3.

The assertion that soft power is simply the gleam on the sword reduces soft power to a side-effect of hard power, leaving soft power without any autonomous analytic purpose – analyzing hard power should suffice. The soft-power resources presented in table 4.1. (p. 49) suggest that there is a problem here: Being a strong player in international institutions certainly tends to go hand in hand with having material strength, and diplomacy also costs money. In other words, the wielding of Nye's soft-power resources frequently *does* require a measure of hard-power resources.

In assessing this line of criticism, therefore, it is important to remember that soft power is intended to complement hard power, and *not* to compete with it. In analyzing power, context is critical: A preponderance in hard power resources carries with it a potential for building soft power, but your gleaming swords can also harm your soft power – a central point to Nye. In addition, one should heed Baldwin's advice to always specify scope and domain.

This is a point on which Nye is understandably confusing, however, as while he is adamant that soft power was *never meant to stand alone* (see p. 48), he is equally clear that the difference between the hard and soft sides of figure 4.1.b) is best understood as a difference in *kind*. Even so, soft power *does not depend on hard power* (Nye 2004: 9, emphasis added), and hard power can *damage* your soft power (ibid: e.g. 75, 127). These two aspects definitively distinguish the gleam-on-the-swords from Nye. There are obviously psychological elements to hard power, and the gleam on the sword *can* produce the soft power of admiration, but power is not *reducible* to hard power; soft power is power even without the iron fist.

5.1.2. U.S.-centric

In the "U.S.-centric" category of criticisms of soft power belong the criticisms that concern soft power's relationship to the United States. These range from specific charges about its limited

relevance, like the lament that "the attempt to graft an American-originated concept onto the Canadian political landscape [causes] counterproductive confusion and division" (Smith-Windsor 2000: 51), to the more general charge that the core of the concept is an expression of the specific U.S. experience; American exeptionalism. This is what Womack sees in the background when he likens Nye's soft power to Huntington's clash of civilizations:[22] "While Huntington is unilateralist with the windows closed, Nye is unilateralist with the windows open. (...) Essentially, [Nye] sees the challenge of soft power as that of making 'our' (American) goals more attractive" (Womack 2005). Knutsen (2007) also sees Nye's soft-power writings as "infused with an attitude of 'American Exceptionalism'". The difference between these two charges may seem like one of degree, but is arguably a difference in kind: Whereas Smith-Windsor is saying that the concept is American and not necessarily applicable anywhere else, Womack and Knutsen provide an "exceptionally American" reason for its limited applicability: that the concept depends on the idea that a powerful nation is also in possession of attractive ideas and values, and that the values and ideas of the US are inherently attractive to others.

Compared to Smith-Windsor's charge that soft power was "developed for an American foreign policy discussion" and is of little use elsewhere, the argument that soft power depends on "US exceptionalism" is more fundamental. Though Nye spends many pages universalizing soft power's validity, there is no denying that throughout his work the concept retains a connectedness with the USA. Certainly U.S. soft power is the preoccupation of Nye's soft-power authorship, and he does not question the "universality" of the U.S.'values as seen in his comment that the norm of democracy has become the "touchstone of legitimacy" (cf p. 52), or that U.S. soft power benefits from the information revolution "to the extent that official policies at home and abroad are consistent with democracy, human rights, openness, and respect for the opinions of others" (Nye 2004: 32). However, neither charge undermines the concept's more universal relevance. Soft power has obviously been developed for an American foreign policy discussion, and achieving soft power *dominance* internationally would seem to require a rather "exceptional" culture, but even if this is true, the U.S. has certainly not been the only culturally powerful and ideologically appealing nation. In fact, accusing soft power of depending on American exceptionalism is an American exceptionalist argument, as it implies that the concept can only be relevant regarding the exceptional United States that it was developed around.[23] Even if soft power was only relevant for a "hegemon" of U.S. caliber today – which neither Knutsen (1999: 280-281) nor I, consider it to be – soft power would still be universalizable to past, present and future hegemons. Some of Nye's

22 (Huntington 1993)
23 For example, as you may remember from chapter 1, the soft-power concept has *taken off* in China.

formulations are U.S.-centric, but the basic definition is not.[24]

5.1.3. "Fuzzy"

Predictably, most critics of soft power have at some point characterized the term as too vague and nebulous to be of use. "The problem with soft power is its analytical fuzziness", writes Womack (2005), and Cooper writes that "hard power is coercive force. Soft power (it seems) can be just about anything else" (Cooper 2004: 168). Smith-Windsor (2000: 53) describes soft power as a term that "risks being convoluted to the point of practical uselessness", and Niall Ferguson dismisses soft power with "the trouble with soft power is that it's, well, soft" (Ferguson 2003: 21). The trouble with Ferguson's dismissal of soft power is, as has already been mentioned, that at the end of this article he clearly identifies and emphasizes soft power, without using the term, thus demonstrating that there might just be a need for it – "faith cannot move mountains. But it can move people" (ibid: 24). This punchline could have been used to describe soft power. What Ferguson is *really* dismissing, and is mistaking for the soft-power concept, is "the notion that nontraditional forces such as cultural and commercial goods can exert influence in world affairs" (ibid: 21), which, as we saw in chapter 4, is only a part of Nye's concept – and not a part that is thought to give power in isolation.

The *essence* of the fuzzy-critique is, however, that soft power is too dependent on context to be useful, and Nye does not ensure his arguments against *this* objection. Everything that is admired by others can be a source of soft power. For example, he argues in S*oft Power* that "protest movements are a part of popular culture that can attract some foreigners to the openness of the United States at the same time that official policies are repelling them" (Nye 2004: 52). When Nye in this way presents the soft power created by civil society as a counterforce to the official behavior of a state, this demonstrates the difficulty of applying "soft power" to state behavior, which in turn makes it harder to decipher just what *use* Nye envisions for his concept. Similarly, Nye describes *religion* as a "'double-edged sword': how it cuts depends on who is wielding it" (ibid: 59).

This fuzzy-objection to soft power invariably loses some steam, however, once the nebulous power-concept is used as the measuring rod for soft power's fuzziness. Ferguson (2003: 21), with reference to the paradox of an international society that is embracing some sides of US culture while at the same time revolting against others, describes soft power as a "Janus-faced phenomenon". It is easy to agree, but this is not a reason to dismiss soft power. Economic power and military force can certainly be "Janus-faced" as well; Using military force, for instance, can

24 Knutsen (2007) thinks soft power is an important contribution to the field, and would probably feel misrepresented if I did not mention here that he does not think that *soft power*'s relevance is limited to the US, though he sees Exceptionalism in Nye's *presentation* of soft power.

sometimes create martyrs, and turn out to exacerbate the problem you meant to solve. It is true that soft power is inherently context-dependent – but as chapter 3 demonstrated, the same is true of power more broadly. *Power* is relational, and ultimately, it is a psychological relationship. Soft power may be fuzzy, but power is fuzzy any way you look at it. The important question to answer here is whether "soft power" is more nebulous than "power". That is a question of whether or not soft power is a commonsensical development of the power-concept, and will be dealt with in more detail throughout chapter 5.

5.2. Soft, but Power?

The three objections to soft power above do not create much difficulty for the concept because they all recognize that the psychological effects that soft power refers to are, in fact, an aspect of *power*. Even the gleam on the sword-critique distinguishes between the physical effects of force and the way in which hard-power resources may don the "velvet glove" of soft power. A more essential criticism of the concept concerns whether what it refers to is an aspect of power at all. This argument is that "soft power" refers to an aspect of human interaction (attraction, admiration, "goodwill") that is real enough, but that calling this aspect "power" is misguided.

This subject matter is at the heart of the first three criteria of my conceptual analysis in several ways. Most obviously, it affects the very premise of the *first* criterion, that soft power should be in accordance with power in ordinary use. If most of the content in Nye's "soft" aspect of power is more accurately described without resorting to use of the power-concept *at all*, then the soft-power concept is not in accordance with its ordinary use. Soft power's status as *power* also has relevance for the second and third criteria for evaluation: Regarding the *second* criterion, that soft power should be "consistent with surrounding concepts", the conceptual alternatives suggest that soft power is not "consistent with" as much as attempting to somehow *usurp* these surrounding concepts. The third criterion is similarly implicated by the suggestion that, that which soft power draws attention to is not *being* overlooked – it is just given different names.

So, some scholars have seen Nye's use of the power-concept as inaccurate because they conclude that they cannot identify where the "power" lies in soft power, and based on some of Nye's argumentation, this is an understandable position. His emphasis that U.S. policies are a source of soft power "when seen as legitimate" (Nye 2004: 11), and that they damage soft power when they're seen as arrogant (ibid: 67), for instance, is close to saying "popular politics give soft power while unpopular politics take it away", and borders on being tautological. Where is the "power"? If a country modifies its international behavior just to please or appease an international public, it can hardly be said that this is exercising power. Is it possible that the difference between soft power and

pandering, in the "there goes my public – I must follow, so I can lead them"-sense,[25] is found in the capacity to *persuade*?

5.2.1. Persuasion

Womack (2005) suggests that what soft power really comes down to is capacity for **persuasion:** "By definition, compliance without persuasion rests on hard power. The capacity to persuade is the difference between leadership and domination." writes Womack. If we accept this, then soft power is not "power" according to the power-analysis of chapter 3. Persuasion is "one actor convincing another actor to freely alter its beliefs, interests, or actions"; it is social causation that does not "shape the capacities of actors to determine their circumstances and fate" (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 42), and thus falls outside the definition of power. However, Womack is incorrect in asserting that "compliance without persuasion" cannot rest on soft power – in fact, it often does. When someone you admire asks you for a favor, for instance, persuasion is often unnecessary, because you *want* to please. Soft power makes persuasion easier, but soft power is not *reducible* to persuasion.

In addition, using persuasion to distinguish between "leadership and domination" is not as straightforward as Womack seems to think; it blinds you to the fact that the actors in question are often not on equal footing - that "many forms of persuasion – even many of which everybody approves – are really a kind of force" (Russell [1938] 1992: 183). That we do not need to equate "power" with "persuasion" to think of soft power as "power" is *also* easily demonstrated by considering the "dark matter" of timing: Popularity should not be mistaken for an end in itself, but describing the quest for popular approval as a way to render yourself powerless is to fundamentally misunderstand that you may have shaped the preferences of your fans in the first place. This is (presumably) the way in which Nye sees popularity as a measure for power, and the power you observe is a *structural* power.

5.2.2. Attraction

Nye does not describe soft power as a power of *persuasion*, but he frequently shorthands soft power as the power of **attraction.** Cooper (2004) and Knutsen (2007) both ask whether attraction is really a form of power, and this is a reasonable question. Attraction is in the eyes of the beholder, and being attractive does not logically entail *acts* to attract (Cooper 2004: 170). Nye emphasizes the strategies that states can adopt to consciously *use* their soft power, so when he lists attraction as behavior (table 4.2.), this should be understood as going beyond simply *being* attractive to *convincing others of* your attractiveness. The "behavior of attraction" is central to the confusion

25 This is essentially Carr's warning about the apotheosis of public opinion that was mentioned in chapter 3. (see p. 25)

around soft power's claim to power-status on the three dimensions of power, and will be discussed further in section 5.4.

When making the case that attraction is power, another essential question is: what, exactly, does attractiveness *do* for a country? Cooper (2004: 171) points out that it is not always a good thing to be attractive – admiration can lead to imitation, which, in turn can become competition. In other words, "getting others to want what you want" (Nye 1990: 31) is not necessarily in your best interest. Cooper is, however, interpreting Nye rather disingenuously here. In light of Nye's full presentation of soft power as a *wieldable* "power of attraction", Nye's intended meaning for soft power is *getting others to want what you want them to want (!),* or "getting others to want the *outcomes* you want" (e.g. Nye 2004: 5; 111). As for what attractiveness *does* for a country, Nye's perfectly reasonable claim is that being attractive produces cooperation without any explicit threats or exchange taking place (ibid: 7). Furthermore, Nye explicitly links *power* to intentionality and action, so *soft* power is not merely "leading by example" (though that is certainly a part of it), which is *influence*, but not necessarily power.

5.2.3. Influence

Knutsen (2007) suggests that because of its unclear relationship to power, attraction should rather be sorted under the term of **influence**, which should stand on its own, distinct conceptual feet. In other words, he suggests that rather than speaking of the "power of attraction", we should speak of an "influence of attraction." This leads to a puzzle: where is line between influence and power? *Is there* a line between "influence" and "power"? Dahl (1957: 201) listed influence as a "subtly different" *synonym* to power. Like Knutsen (2007), I understand the concept of influence as *distinct* from the power-concept. Using influence and power synonymously renders the power-concept too close to causality – and Barnett and Duvall pointed out how this is misleading in chapter 3 (see p. 31). While influence is not always power, power will always mean influence in some form; because power is defined as the "production of effects", power is *by definition* influence. Influence is *power* when it satisfies Barnett and Duvall's power definition; "the production, in and through social relations, of effects that shape the capacities of actors to determine their circumstances and fate". The question of when to classify influence as "power" creates a tension between "power" and "soft power" that is substantially related to the differences between power-concepts on the structure/ agency dimension, as we will see in section 5.4.

5.2.4. Legitimacy

Cooper (2004) nominates **legitimacy** as a rival concept to soft power, and seems to be of the

opinion that the soft-power concept is close enough to the concept of legitimacy to be superfluous. Legitimacy can be briefly defined as "the normative belief by an actor that a rule or institution ought to be obeyed" (Hurd 1999: 381). Cooper asserts that "if soft power sometimes seems to be a complicated, many-sided, and elusive concept, that may be because legitimacy, which lies at its heart, is also a complex and elusive concept." (Cooper 2004: 173).

Cooper's point about soft power's elusiveness is well made, of course, but the claim that this is due to the concept's similarity to legitimacy is inaccurate – "power" is complex and elusive enough to account for soft power's elusiveness without adding the complexities of "legitimacy". Legitimacy is an invaluable power resource on the soft side of the scale, but it is certainly possible to conceive of soft power that is illegitimate, or where legitimacy is just irrelevant. The *pull* that American universities have in attracting foreign students, for instance, probably has more to do with prestige, future income, and other factors than with students' ideas of who "ought to be obeyed". Yet Nye refers to this attraction as an important source of soft power because the students that are attracted to U.S. universities for whatever reason "usually return home with a greater appreciation of American values and institutions" (Nye 2004: 45). Nye cites a report from the Association of International Educators that describes such students as "a remarkable reservoir of goodwill", and points out that many such students wind up in positions where they can affect policy outcomes that are important to the U.S. (ibid).

Legitimacy and soft power also have a significant "chafing point": Nye argues that soft power should be included in the development of strategies that are used to alter the behavior of others, and herein lies a paradox – soft power may have a core of legitimacy, in that the aim is to change *what others judge to be right*, but whether this legitimacy is achieved by shrewd manipulation or by some actual *justness* is irrelevant for the result. What matters is that the wielder of soft power is not *seen* to be hypocritical, as "perceived hypocrisy is particularly corrosive of power that is based on proclaimed values" (ibid: 55).[26] Because soft power is described in instrumental terms, the only way in which legitimacy and soft power can be near synonyms is if you modify the concept of legitimacy to mean *popular* legitimacy, and say that the very fact that something is popular legitimizes it – which is, in turn, just true by definition. To the degree that legitimacy is a form of power it is certainly power of the soft, *third* kind in a tripartite understanding of power,[27] but rather than being soft power's conceptual "heart", legitimacy is only *one aspect* of soft power. The "power of attraction" is not the same thing as the "power of legitimacy" – yet

26 This is Russell's observation about how traditional power breaks down when it steps out of line; see p. 25.
27 Incidentally, Ian Hurd (1999, 2007) uses a tripartite power-concept where he calls the three influences coercion, self-interest, and the power of legitimacy. Hurd advocates using "legitimacy" much in the same way that Nye uses soft power. A focused comparison of the concepts soft power and legitimacy could be very cool!

attraction and legitimacy are both powerful intangibles in social relationships; "soft" aspects of power. Legitimacy (or at least *perceived* legitimacy) is an important soft-power *resource*, and other soft-power resources, such as political values, can be sources of legitimacy.

5.2.5. Soft, *and* power

When Nye describes soft power, is he really just describing "the capacity to persuade others of your attractiveness"? Can we discard "soft power" in favor of something like "the influence of popular legitimacy"? My answer is no – the objections to soft power addressed in chapter 5.2. are not conclusive. It is interesting that these writers, in their efforts to boil soft power down to its essence, have come up with different approaches, none of which can be collapsed satisfactorily into soft power. Defining power narrowly as (physical) coercion is the only way to get around its elusiveness, and doing so means rendering the concept unrecognizable.

The essence of soft power *is* "power", and taking soft power seriously as a concept requires taking the "power" of it seriously. The ambition of soft power was never to *replace* the more specific concepts which are used to describe "nonmaterial-influence powers" – only to make it clear that there is *power* in legitimacy and attraction and the capacity to persuade. Nye wants to speak of "the soft power of attraction", or "the soft power of legitimacy", and none of the above objections demerit such a conceptualization. This does not mean that the soft-power concept is unproblematic. These objections against soft power clearly demonstrate that this psychological attraction-element of power is hard to pin down, and that the reason why soft power is so contested is Nye's (noble) ambition to develop a concept which covers just this problematic element.

5.3. Soft power and the three dimensions of power

Section 5.3. compares soft power to power on the structure/agency- (5.3.1.), resources/behavior- (5.3.2.), and dark-matter dimensions (5.3.3.), based the work done in chapters 3 and 4. In the story so far, the three dimensions of power have shown themselves to be relevant for accessing the problematic aspects of soft power – like how soft power is *structural* power that can be *wielded* – which requires *agency.* Other examples of the dimensions being central to gaining insight into the soft-power concept include how soft-power resources are structurally determined, and how soft-power behavior hinges on perspective.

The three dimensions have something to contribute to the evaluation of soft power on each of the three first criteria for my conceptual analysis. First and foremost, however, this section is directed towards the *first* criterion, regarding soft power's accordance with the ordinary use of power. Section 5.3. has the main task of assessing whether Nye uses the dimensions of power in a

way that accords with the way in which they are ordinarily used.

5.3.1. Soft power and the structure/agency dimension

To match the structure of chapter 5 to chapter 3, this exploration of the structure/agency dimension of soft power opens with a discussion of the relationship between soft power and the structural power-concept of *hegemony*. The topic also indirectly overlaps with the previous section, as the hegemony-concept, too, can be described as one of soft power's "surrounding concepts". Furthermore, this structure allows me to examine soft power's relationship to the structure/agency dimension of power in connection with soft power's kinship with hegemony: In chapter 3, I used the concept of hegemonic power to explain to the notion of *structural* power-concepts, and soft power *is* a structural power-concept, as I will come back to later in the section.

There is a parallel of focus to the hegemony- and soft-power concepts.[28] With soft power, Nye focuses on the psychological aspect of power – and on culture and values as central components of this aspect. Theories of hegemonic power see the power that shapes our perceptions of ourselves as the ultimate in hegemonic power preponderance – and it is "the supreme exercise of power to get another or others to have the desires you want them to have ... to secure their compliance by controlling their thoughts and desires" (Lukes 1974: 23). This is *very* similar to Nye's language of getting others to want what you want them to want.

In *Bound to Lead* (1990), Nye mentions (Cox' use of[29]) Gramsci immediately after he has introduced "soft power":

> Following the insights of the Italian thinker Antonio Gramsci, Cox argues that the most critical feature for a dominant country is to obtain a broad measure of consent on general principles – principles that ensure the supremacy of the leading state and dominant social classes – and at the same time to offer some prospect of satisfaction to the less powerful. (…) although we may not agree with his terminology or dates, Cox has touched a major point: soft co-optive power is just as important as hard command power. If a state can make its power legitimate in the eyes of others, it will encounter less resistance to its wishes. If its culture and ideology are attractive, others will willingly follow. (…) These soft sources of power are becoming more important in world politics today. (Nye 1990: 32-33)

The parallel between soft power and hegemony is of limited scope, however. Though the quote suggests that Nye envisioned his soft power as an update of Gramsci, soft power must be kept distinct from hegemonic power. In *Soft Power* (2004), Nye does not talk about hegemony (or Gramsci) beyond noting that it is today possible to talk of *American* hegemony "only in a narrow, military sense" (Nye 2004: 4). In addition, while hegemonic power is absolute structural

28 . . .which is a bit of a paradox, as psychology is concerned with the *individual*, whereas hegemony theorists focus on how power is a *structural* (and collective) phenomenon.
29 Nye credits Robert W. Cox (1987) *Production, Power, and World Order* New York, NY: Columbia University Press

dominance, Nye uses the soft-power concept to describe a set of tools available to *all* nations, regardless of their structural power-positions. Knutsen (2007) sees hegemony and soft power as *rival* concepts, and writes that it seems like "Nye has noted Gramsci's Marxist point, and recreated it by way of his own, liberal logic". Knutsen puts the difference down to epistemology – that soft power is naturalist, while the hegemony-concept is constructivist (ibid). I return to this issue in 5.4.3. The topic at hand is soft power as *structural* – and note, *not* hegemonic – power.

In the first chapter of *Soft Power* (2004), Nye explains the *need* for the soft-power concept with the assertion that those who do not pay attention to "structural" power tend to dismiss the soft aspects of power: "The skeptics who want to define power only as deliberate acts of command and control are ignoring the second, or "structural", face of power – the *ability to get the outcomes you want* without having to force people to change their behavior through threats or payments" (Nye 2004: 15, emphasis added). At the same time, Nye has a strong focus on strategy and behavior, which tells us that he wants us to think of soft power in terms of *agency*. Notice how Nye describes his version of Bachrach and Baratz's "structural face" of power as an *ability.* The formulation communicates that soft power is *not* just another word for structural power. Soft power "rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others" (Nye 2004: 5), which is something that you *do*, requiring agency. Again, we see the tension between soft power as a structural phenomenon and the intentional *wielding* of soft power.

Coherently uniting its structural- and agency elements is soft power's primary challenge as a power-concept. The problem is present in the scholarship that Nye works from as well – albeit in a latent form: Nye's soft-power concept can be said to grow out of the argument between Dahl and Bachrach and Baratz regarding the concept of power (chapter 3, p. 31). The essence of the disagreement was that Dahl asserted that power relations were knowable if and only if there was an observable and traceable connection between A and B (Dahl 1957: 204), and Bachrach and Baratz held that this was too narrow – because "we cannot be certain that the 'unmeasurable elements' are not of decisive importance" (Bachrach and Baratz 1962: 948). Bachrach and Baratz's central point, and the one from which Nye has developed soft power, is that a*gents always operate within structures that may be constraining or conducive to their goals.* **Nye builds on this insight to effectively talk about Bachrach and Baratz' *second face* of power using Dahl's *first face* (agency) terminology.** Accordingly, Nye treats the structures that make up power's second face as malleable, wieldable resources (discussed further in 5.4.2). In making structurally-determined advantages like attractiveness and believability accessible for strategic use, Nye aims for the type of simplicity that lies in understanding power as agency power á la Dahl. Nye's move causes problems, however, for the accordance between soft power and the structure/agency dimension of power

because whereas agency-concepts of power define the exercise of power in terms of making someone do something that they *would not otherwise have done*, to exercise *soft* power is to shape other actors without *compelling* them; "affecting behavior without commanding it" (Nye: 2004: 2).

Bachrach and Baratz (1963) effectively side-step this problem. Bachrach and Baratz are reluctant to describe the *use* of structural advantage in terms of "wielding power". Instead, they suggest an analytical framework to distinguish between instances of *power* –which requires (i) a conflict of interests, (ii) that B bows to A's wishes and (iii) that A can, in fact, threaten to invoke some sanction against B (Bachrach and Baratz 1963: 633) – and instances that are better described by related concepts: *influence*, *authority*, *manipulation*, and *force* (ibid: 640). In other words, to Bachrach and Baratz, *wielding* the "second face" of power cannot be described as wielding *power*.

This difference between Nye and Bachrach and Baratz has a parallel in section 5.2: My assertion that "the question of when to classify influence as 'power' creates a tension between 'power' and 'soft power' that is substantially related to the differences between power-concepts on the structure/agency dimension" (p. 68) concerns precisely this tension, which manifests itself whenever we try to take *structural* power seriously while at the same time treating power as a causal force wielded by *agents*. In 5.2. I concluded that none of those alternatives could be collapsed satisfactorily into soft power – but what does this mean for Nye's accordance with the ordinary use of power?

The fact that it is difficult to combine the structural- and agency perspectives on soft power does not necessarily mean that you have to *choose one* – like power, soft power has (at least) two faces. In chapter 3, it took Barnett and Duvall (2005) and their *taxonomy of power* to unite the structural- and agency perspectives under a common definition of power. To illustrate where the soft-power concept fits on the *taxonomy*'s structure/agency dimension, I have placed soft power on the continuum of power that was developed in chapter 3:

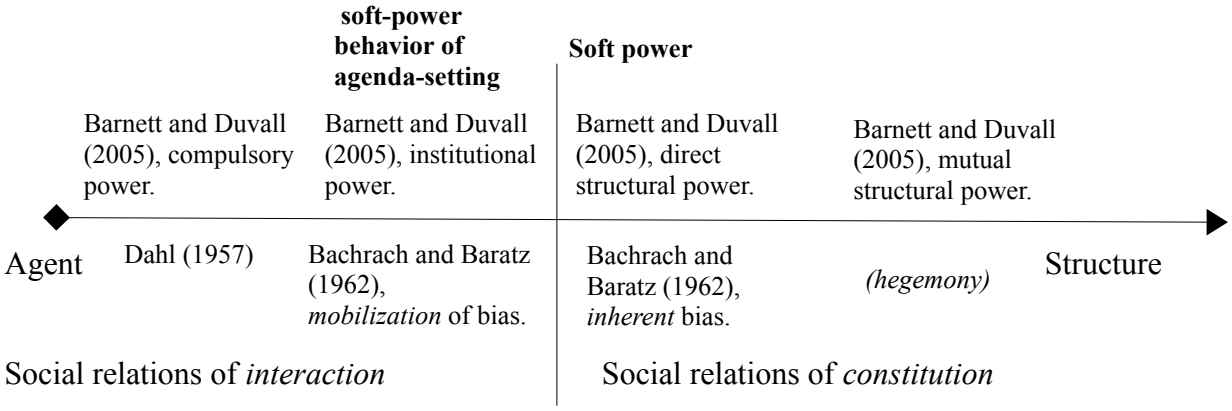


Fig. 5.3.1. Soft power on the structure/agency dimension of *power*

Barnett and Duvall's taxonomy can be used to disentangle the *structural* concept of "soft power" from the agency-perspective that underlies Nye's pervasive language of *wielding* soft power. Here, we can distinguish between soft power as a structural- and an agency power-concept: soft power can be categorized as power through social relations of *constitution, and* through social relations of *interaction*.

As a structural power, that is, when soft power works through **social relations of *constitution***, soft power is a reality that does not have to be used consciously by agents; it's just *there.* Structural power as *inherent* bias is the power of existing structures of norms and rules that limit the perceived options of others to outcomes that are in line with your wants. Soft power as structural power works through *direct* social relations of constitution: others want the same outcomes that you want because they genuinely perceive your interests to be *their* interests, too.

Soft power is *direct* structural power. Here we see how the difference between soft power and hegemonic power as structural power-concepts is the difference indicated by Barnett and Duvall between the *direct* and *mutual* structural powers (p. 34) – unlike hegemonic power, the soft-power concept does not refer to power that is *mutually constituting the actors themselves*.

Agency concepts of power concern power that works through **social relations of *interaction.*** Soft power as agency power belongs to the category of power-concepts that Barnett and Duvall call *institutional power*. As the figure indicates, soft power can be wielded by agents through the *mobilization of bias* – that is, by agents' *conscious* manipulation of *inherent* bias to advantageously affect outcomes. The soft-power behavior of agenda-setting, while far from the only form of "soft-power behavior", is therefore that rare thing, an uncontroversial example of the second face of power *working through* social relations of interaction. Under certain given circumstances, it is possible to "wield soft power" in a *compulsory* way. A suicide bomber who believes in the justness of the cause, for instance, may be *compelled* to act when given the order to do so – but his is precisely the sort of scenario in which Bachrach and Baratz would reject the use of the word "power" favor of a related concept, e.g. "authority". In the theater of international relations, moreover, soft power is by definition not compulsory.

In summary the taxonomy of power tells us that it is possible to reconcile soft power with the power's structure/agency dimension by saying that soft power is compatible with power defined both as acts of wielding power in social relations, and as power that works through social relations. The match is awkward, however – and recognizing this difficulty sets the stage for the difficulties that show up on soft power's resources/behavior dimension*:* While the *base* of soft power is constitutive, structural power, Nye focuses on the *act of influencing* as a way to distinguish between what is power and what is not. He seems to be aiming to turn what is essentially a structural power-

concept into agent power by focusing on soft-power *behavior*.

5.3.2. Soft power and the resources/behavior dimension

I open my analysis of the resources/behavior dimension of soft power with the tripartite tradition of power-concepts which, as an *agency* -approach to power, is primarily concerned with the resources and behaviors of power.

By organizing power into the three elements hard, economic, and soft, Nye is writing himself into the **tripartite tradition of power-concepts**. Tripartite approaches have in common a desire to move beyond the strictly hard, measurable power-concept, and into a system of knowledge where the "paradox of unrealized power" may be avoided. In the tripartite tradition, power is understood as actors wielding military, economic, and/or soft power resources to make someone else do what they would not otherwise have done, through military, economic, and/or societal interaction. For the most part, Nye's power trilogy (military, economic, and soft) fits in comfortably with these traditional tripartite descriptions. There are still a few points to be made regarding the relationship between soft power and the other "third forms" of influence mentioned in chapter 3 (p. 24); normative power (Knutsen 1999), what I call "propaganda power" (Carr [1939] 2001), and "propaganda in its *broadest* sense; power over opinion" (Russell [1938] 1992).

Knutsen (2007) uses soft power as another word for *normative power*. I do not agree entirely with this – Nye's soft power is very similar to, but not equivalent of, the normative power that is so central to hegemonic power. Nye (2004: 10) refers to Norway as a country with considerable soft power, for instance. As soft power does not depend on hard-power strength, you can achieve soft power independently of hard power, from your "moral authority as a good citizen" (ibid). Knutsen's *normative power*, on the other hand, is a concept that is connected with the power to *establish* the norms (Knutsen 1999: 49) and with "a shared understanding among the decision-making élite about the ordering rules of society" (ibid: 61). The distinction is not that clear, however, as normative power, too, can be "tapped into" by weaker states, and used to challenge a hegemon (ibid: 281). The *main* difference between soft power and normative power seems to be epistemological: Normative power is presented in constructivist terms that are explicitly historicist and contextualized, and soft power is presented in naturalist terms.

Carr's *propaganda power* is quite different from soft power – although Nye himself refers to it (Nye 2004: 8). Carr's third power is limited to the very important, but ultimately *material,* resource of propaganda. Furthermore, there is the central difference between the two approaches to intangible power that matches the difference between Carr and Russell: Carr emphasizes that propaganda power is indivisible from the other kinds of power, but this is not the case for the soft-

power concept: Soft power *can* create movement on its own (Nye 2004: 9).

Russell's *power over opinion* (from *Power. A New Social Analysis* (Russell [1938] 1992)) seems to be echoed by Nye in important ways. The similarity in the two concepts is seen in the way in which "power over opinion", like soft power, is used to describe the force behind the consent on which both *traditional* and *newly acquired* power rest (see p. 25). In addition, Russell, like Nye, is careful to emphasize the dangers of behaving in ways that *undermine* this power. Consider too Russell's point that

> It is easy to make out a case for the view that opinion is omnipotent, and that all other forms of power are derived from it (...) but this would be only a half-truth, since it *ignores the forces which cause opinion*. While it is true that opinion is an essential element in military force, it is equally true that military force may generate opinion. (Russell [1938] 1992: 93, emphasis added)

The same point is made by Nye, both specifically, in statements about a how the military can be a source of admiration (e.g. Nye 2004: 116), and more generally, in that soft power is really Nye's way of telling us not to ignore "the forces which cause opinion". Russell also asks "To what extent is a uniform creed, whether spontaneous or imposed by authority, a source of power? And to what extent, on the other hand, is freedom of thought a source of power?" (Russell [1938] 1992: 101) – a good match for Nye's observation that having viable protest movements can generate soft power for a state, even though it is the state they are protesting against (p. 65).

Though the tripartite tradition of power is rightly thought of as an agency-tradition, the structure within which the agents operate is an essential part of it. As the difference between hegemony and soft power as structural power parallels the difference between Barnett and Duvall's *direct*- and *mutual structural* power, the difference between the (structural) power that is the source of the tripartite-tradition's *third* type of influence and *hegemonic* power can be understood as the difference between *direct structural* (tripartite) power and *mutual structural* (hegemonic) power. Barnett and Duvall's decision to place the two types of "social relations of constitution" in *one* category for "structural power" in their taxonomy is a good illustration of the close relationship between hegemonic power and the structural element of tripartite power.

I move on to a detailed examination of the relationship between soft-power resources- and behaviors and the resources/behavior dimension of *power*. Nye generalizes soft-power resources as "values, culture, policies, and institutions" (see table 4.1., p. 49) and provides specific examples such as c*redibility*, *religion, high life expectancy, tourism, music sales and Nobel Prizes* (Nye 2004: 106, 49, 76-77). Table 4.1. lists soft-power "behaviors" as attraction and agenda setting. Some sources of soft power are fairly concrete, such as being a significant contributor of foreign aid (ibid: 61), but *wielding* soft power is another matter. "Soft-power resources are slower, more diffuse, and

more cumbersome to wield than hard-power resources" (ibid: 100), and "whether soft power produces behavior that we want will depend on the context and the skills with which the resources are converted into outcomes" (Nye 2006).

Nye *never strays from emphasizing the context-awareness and skill* involved in "wielding intangible resources". Nevertheless, the statement illustrates a weakness of soft power as an analytical concept. The successful wielding of soft power resources – *by definition* – depends on skill. As part of an analytical power concept, and certainly one within a naturalist epistemology, "skill" becomes something of an emergency exit. Baldwin warned of this; "Emphasis on skill and will in conversion processes [from resources to outcomes] makes it all too easy for the power analyst to avoid facing up to his mistake" (Baldwin 1979: 170). "Skills" hides the fact that the link between behavior and outcome is ultimately unobservable. This causes problems for those who try to work empirically with soft power, as we get into in chapter 6. Relatedly, Nye's repeated (and certainly true) argument that the effectiveness of hard power is *also* context dependent does not ameliorate the confusion inherent in the language of *wielding* soft power. Central on Nye's agenda is his criticism of a power-concept that focuses on hard power to such a degree that soft power is overlooked or underestimated. This explains his choice to use a terminology of resources and behaviors, but it does not solve the problem. In contrast to the tangible resources that are needed for hard-power behavior, context decides not only whether or not you can *use* soft power resources, but whether or not they *are* soft-power resources.

The significant difference between the context dependence of hard power and the context dependence of soft power is that while hard power *involves* concrete and tangible resources that are wielded in different contexts with more or less "skill and will", soft-power resources are *contingent* on context, skill, and will. On the resources/behavior dimension, this contingency of soft-power resources may be a serious challenge to soft power as a concept that is *in accordance with the ordinary use of power.* The contingency also brings to mind another important topic for understanding soft power's resources/behavior dimension:

Soft power by *perspective*: "wielding structural power." Whatever else can be said about the ordinary use of power, the intentional act of (successfully) *wielding* power over someone is at the very least to achieve an intended change in them. Being on the receiving end of this wielded power is a different thing.

Recall this table from chapter 3:

From A's perspective, A has power over B if:	A acts with the intention to influence B *(behavior)*	+ A has the ability to influence B (*resources*)	+ the outcome, the effect of A's influence on B, is the one desired by A

From B's perspective, A has power over B if	A has influence over B (intentional or unintentional)	+ A's influence over B leads to an outcome that is *not* desired by B

Table 5.3.2. Power from split perspectives

The table illustrates how the resources/behavior dimension of power is not necessarily objectively observable. From A's perspective, getting your way is what matters– whether or not B approves is less relevant, and ultimately unknowable. B, on the other hand, will not consider itself to be under the power of A if B already *wants* to do what A wants it to do. The implication is that *soft power seems to only exist from A's perspective*: If B does not perceive A's behavior as exercising power unless it leads to an outcome *not* desired by B, then A's exercising of "co-optive" power by influencing just *what outcome B wants* falls outside of the power relation as perceived by B. This is frequently the case with "soft-power policies". Students from country B participating in an exchange program that was initiated by country A for the purpose of influencing Bs future leaders, for instance, would typically not be *compelled* to do so, and would not see A as exercising power over them. On the other hand, there is a good chance that attracting students "builds structural power" for A, which is *why* country A is intentionally wielding its resources to achieve a desired change in country B's perceptions. This is a typical example of "wielding soft power" (Nye (2004: 45-46) uses American student exchange programs with the USSR as an example), and it is easy to see why some struggle with the application of the word *power*. Such a scenario can definitely not be understood as power if one uses Dahl's criteria for what power is. It *can* be understood as *structural* power, though – the idea that this scenario *creates* power fits Barnett and Duvall's description of power that "works though" social relations of constitution.

Chapter 3 also described the interplay between structures and agents as so complex that even if A is exercising agent power, B can experience it as structural power (see p. 39). Just *how* agents can and do intentionally wield their "structural resources" is still problematic, however. Soft-power behavior typically means to consciously tap into your structural advantage, and use it as a foreign policy tool. "Attraction" is designated as "behavior" to cover the intangible – and to power holders unavailable – behaviors that make up the resources of culture and values. A's intentional soft-power behavior works best when B does not recognize it as power. In fact, the "intentional use" of soft power can be described as "manipulation", which can undermine its goal, and cancel out its effect;

as Nye puts it, "no county likes to feel manipulated, even by soft power" (Nye 2004: 25). Obvious attempts at intentional soft-power wielding risk being dismissed as "propaganda", and such soft-power *behaviors* can themselves undermine *established* (structural) soft power.

On the soft-power behavior of "exerting attraction": Nye's choice to describe power that works through structure in the resources/behavior terminology associated with *agency* carries the cost of making soft power's accordance with the ordinary use of power questionable. Turning structural constraints and opportunities into a question of *ability* is confusing. The fact that Nye describes *structural power* as an ability is what allows him to speak of the "ability to attract" (ibid: 6), or the "ability to be believed" (ibid: 31). However, these "abilities" (unlike, say, the ability to count to ten or the ability to hold a rifle) cannot be understood as traits of the actor wielding power. Whether or not you are attractive is ultimately down to the judgment of the people you want to attract, as is an "ability to be believed."

For soft power, the resources/behavior dimension remains elusive. How Nye envisions the crucial conversion processes from the power resources of values, culture, policies, and institutions through the behaviors of attraction and agenda setting to the desired result is not immediately understandable. For instance, Nye accuses critics who see no power in popular culture of "confusing the cultural resources with the behavior of attraction" **(**Nye 2004: 11). The problem is that while attraction is influence, and often *powerful* influence, there is not necessarily an *act* of influencing involved. If the soft-power concept is to be used to describe power *behavior*, then merely being attractive is not enough. As was also pointed out before, attractiveness can have consequences like unwanted imitation. Nye (2004: 15) is aware of this, but replies that "exerting attraction on others often does allow you to get what you want" (ibid). Nevertheless, if it makes sense to speak of soft-power behavior, there must also be identifiable *acts of wielding* soft power.

Nye does not *embellish* on soft power's relationship to the structure-agency dimension. Nye's categories of soft-power resources and soft-power behaviors hinge on the concepts of structure and agency, and the lack of a clear distinction between soft power as *structural circumstances* and soft power that is wielded by *agents* is mirrored in the confusion around what constitutes soft-power resources and behaviors. There is an inherent chicken-and-egg-dialectic between soft power and the concept of soft-power resources: Values, culture, policies, and institutions *can* be used to exert power, but this is not their main purpose, and their utility as soft-power resources depends entirely on context and audience. Economic and military resources can *also* be resources of the "third", soft power. *Can intentions, perspective, timing, and epistemology sort it all out?*

5.3.3. Soft power and the dark-matter dimension

I will argue in this section that the *main* difficulties with relating soft power to "power" on the two first dimensions concern topics that I have categorized as the dark matter of power.

I begin with soft power and the dark matter of **intentions.** The "power" of soft power *may or may not* be defined by the intentions of a "soft-power wielder": Soft power is partly an unintentional side-effect of policy, and in that sense, "practicing what you preach" might be seen as "*unintentional* wielding" of soft power. Soft power *also*, however, involves the step of going beyond simply being attractive to convincing others of your attractiveness – which is how we may think of the *intentional* wielding of soft power. This is a subject on which Nye's soft-power concept can seem contradictory – A's *intentional* soft-power behavior works best when B does not recognize it as power (" no country likes to feel manipulated"), and "soft-power behavior" is mainly public diplomacy, which has an *expressed purpose* of influencing others.

Soft power hinges crucially on the dark matter of **perspective** in many ways. The most obvious way was discussed in the previous section; resources and behaviors of soft power are largely *defined* as resources and behaviors of soft power by how they are received. Perspective is also the central "dark matter" of the divergence between Nye's soft-power concept and Bachrach and Baratz' conceptualization of structural power from which soft power was developed: In agency terms, Bachrach and Baratz ultimately distinguish between whether or not A has wielded power based on the psychological mechanism by which B complies. Even if compliance is *sought* by exercising power, write Bachrach and Baratz (1963: 640), "we believe, in fact, that in some situations the behavior of decision-makers and their subjects alike can be explained partially or entirely in terms of force, influence, or authority". Nye would explain such situations in terms of soft power. To him, attraction and co-option are soft *power* in the sense that changing actors' preferences or their intentions changes their *actions* – whereby you achieve your desired foreign policy outcomes (e.g. Nye 2004: 15, 34, 56). What Nye does differently from Bachrach and Baratz is to talk about their (structural) "second face" of power using "first face" (agency) terminology: Nye defines soft-power behavior from the result rather than from how the influence is experienced, and focusing on the perspective of the wielder allows him to side-step the problem of determining where the *power* in the relationship is located. The dark matter of perspective becomes a buffer between *having* and *wielding* soft power.

"Wielding soft power" is a way to capture the idea that the strategic use of a structural advantage is a type of power-behavior. Whether soft power is "wieldable" or merely something you *are* has implications for practical policy. If you can *be* a soft power but not *wield* soft power, then the question of soft-power strategy becomes a question of how you should *be*. That it is necessary to

practice what you preach is a big part of Nye's message to policymakers: "Political values like democracy and human rights can be powerful sources of attraction, [...but...] perceived hypocrisy is particularly corrosive of power that is based on proclaimed values" (Nye 2004: 55). As soft power when *wielded* is mainly an instrument for achieving desired outcomes, there is a tension *within* soft power, between "being a good citizen" and being "manipulatively Machiavellian".

My next topic is the relationship between soft power and the dark matter of **timing**. Soft power is structural power. If structural power is embodied past action (see p. 48) then laying the foundations for future soft power is *one* way of wielding soft power. Taking time into account in this way draws attention once again to the similarities between Nye and Russell. Russell was *explicit* in his emphasis on timing: he differentiated between a "power over opinion" which has at its disposal the "sanction of immemorial custom", and the "first steps in the production of a wide-spread opinion, [which] must be taken by means of persuasion alone" (Russell [1938] 1992: 93). The dark matter of timing is *implicitly* central to Nye as well: *Soft Power* notes that hard power can be used to establish institutions that later become regarded as legitimate (Nye 2004: 7), and that soft-power behavior sometimes "takes years to produce the desired outcomes" (ibid: 99). This leads him to argue also that the negative effects of the 2003 Iraq war on U.S. soft power should not be exaggerated (ibid: 43) – because soft power is a long-term factor in international relations, and not merely a question of ephemeral popularity. To be able to wield structural power you must first *establish* structural power – which is arguably a type of wielding in itself – and then you can use this power on a case-by-case basis. Understanding this is essential for understanding how soft power is *power.*

The dark matter of timing provides a partial explanation of why it is so difficult to adapt soft power to the resources/behavior dimension of power: *Soft-power behavior* depends on structural factors such as a receptive audience or a strong position in international institutions – that is to say, embodied past action. This is problematic, because the resources/behavior dimension of power concerns the moment of *action,* at which A is going to influence B. Power as "resources and behavior" does not account for power which was *exercised in the past.*[30]

The final post on this examination of soft power's dark-matter dimension is the dark matter of **epistemology.** At first glance, the epistemological foundations of soft power are naturalist. The soft-power concept is about what power *is*, and about how power *works*, and Nye does not delve into an

30 In a sense, there is also room for objecting to Nye's assertion that soft power does not depend on hard power in the "dark matter" of timing: Nye's first example of soft power that does not depend on hard power, for instance, is the Vatican (Nye 2004: 9), and while it may be true that the Pope has no legions, there is certainly hard power in the Catholic Church's past. This is related to the "gleam on the sword"-objection to soft power: What if soft power is merely the gleam on a sword that was used *before*? And yet, how do you know that there was not *first* a power of *attraction* to a religious idea? Co-optive power is not so easily reducible.

analysis of *how* or *why* the established social and political systems within which power is so essential a phenomenon have come about. This means that soft power is *not* a constructivist approach to power (chapter 2). Furthermore, Nye writes with an expressed focus on identifying mechanisms of soft power, placing him in the *legislative* – as opposed to the poststructuralist – "epistemological strand" (chapter 3). While Nye is clear that the soft-power concept is developed from the structural face of Bachrach and Baratz rather than the narrow, compulsory power of Dahl, the power-concept behind soft power is anchored in that behavioral power-definition and presented as its logical extension: "Power" is A's ability to make B do what B would not otherwise have done, and "soft power" is power in the sense that "A makes B want what B would not otherwise have wanted".

Relating soft power to **the different logics of Hobbes and Machiavelli** illustrates why this aspect of power eludes confinement by naturalist methods: Soft power is a very "real" element of power, but it can only be *used* by taking an interpretive, "strategically Machiavellian" approach to power – by understanding both the "rules of the game" and how the rules may be changing (Nye 2004: 4). If we think of the "Hobbesian way" as focusing on what power *is*, and the "Machiavellian way" as focusing on what power *does*, it is the latter that is closer to Nye's. Soft power is a contingent and interpretive power-concept.[31]

By using the "mechanistic" language of naturalism on the intangible (and *intersubjectively reified*) aspects of power, Nye is "legislating on the interpretive nature of power". The ambition is to provide us with a wieldable, agency concept of soft power, but the problem with soft power from a naturalist perspective – that there *is* no identifiable mechanism by which A *makes* B act according to their wishes – remains unresolved. The subject matter is still intangible. **Soft-power resources and -behaviors have become "categories without boundaries" because the Machiavellian logic behind *using* soft power clashes with the Hobbesian ambition to legislate what soft power *is*.**

This clash is with power in "ordinary use", however. Tripartite approaches to power *all* endeavor to move beyond a strictly, measurable (hard) power-concept, and they *typically* do this by describing the intangible, and ultimately psychological definitional trait of power in terms of intangible resources that are analogous to tangible ones. Indeed, in chapter 1 I turned to *Hobbes* for a description of the power "resources" that are contingent on their audience:

31 This (somewhat paradoxically) places soft power *closer* to a "poststructuralist flux" than the epistemologically *constructivist* hegemony-concept: Hegemony takes the search for a *core* of power to its ultimate consequence of a *colonization of the mind.* In a sort of "Machiavellian unwillingness to anchor power", Nye's naturalist, agency focused approach describes power over the body, power over the purse, and power over opinion as deriving from three resource bases that are separate, but real – and *not* reducible to either material strength alone or a combination of material strength and the way "the system" colonizes our minds.

> What quality soever maketh a man beloved or feared of many, or the reputation of such quality, is power; because it is a means to have the assistance and service of many." (Hobbes ([1651] 1996: 58).

5.4. Conclusions on the first three criteria for evaluation of soft power

This section concludes the conceptual analysis of the first three criteria. To be a "theoretically useful" concept, the soft-power concept should not stray radically from "power", as the latter is understood in ordinary use. Soft power should also be consistent with surrounding concepts, and it should draw attention to something which might otherwise easily be overlooked.

On the first criterion, *accordance with the ordinary use of "power"*, I conclude that soft power *is* in accordance with the ordinary use of power – because the "ordinary use" of power is very wide. On the second criterion, *consistency with surrounding concepts,* the conclusion is that soft power's consistency with surrounding concept is imperfect, but not seriously flawed. On the third criterion, I conclude that it is the great *strength* of soft power that it draws attention to something – an aspect of *power* – which is otherwise easily overlooked. The overall conclusion is that in my judgment, soft power's value on the *third* criterion outweighs its shortcomings on the *first* and *second* criteria.

5.4.1. Is soft power in accordance with ordinary use of "power"?

> *Conclusion: A qualified yes. Soft power is in accordance with ordinary use of power – because "ordinary use" of power is a widely inclusive category.*

Soft power *is* in accordance with the ordinary use of power, because the "ordinary use" of power is a very "inclusive" category. That Nye is difficult to put into the boxes of the conceptual analysis of power makes him not so different from his predecessors. ***Reduction*** is a keyword here: can we reduce "power" to *hard* power? The answer is clearly *no* – and people who prefer hard-power parameters *also* realize this (cf. Ferguson's (2003) assertion that "faith can move people").

The relationship between soft power and power is not unproblematic, however. Following Baldwin (1980), I limited the analysis of "power" by using Nye as the "principle authority". But even on his own terms, Nye leaves room for discussion about soft power's accordance with power by defining "power" as *changing outcomes*, and "soft power" as *changing preferences*. In approaching intangible power from a naturalist perspective, Nye *does* seem to be changing the meaning of "power" in his "soft power" by using the power-concept to describe social relations of interaction that are not *observable* as power-relations. Because power is such a complex concept, my first step in assessing soft power's accordance with the ordinary use of power needed to be a

thorough analysis – not just a brief definition – of power and soft power. I organized my comparison of the concepts along three dimensions, and got the following conclusions:

On the **structure/agency dimension,** "power in ordinary use" contains both structural and agency power – but *taking structural power seriously while defining agency power coherently seems to be an insurmountable problem for anyone looking for a naturalist, behavioral concept of power.* The soft-power concept comes up against this problem from the start: The point to having a structural dimension when your focus is agency power is that "agents always operate within structures that may be constraining or conducive to their goals" (p. 44). Soft power is "structural power", and at the same time, soft power is something that you *wield*; we have no conceptual "boundaries" for soft power that map onto the structure/agency dimension of power.

Bachrach and Baratz *evaded* this problem. They argued that power's structural face should be taken into account as "power", but made no attempt at making it "wieldable". Instead, they defined the *wielding* of power in a way that resembled Dahl's behavioralist definition, and explicitly disqualified "soft" aspects of power such as authority from *being called* "power" (see p. 38). This only means that the tension in Bachrach and Baratz' conceptualization of the second face of power is not in exactly the same place as the tension in Nye's soft power – not that it went away. Bachrach and Baratz' problem is that their structural power cannot be *used* as power, and Nye's problem is that the process by which wielding structural power produces the outcomes you want is unobservable.

Nye *could* have been more specific, of course – Barnett and Duvall's power-taxonomy demonstrates that recognizing their four categories as four distinct "mechanisms" of power can be a coherent way to allow power to be *just about anything* – but theirs is a fairly high level of abstraction, and it is understandable that Nye does not go into this level of detail when is aim is a concept that can be used in foreign policy discussion. In any case, Barnett and Duvall also had difficulty with the concept of "wielding structural power"; their unexplored statement that institutional power can be "wielded, but not possessed" stems from same pervasive problematic.

The **resources/behavior dimension** of soft power is where the most striking difficulties in applying the word "power" to the intangible aspects of power manifest themselves. We saw in chapter 4 that whether or not soft-power resources are converted into desired outcomes depends on the "skill and will" of politicians. The prominence of the "skill and will"-component of soft power's resources/behavior dimension camouflages the problem with soft-power resources: That the link between behaviors and outcomes is ultimately unobservable. The same purpose is served by his references to "abilities" that just do not sound like *abilities* – like the *ability to attract*, or the *ability to be believed*.

Nye defines "power" as the ability to get the *outcomes* you want, and *soft* power as the ability to get *others* to want the same outcomes without using *hard* power. In terms of what we can observe as the results of power-behavior, "changing preferences" is the soft-power counterpart to "power"'s "changing behavior" – but for the observer, changing preferences and changing behavior are not very good equivalents. Furthermore, Nye describes wielding soft power as achieving desired results by means of an "observable but intangible attraction". Just how "attraction" can be used (and *seen*) to *change* preferences is left unresolved.

This treatment of power's resources/behavior dimension is, however an "ordinary use" of the power-concept: *All* agency, tripartite power-concepts have to struggle with the fact that their *third* "resource" is not a resource, but a vaguely defined "way of influencing. "Soft-power resources" uses an established, traditional and "ordinary" analogy to the *tangible* resources of power. As with *all* "third" resources, the *context* determines whether or not soft-power resources *exist*. This does not stand up to scrutiny as a part of a strict naturalist and behavioral power-concept, and *it never has*.

The **dark-matter dimension** sheds light on soft power's "accordance with ordinary use of power" by helping us see how these "dark" aspects of power can come with practical consequences for how instances of power are understood. In chapter 3, I used the dark-matter dimension of "power" to show how the concept's *relational* nature means that any scenario of A's power over B ultimately hinges on the intentions and perspectives of both A *and* B. Soft power's dark matter revolves around the question of where to draw the line between what *is* and what is *not* a power-scenario. In the tension between soft power as a structural position that you are "endowed with" and the intentional *wielding* of soft power, the dark matter of *perspective* acts as a buffer: The perspective from which soft power is meant to be "power" is clearly that of the *wielder* of power, and the "production of intended effects by means of soft power" is Nye's core idea. The *effects* of soft power, on the other hand, depend entirely on the experience of B. Furthermore, soft power as (A's) agent power *is* about being able to use your structural power to your advantage, but it is no less about just *not undermining* your *structural* power. "Soft-power wielding" works *best*, however, when B does not know that power is being exercised at all.

To show that both scenarios are consistent with "power" from a "naturalist-to-constructivist" epistemological perspective, I used the dark-matter dimension to describe structural power as "embodied past action". This element is important for recognizing soft power's overarching logical coherence as a power-concept, and could be emphasized more by Nye. Relatedly, soft power is described both as something that *can work on its own*, and also as something that was *never meant to stand alone*. This is not resolved by Nye – but with the help of power's dark-matter dimension, I offer the following elucidation: Soft power is not meant to stand alone because soft power, to use

Russell's terminology, is ultimately *derivative* power. Wielding soft power depends on embodied past action, and *building future soft power* is also a form of "wielding soft power". The "power" of soft power does not make sense without being related to power more broadly – but soft power can be *wielded* independently of hard power. When soft power is available, its use does not depend on the "iron fist".

Finally, there was the dark matter of **epistemology.** As I wanted to assess the internal validity of soft power, I aimed to evaluate Nye's accordance with *himself.* Nye's epistemological foundations are naturalist, and the soft-power concept is embedded somewhere in the grey zone between naturalism and constructivism that was described in chapter 2: From his naturalist perspective, Nye takes an *interpretive* approach to what he understands to be "power".

This tension between naturalist- and constructivist epistemologies is pervasively present in the power literature because a naturalist power-concept that acknowledges that power is *relational* cannot get around the ultimately psychological nature of power-relationships. For those who insist on a naturalist, behavioral approach that thinks of power as something which is actively used, there is no way to avoid this. Wholly constructivist approaches do not have this problem with the power-concept because, as I put it in chapter 2, it is *all power* – the *hegemonic* power-concept shows this. Confusion arises from Nye's attempt to unite two different approaches to identifying "power", and though I conclude that soft power does live up to the first criterion, my conclusion is qualified by this *lingering objection* to soft power's accordance with ordinary use of power: Nye sets soft power up as a naturalist, behavioral power-concept, but never resolves the problem of how the structural face of power can be understood as an "ability". The objection is tempered by the fact that this is a dark-matter topic where the tripartite-power tradition is *misleading to begin with* – because it sets its *third* power on par with the (positivistically) observable military and economic powers, yet the third power in tripartite power-concept is entirely interpretive.

Soft power is in accordance with ordinary use of power. I have said that the overarching question on the accordance-criterion is "whether soft power is more nebulous than power", and my answer is that *power* is every bit as nebulous as *soft* power.

5.4.2. Is soft power "consistent with surrounding concepts"?

Conclusion: Another qualified yes. Soft power's "consistency with surrounding concepts" is imperfect, but not seriously flawed.

The consistency-criterion says that it is reasonable to expect from a new concept such as soft power that it should be consistent with its surrounding concepts which are allowed to remain, and I used

the criterion as a way to approach the potential *problem* that the soft-power concept might *confuse* established ways to understand its subject matter of intangible power. In the course of the analysis I have found *hegemony, persuasion, attraction, influence, authority,* and *legitimacy* to be interesting as "surrounding concepts which are allowed to remain".

When considered through the lens of the third criterion, **hegemony** coexists easily with soft power, because while the two concepts share a focus on the same subject matter of intangible power, they have very distinctive approaches to it. Some concepts I encountered when they were launched as *alternatives* to soft power. The alternatives were parts of objections to soft power on the grounds that it was *too close* to an established concept, and I disagree; **persuasion** and soft power are far more different than Womack implied, and persuasion also coexists easily with soft power. The same goes for **authority** and **legitimacy**, which coexist very well with soft power indeed: Authority and legitimacy are both "soft powers". Statements about "the soft power of authority" and "the soft power of legitimacy" are intuitively easy to relate to, and do not suggest that soft power is a superfluous concept.

Two "surrounding concepts" to soft power that are more problematic are **attraction** and **influence**. The issue with these is different from the consistency-issues that concerned those concepts that share some of soft power's subject matter, however; Attraction and influence are surrounding concepts that concern the problem of relating "soft power" to "power". Attraction is at the definitional *core* of soft power ("soft power is attractive power") and the "power" of attraction is not immediately reasonable. Influence is similarly confounding. Knutsen suggested that attraction should be understood as *influence* rather than as *power*. "Power" is ordinarily used to mean something more than influence, but Nye sends mixed messages about whether *soft* power is more than influence. In his presentation of the power concept Nye explicitly links *power* to intentionality and action, and describes *soft* power as more than just "influence" (Nye 2004: 5), but overall, Nye uses the power-concept in a way that makes him seem inclined to agree with Dahl, that influence is a "subtly different synonym" to power.[32]

The problem of determining what makes "attraction" a "power" remains open-ended, and my conclusion that these problems are not too serious *also* follows from the complexities of "power in ordinary use": Influence of attraction" is "power" in two senses: (i) in the sense pointed out by Hobbes, that *"What quality soever* makes you feared or loved – or gives you a reputation of this" is power because it is "a means to have the assistance and service of many, and (ii) in the sense of structural power. A's attractiveness to B can be said to be *power* that "shapes the capacities of actors to determine their circumstances and fate" if A's past actions are embodied as what B now finds

32 This comes across more clearly in Nye's later writings, e.g. Nye 2011b: 11.

attractive.

5.4.3. Does soft power draw attention to what might otherwise easily be overlooked?

Conclusion: Yes, and it is the great strength of soft power that it draws attention to something – an aspect of power – which is otherwise easily overlooked.

My efforts to concretize soft power's ability to draw attention to an aspect of power that might otherwise easily be overlooked supports my initial impression that soft power does the job – it is a clear strength of soft power that it captures a real and often overlooked facet of power as it is commonly understood. This is the natural conclusion of chapters 3 and 4 put together: Chapter 3 showed that "realist" uses of the concept of power that downplay the role of human perception in power relationships tend to dominate because it is far easier to count material things than to examine the psychological intangibles of social power. However, actual scenarios of conflict and co-operation are generally much more complex than mere hard-power analyses would lead you to think, and *all* power-resources are to some degree context dependent. Taking the psychological intangibles out of your approach to power changes "power" into "force". Chapter 4 showed how Nye's soft-power concept is directed at convincing people to pay more attention to *non-coercive* power relationships.

This criterion is where the fact that Nye takes a *naturalist* approach to intangible power is a salient point: These fuzzy, intangible things of power are otherwise easily overlooked *by naturalists,* but they do not disappear from *existence*. The dichotomy of hard and soft power is an effective way to "reify" the soft aspects of power that are equally deserving of our attention as "guns and the butter", and the risk we run of not paying soft power enough attention is probably larger than the risk of overlooking hard-power factors by focusing on soft-power relations. Because hard power – wealth and artillery – is so easy to identify, it is simple to understand when one is certainly *not* talking about soft power. In the extension of the consistency-criterion, soft power is a way to make sure that factors such as "legitimacy" and "authority" are not automatically seen as subordinate to tangible parts of political power. It is this overarching, comprehensive function of soft power that makes the concept stand out, and sets soft power apart from its surrounding concepts.

Soft power's valuable contribution on the third criterion outweighs its weak points on the first and second criteria. Nye's innovation lies in the very insistence on embracing the vagueness of power from a naturalist perspective.

5.4.4. *Theoretically useful?* Concluding remarks

We have seen that soft power is as comprehensive as the power-concept itself, and while the fit is not altogether comfortable, soft power *is* a "theoretically useful" power-concept: As *"power in ordinary use" cannot be cut off from its "soft" aspects, my conclusion must be that soft power is in accordance with power in ordinary use, (mostly) consistent with its surrounding concepts, and draws attention to something which is otherwise easily overlooked.* Nye's innovation is to express the insight that most power rests on some form of structurally produced consent in our "ordinary" language for talking about the *workings* of power. With soft power, Nye has created an umbrella term meant to cover various descriptions of the psychological sides to power such as moral authority, normative power, legitimacy, and "goodwill", and it is no wonder he gets accused of fuzziness. It is a paradox that soft power, in all its tangled glory, is also very intuitively accessible. Power is like love, writes Nye; "easier to experience than to define or measure, but no less real for that" (Nye 2004: 11). The softer the power, the more this analogy rings true. Why, then, does Nye *want* to "legislate the intangible"? – what is the *usefulness* of drawing this distinction within the power-concept?

I think that this is effectively illustrated by the smart-power concept. Nye (2004: xii) ends the preface to *Soft Power* with an appeal to "smart power". The concept of "smart power" refers to an ideal combination of hard and soft power, and achieving this requires an awareness of the distinction between the two. The smart-power concept has been embraced by many political practitioners – including the Obama administration – and lately, Nye has taken to expressing a preference for "smart power" over "soft power" (e.g. Nye 2009; 2010; 2011b). The value of smart power is meant to be that it emphasizes that soft power and hard power go hand in hand – but as a power-concept, it is nowhere near as interesting as soft power. Combining hard and soft power is *obviously* the best approach to foreign policy, and accordingly, "smart power" seems to basically mean "power".

6. The 4th Criterion: Soft power as "operational in the broadest sense"

Chapter 6 aims to evaluate the soft-power concept on the fourth criterion of my conceptual analysis – that *scientific concepts should be "operational in the broadest sense".* In my method-chapter I listed three reasons to do this – *First*, political science, at the end of the day, addresses concrete, real-life problems. *Second*, Baldwin's approach to conceptual analysis recommends such assessment, and *third*, empirical research that makes use of the soft-power concept is a goal for Nye

himself. As observation is a central part of a naturalist epistemology, it is important to also examine soft power as a "measurable" phenomenon. I am already stretching the length of the format of a Master's thesis, so my analysis of the 4th criterion must be kept brief – but I consider the criterion to be significant enough that this fairly superficial treatment of it still adds value to my conclusions.

The previous chapter concluded that there *is* a "real-world area of application" for the soft-power concept, and that *ignoring* soft power is an oversimplification that leads us to miss out on important information. Operationalizing soft power is an integral part of Nye's project (Nye 2004: e.g. 33-34; Nye 2006). Nye is *also* adamant that "whether soft power produces behavior that we want will depend on the context and the skills with which the resources are converted into outcomes" – and the conclusions from chapter 5 suggest that using the premises of a naturalist epistemology to study soft power will prove difficult.

The criterion that a concept should be "operational in the broadest sense" should not be understood to mean that it must be *easy* to operationalize, but it *does* entail that a **clearly defined generic concept of soft power should be useful for developing lower level generalizations that can then be applied to the real world.** My strategy for evaluating soft power on the fourth criterion is to compare Nye's guidelines for operationalizing soft power to a selection of empirical studies that follow them. The empirical studies of soft power that I consider in this chapter share in Nye's epistemological starting point, and they have in common the stated ambition to study soft power *as Nye defines it.* I compare their presentation of their indicators to Nye's presentation of soft power to investigate whether empirical approaches to soft power that follow Nye's directions manage to stay true to the definitional core of the concept.

6.1. Nye's "operationalization" of soft power

I begin by revisiting and problematizing Nye's operationalization of soft power as it was presented in chapter 4.

> Simply put, in behavioral terms soft power is attractive power. In terms of resources, soft-power resources are the assets that produce such attraction. (Nye 2004: 6)

How you observe and measure soft power is a central theme in *Soft Power* (2004). The message is that soft power is both observable and wieldable. While this power of attraction is always an intangible element, it can be observed and operationalized. "[W]hether a particular asset is a soft-power resource that produces attraction can be measured by asking people through polls or focus groups", and whether that attraction *produces desired policy outcomes* "has to be judged in particular cases." (Nye 2004: 4). The indicators that Nye uses for soft power *potential* are:

• opinion polls on international popularity of/admiration for culture and policies;

• statistics on trade and economy;

• statistics on foreign students choosing to come to a country's universities;

• statistics on scientific innovation and Nobel Prize winners.

I will also repeat Nye's tripartite power-concept and the tools associated with each aspect of power:

	Behaviors	**Primary currencies**	**Government policies**
Military power	coercion deterrence protection	threats force	coercive diplomacy war alliance
Economic power	inducement coercion	payments sanctions	aid bribes sanctions
Soft power	attraction agenda setting	values culture policies institutions	public diplomacy bilateral and multilateral diplomacy

Table 6.1. Three types of power repeated (Nye 2004: 31)

•Opinion polls are a way to measure the potential soft power lodged in your cultural-, normative (values)-, and policy resources that you can currently draw on.

•Nye's other indicators are soft-power indicators because they are assumed to help measure attractive traits such as economic success (economic and trade statistics) and scientific innovation and prestige (prizes). If many people want to study at your universities, this may be an indication that your attractive behavior is working; students also help you build soft power for the future. These are "the assets that produce attraction". Conversely, if any of these statistics show a downward trend, it should indicate that your attraction is waning. Do these indicators really measure soft power?

Problematizing Nye's operationalization of soft power: The question of whether and how Nye's indicators capture significant aspects of Nye's definition of soft power is a question with two levels. First, there is validity: Do these indicators measure what they claim to measure? The issue of validity is a confounding one when working with opinion polls, and polls that gauge emotionally charged phenomena like "admiration" will be *particularly* vulnerable.[33] These are very important problems that any empiricist using such data should remain keenly aware of, but they are not under scrutiny here. I can stipulate Nye's assertion that "polls are a good first approximation of both how attractive a country appears and the costs that are incurred by unpopular policies, particularly when they show consistency across polls and over time" (Nye 2004: 18). The bigger question is what I

33 ...to problems such as cross-cultural differences in what is *meant* by "admiration", for instance.

call "the second level of validity" – whether ***Nye's proposed indicators capture his definition of soft power.*** Even if polls are valid measurements of admiration, there is another pitfall of this use polls and focus groups as a way to measure soft-power resources. Nye argues that "whether a particular asset is a soft-power resource that *produces* attraction can be measured by asking people through polls or focus groups" (ibid: 5, emphasis added) – is that *really* what polls and focus groups measure? Not necessarily. If many people say that they "like American movies and TV", for instance, you may reasonably postulate an attraction to American culture *without* at the same time saying that the attraction is *produced* by these "cultural resources". Wang and Lu (2008: 446) point out that "on the basis of such indicators, Nye claims that Japan has more potential soft power resources than any other Asian country; but so far Japan's advantage in these resources has not resulted in comparable attractiveness in the region or the world". Nye (2004: 86-87) acknowledges the limits to Japanese soft power (e.g. "residual suspicion" after Japanese aggression in the 1930s) as typical contextual reasons for why it is difficult to measure *all* power in terms of resources. From Nye's description of soft power as co-optive power, it is reasonable to say that there is a connection between popularity and soft power that is as real as the link between capability for destruction and *hard* power – but *causality* is less apparent.

The definition of soft power tells us that *in terms of resources, soft power resources are the assets that produce attraction.* The soft-power resources of "values, culture, policies, and institutions" can be examined in studies of state behavior, but the question of their link to *outcomes* does not disappear. You have hard power because you have weapons and money and the capacity to use them – but soft-power resources "change with the changing context" (Nye 2004: 68), and Nye's indicators are only indirectly observations of attraction – in practice, they require interpretation and contextualization. The soft power of a country "rests primarily on three sources: Its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority)" (Nye 2004: 11).

When and how is behavior attractive? As it is clear that Nye intends for soft power to provide foreign policy *tools,* we must deduce that "soft-power behavior" refers – at least most of the time – to intentionally wielded power. Observing soft power *as an action* also runs straight in to the problematic idea of a "power of attraction": Soft power is at work when "behavior is determined by an observable but intangible attraction" (Nye 2004: 7), *but Nye does not provide a strategy for observing how attraction determines behavior.* Again, we see that the *tripartite-analogy* is misleading, in that soft-power behaviors are not comparable to hard-power behaviors: We easily understand what it means to coerce, to shoot, or to bribe, but we do not easily understand what it

means to attract.

Can we make epistemologically naturalist observations of soft power at work? Nye writes that proof of power is seen in the "changed behavior" of others, but at the same time, soft power is "the ability to shape what others want" – their *intentions*, that is, and not their behavior, other than indirectly. *Proof* of soft power cannot be *seen* in changed behavior – the process must be *interpreted* – We must infer the *existence* of soft power from the observed *effects* of soft power, and this will inevitably require some *interpretation* of these effects.

For instance, the situation in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in 2002-2003 is used frequently to illustrate the costs to the United States of *not* successfully using their soft power. In *Soft Power* (2004:16), Nye explicitly says that U.S. soft-power shortage is why Mexico and Chile did not support this U.S. with respect to the invasion of Iraq (resolution 1441) in 2003. However, since the presence of intangibles is a matter of interpretation, the actual events are open to different perspectives, and examples abound of different interpretations of the same situations. For instance, while Nye argues that a decline in soft power explains the behavior of potential allies in the UNSC-debacle before Iraq II, Ferguson sees the same behavior as a power play - Under the heading "diplomacy allows weak powers to counter strong ones," he writes that

> There is a nice irony here. Devotees of balance-of-power diplomacy, such as Henry Kissinger, have tended to dismiss institutions such as the United Nations and its predecessor the League of Nations, which were established at the instigations of archidealists Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, respectively. But now, European powers are using such supranational institutions – erected in the name of collective security – in the most *realpolitisch* way imaginable. (Ferguson 2003: 19)

This is a very different interpretation of the Security Council situation, and illustrates the point that the interpretive nature of "power" goes both ways. Yet another interpretation of the situation is that the U.S. might just have been asking for the *obviously* unreasonable – that it was not that the *messenger* that lacked credibility so much as the *message.*[34]

The tangibility of the resources is the *nature* of the difference between hard and soft power, and the fact that soft-power relations are embedded in the way we *think* is a very good reason why empirically oriented scholars typically choose other paths. Any empirical study of soft power phenomena faces great methodological challenges. Some strategies for coping with these challenges follow:

6.2. Others' operationalizations of soft power

Empirical research on soft power is faced with a considerable methodological challenge: soft-power relations are embedded in the way we *think*. The challenge for the naturalist and empiricist,

34 I think of this as the Arne Eggereide corollary. Thanks, Dad, for pointing it out to me.

"mainstream" scholar seems insurmountable. I concluded in chapter 5, however, that soft power *draws attention to what might otherwise easily be overlooked,* and that this is especially relevant for naturalist social science. The efforts to examine it empirically are arguably valuable for that reason *alone* – with trial and error as the way towards a better understanding of how to observe the unobservable. I have chosen empirical studies that exemplify different quantitative and qualitative approaches to examining soft power. They have in common the stated ambition to study soft power as it is defined by Nye (2004). Machida (2010); Atkinson (2010); Kroenig, McAdam and Weber (2010); and Datta (2009) have published empirical studies based on *Soft Power* (Nye 2004). Section 6.2. briefly presents their approaches, and assesses their relationship to Nye's soft-power concept.

6.2.1. Evaluating policy results

From a naturalist point of view, one logical way to approach the study of soft-power *effects* is to to study the effects of specific government campaigns of public diplomacy. The advantages to this approach are that (1) the state is the point of origin for the power being wielded, and (2) having this identified link between wielder and recipient lets you argue that the supposed causal factor is the more likely explanation.[35] If there is also a stated and measurable goal in the campaign, then its effects can be evaluated. The article "Taking Soft Power Seriously" (Kroenig, McAdam and Weber 2010) sets out to do just that, and looking at their approach is a rewarding exercise for understanding the challenges of operationalizing soft power:

Kroenig et al. start by modifying the soft-power concept to fit their purposes. They redefine soft power in terms of observable behavior: "states exercise soft power when they use nonmaterial means to achieve specific foreign policy objectives" (Kroenig, McAdam and Weber 2010: 413). They develop three conditions for the effective use of soft power,[36] and test the salience of these soft-power conditions with a comparative study of three "soft power campaigns" waged by the U.S. during the G.W. Bush-presidency: winning hearts and minds in Iraq, countering ideological support for terrorism, and democracy promotion in the postcommunist region (ibid: 417). They find that all three conditions for soft-power efficiency were only present in the case of democracy promotion in the postcommunist region, and only there do they see soft-power success (ibid: 425). Kroenig et al. conclude that

35 There is seldom an observable cause, but we can isolate out the effects of other possible causes by controlling for other possible causal factors.

36 These conditions, they say "are necessary, but may not be sufficient" (Kroenig, McAdam and Weber 2010: 414): (i) States must be able to communicate to the intended target something approximating a *functioning marketplace of ideas*, (ii) the attitudes of relevant targets must be *subject to influence and change*, and (iii) their attitudes must have *causal impact on an outcome* in international politics *that promotes the interests of the state* attempting to wield soft power.

> soft power comes with its own quite striking limitations. Our research suggests that soft power strategies will be unlikely to succeed except under fairly restrictive conditions. It may very well be, then, that the U.S. foreign policy elite is at risk of exaggerating the effectiveness of soft power (rather than underutilizing it) as a tool of foreign policy (Kroenig, McAdam and Weber 2010: 425).

The study ends with two practical recommendations: (i) policymakers who want to deploy soft power should be "shaping the battlefield" for soft power "just as boldly as military strategists do before deploying hard power", and (ii) when waging soft power campaigns, they should seek to "transmit messages through intermediaries who are more trusted by target audiences" (ibid: 426).

Two issues need to be addressed about this operationalization: First, "winning hearts and minds", "countering terrorism" and "democracy promotion" have little in common beyond being *attitude*-goals, and this needs more attention than the authors are offering (i.e. none). Kroenig et al.'s agenda of specifying conditions for successful instance-specific soft-power behavior of the state is interesting and instructive, but their conclusions are made less convincing by the fact that "success" and "failure" seem somewhat arbitrary, and that using "stated goals" to gauge success means that any *other* benefits than the ones imagined at the outset are not considered. As policy evaluation this makes sense, but if the goal is to "take soft power seriously", the study should also consider *Nye's* point that "In some circumstances aggressive proselytizing can destroy rather than create soft power" (Nye 2004: 94).

In light of my conceptual analysis of soft power, my second (and bigger) objection to Kroenig, McAdam and Weber (2010) is their initial decision to redefine soft power exclusively in terms of observable behavior – which leaves their soft-power concept incomplete. To some extent Nye *invites* this, and the way in which Kroenig et al (2010: 413) describe the "power" that Nye presents as a base for "soft power" (i.e. a naturalist, behavioralist concept[37]) *is* true to Nye, but they end up *defining soft power* as such a behavioral, causal power-concept: "Any theory of soft power necessarily assumes that attitudes held by individuals play a central causal role in determining political behavior and that the behavior of these individuals can shape relevant international outcomes" (ibid: 416) – meaning that

> even if a state is successful in effectively communicating a message in a marketplace of ideas and in changing the attitudes of its target audience, the state will not have applied soft power effectively if the new attitude does not result in a noticeable improvement in the state's international political environment. (ibid)

My conceptual analysis has made it clear that "second, 'structural'" face of power that according to Nye is the *locus* of soft power does *not* depend on specific scenarios in which A observably makes

37 In fact, their choices of power-scholarsip for understaning soft power overlap with *my* choices in striking detail – they cite Dahl, Bachrach and Baratz, Baldwin, Lukes and Barnett and Duvall (Kroenig et al 2010: 427). I can only offer my assurances that I did that *first*...

B do what B would not otherwise have done to be "power". However, the mixed message in *Soft Power* (2004), where Nye uses a language of such causal, observable, behavioral power to describe a wider, and much less instance-specific *mechanism* of power, was bound to lead some researchers to that conclusion. Ultimately, this consequence of Nye's decision to use behavioral terminology on structural power is not a very pernicious one – because it is so easily fixable: Kroenig et al. should leave Nye's not-so-stringent soft-power concept intact, and rather specify that they examine "one *aspect* of soft power; a state's use of nonmaterial means to achieve specific foreign policy objectives". This is not a big operation, but it makes a big difference.

6.2.2. Large-n approaches

Naturally, some researchers have explored using large-n approaches in the study of soft power; according to the naturalist hierarchy of methods,[38] statistical approaches with large datasets are *preferable* to the comparative case study work of Kroenig, McAdam and Weber, and Nye's suggested indicators of soft power *are* statistics, after all. Examples of statistical soft-power research include Datta (2009), Machida (2010), and Atkinson (2010).

Datta and Machida both use "polls on popularity and admiration" – data from the Pew Global Attitudes Project: In "The Decline of America's Soft Power in the United Nations", **Datta (2009)** uses regression analysis to study the effect of U.S. standing in national populations on state voting behavior in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). Datta hypothesizes a positive relationship between public approval of the U.S. and voting alignment with the U.S. in the UNGA, and finds support for this hypothesis; "Other things being equal, cross-national favorable opinion toward the United States predicts how states will vote in alignment with the U.S. material interest." (ibid: 266). He concludes that "A decline in American soft power provides an effective institutional straitjacket, curtailing America's capabilities" (ibid: 281). In "U.S. Soft Power and the 'China Threat': Multilevel Analyses", **Machida (2010)** uses data from the Pew Global Attitudes Project to demonstrate that U.S. soft power "decreases the perception of China as a threat" in other countries, and "[i]n order to establish a peaceful relationship between the United States and China, American soft power has to carry conciliatory messages" (Machida 2010: 365-366). **Atkinson (2010)** does *not* use polling data to proxy U.S. soft power in other countries. In her article "Does Soft Power Matter? A Comparative Analysis of Student Exchange Programs 1980–2006", she takes a specific U.S. soft-power policy (student exchange programs), and goes looking for observable soft-power effects in the student's home countries. She concludes that "student exchange programs are systematically associated with liberal trends and serve an important role in liberal norm diffusion"

38 see chapter 2, p. 13

(Atkinson 2010: 19).

In *general*, using statistics to examine the *cause-and-effect* of soft power is a problematic choice because soft power is inherently contextual, while statistics are context-less.[39] The great advantage of the statistical approach is that it allows you to isolate information from its context – but this is *no* advantage for understanding soft power; Nye explicitly said that whether or not soft power produces intended effects *has to be judged in particular cases*. These three statistical analyses all set out to take Nye at his word, however, while at the same time, they are all aimed at identifying *effects* of U.S. soft power. Datta and Machida both "operationalize soft power" in ways that miss the mark of soft power a little: They both say that that they are studying *an effect of soft power,*[40] but Nye *never* says that popularity, in and of itself, leads to preferred policy outcomes. With context removed from the picture, their correlations alone cannot convincingly demonstrate soft-power effects. Again, as with Kroenig et al, Datta and Machida could rectify this by being explicit about examining *aspects* of soft power rather than soft power as such. Atkinson (2010) does an outstanding job of specifying the *scope* of her analysis, both in the sense that her *data* is extensively explained, *and* – and this is the point here – in the sense that she specifies the extent to which her work can contribute to our understanding of soft power. She evaluates "the extent to which educational exchanges function as *one mechanism of the broader phenomenon of soft power*" (ibid: 19, emphasis added). Her study is admirable in its recognition of the fact that naturalists seek objective facts about the world, but soft power is inherently interpretive. Following from this insight, she acknowledges that the quest for accuracy about soft power must be done incrementally, by *very* small increments.

6.3. Is soft power "operational in the broadest sense"?

Conclusion: Soft power is "operational" only in the VERY broadest sense..

This chapter set out to evaluate soft-power on the 4th criterion by examining the relationship between Nye's *definition of* and *operational indicators for* soft power, and other scholars' *operationalizations* of soft power. The interpretive subject matter of soft power is decidedly *not* operational in a "*narrow* sense": For a naturalist, soft-power behavior is only operatitionalizable if you can *trace the causal mechanism* from A to B ("no action at a distance"). To wield *power* is to *make someone do what they would not otherwise have done,* and successfully wielded *soft* power –

39 Statistical studies study the correlation of supposed causal factors and effects. Theory supplies the explanation for what cause might have the proposed effect – and many statistical studies are quite weak in the theory-department; focusing more on how likely the correlation is to be merely coincidental. In any case, to address *how* an effect is produced, you need a case study.

40 -*Datta's* regression in particular includes a considerable effort to have his numbers reflect this. (Datta 2009: 275)

that is, "If I am persuaded to go along with your purposes *without* any explicit threat or exchange taking place" can only be described as a *non-event.* Furthermore, there are the enduring problems with the "power" of attraction; *What produces attraction? When and how is behavior attractive?*

According to my method, "a clearly defined generic concept of soft power should be useful for developing lower level generalizations that can then be applied to the real world." The conclusions from chapter 5 clearly show that Nye's power-concept is actually far more expansive than his soft-power indicators suggest, and comparing researchers' use of Nye's soft-power indicators to Nye's presentation of soft power has revealed that soft power is ***very easy to operationalize badly.*** This is at least *in part* due to Nye's *own* "operationalization" of soft power. Nye's soft-power indicators are *practical*; they are easily available statistics. The indicators – opinion polls and statistics on international societal interaction – are also interesting in their own right. The *problems* come when researchers do not pay attention to the fact that Nye only operationalizes *potential* for attraction in this way. His "admirable assets" are only indirectly observations of attraction – in practice, they require interpretation.

Kroenig, McAdam, and Weber operated at a level of generalization that was too high, and ended up *redefining* "soft power" to fit a naturalist research agenda. Atkinson, on the other hand, *succeeded* in applying her lower level generalizations to the real world. Hers is a good naturalist way forward; incremental advance is the way in which scientific progress is made. Within a naturalist philosophy of science, the way to use soft power as an explanatory variable in empirical research could be to further dissect soft power, and look at its theorized component parts. After all, hard power is used analytically in the same way (without controversy, I might add). Soft power should be operationalized on its own merits; Baldwin (1979: 193) is right to observe that "the absence of a common denominator of political value in terms of which different scopes of power could be compared is not so much a methodological problem to be solved as it is a real-world constraint to be lived with".

Because the "operational in the broadest sense"-criterion is open to interpretation, and whether soft power can be said to be operational in the broadest sense by naturalist methods is still a judgment-issue, I say we should keep trying. By using power to describe social relations of interaction that are not *observable* by a naturalist standard, Nye *is diverging* from the naturalist approach to social science – *but* Nye's use of "power" to describe social relations of interaction that the naturalist approach to power cannot observe is still justifiable, as the soft-power concept can serve positivist-minded political scientists by being a constant reminder that our indicators of power are mere indicators, whatever they are. Soft power is empirically exceptionally difficult, but the solution to hard problems is *not* to disregard them – the Real World *is, in fact,* "a real-world

constraint to be lived with".

7. Tricky Power

Hobbes provided the rationale for this study with his *first cause of absurd conclusions* – that "they begin not their ratiocination from definitions; that is, from *settled significations of their words* (Hobbes [1651] 1996: 30, emphasis added). Interestingly, he also provided a key aspect of the soft power conundrum – that "[w]hat quality soever maketh a man beloved or feared of many, or the reputation of such quality, is power" (ibid: 58). How successful is Nye in addressing the Hobbesian challenges? *Does the concept of "soft power" aid our understanding of power as such, and can political scientists use it specifically as an analytical tool?*

I analyzed the soft-power concept following Baldwin's guidelines for conceptual analysis (Baldwin 1980). Starting from Nye's theoretical backdrop for "power", I performed a logical check of Nye's soft power as a power-concept, and concluded that soft power *is* a useful concept – albeit a tricky one. My analysis also indicated that it is difficult – but not impossible – to *operationalize* soft power. Summarized, the main finding of this study is that the soft-power concept's value as a contribution to our understanding of "power" lies in its direct focus on the *difficulties* of power – centered around the idea of "wielding structural power". Soft power intersects with power's structure/agency dimension in its very own way: Starting from a traditional tripartite approach to agency, Nye goes head-to-head with that troublesome *third* – and *structural* power. Power in ordinary use, *ultimately rests on some form of consent*, and we cannot reduce away this "consent" from the "power". This is dark matter of power, and in mainstream, scholarly use of the power-concept, it has tended to be *left* in the dark.

The dark materials which Nye faces head on with "soft power" is intimately connected with the clash of logics *within* the power-concept, between the Hobbesian, mechanistic logic for understanding *what power is* and the Machiavellian, strategic logic for recognizing *what power does*. While Nye has enabled *misunderstandings* by framing his interpretive subject matter in naturalist terms, this choice has merit – because it leads just those "mainstream" scholars who *do* work with "power" within a naturalist/positivist epistemological framework to look at that residual category of power. **Soft power has its clear strengths:** Soft power refers to a real aspect of power that cannot be satisfactorily reduced to a side-effect of hard power. Soft power is necessary for achieving many, if not most, goals in (modern) international politics, and any conceptualization of political power is amputated without this tricky, relational component.

That being said, **soft power also has its weaknesses:** While soft power *is* in accordance with ordinary use of "power" overall, a line between soft-power resources and *wielding* them can be drawn only awkwardly, and there is room for discussion about the degree to which soft power *really* accords with the resources/behavior dimension of power. All social power is to some extent relational, but soft power differs from the other forms of power by being *defined in terms of relations* rather than of resources. Turning structural constraints and opportunities into a question of *ability* is confusing, and it is unclear when "power" inherent in structure becomes "power" as possessed by the soft-power savvy agent. *Ultimately, soft power is just really, really nebulous.*

Why is it still useful? Soft power is still a useful concept because we're not likely to stop talking about *power* anytime soon, and soft power is part and parcel of the "settled signification" of power. All of this "soft" stuff – such as legitimacy, normativity, attraction, and popularity – really *is* baked into the term "power", it is just too easily forgotten. Calling it power makes sense, because it should be treated as such by policymakers – rather than deemed inferior to harder forms of power, and easily overlooked.

Epilogue (i) – The special case of China's soft power.

The true *triumph* of "soft power" is its ability to capture the imagination, and there are many, many possible roads ahead. Toward the end of my project, when I delved deeper into the *uses* of soft power, *all* the interesting aspects of soft power seemed to come together in the case of China. *China's soft-power initiative begs for further study*:

As mentioned in chapter 1, many Chinese scholars of international relations have embraced the idea of soft power. In a search of the China Academic Journals database for articles with "soft power" in the abstract, Wang and Lu found that the phrase first appeared around 1997, but took off in the 2000s, with a handful of articles in 2001, and close to 250 in 2006 (Wang and Lu 2008: 426). Soft power was also included in Hu Jintao's work report to the 17th CPC Congress in October 2007; "China must 'enhance the country's cultural soft power [wenhua ruanshili]'." (Glaser and Murphy 2008: 16). Glaser and Murphy (ibid: 12) suggest two explanations why soft power is such a "hot topic" in China: (i) the theory resonates with traditional Chinese concepts (Confucianism extols a king who relies on moral force not physical force), and (ii) timing;

> Nye's theory was introduced into China as the country was undertaking an in-depth investigation into the rise and fall of great nations, seeking not only to escape the fate of the Soviet Union but to transform China into a great power (ibid).

An interesting question to ask when discussing soft-power resources and behavior – especially in light of the balance-of-power-approach of many of the writers that Nye is arguing against – is *what*

is relative soft power? According to Nye,

> The countries that are likely to be more attractive and gain soft power in the information age are those with multiple channels of communication that help to frame issues; whose dominant culture and ideas are closer to prevailing global norms (which now emphasize liberalism, pluralism, and autonomy); and whose credibility is enhanced by their domestic and international values and policies (Nye 2004: 31-32).

China is a would-be "great power competitor" to the United States, and has the hard-power potential to get there. At the same time, China is "rising peacefully", hoping to avoid balancing behavior against it. A central part of this peaceful rise is promoting Chinese culture and participating in intergovernmental organizations. These are soft-power initiatives.

Can we easily transfer Nye's soft-power concept to "the China case"? Though there are certainly local variations in interpretation, the Chinese have explicitly used *Nye* to develop their soft-power initiatives – creating an excellent possibility for comparative examination of the impact of the same concept on different polities. Many implications from analyzing the soft-power concept – such as the focus on the norm of democracy and the corroding effect of manipulation – suggest that China will struggle with its soft power – in the short run. But *what about the long run?* Soft power is, after all, a long-term size.

Epilogue (ii) – is "soft power" helpful for shaping and discussing foreign policy?

Inquiring into the operationalization of soft power answers only *part* of the question about whether soft power is "practically useful" – even if soft power is a difficult "data-container" in a practical *research* sense, soft power can still be a useful concept in a practical *policy* sense, which is Nye's *main* objective. Though the difficulties with predicting your "success" makes designing successful soft power policies a complicated issue, strategy purposes are really the *raison d'être* of the soft-power concept. Read from this point of view, Nye's soft-power authorship is simply sound advice to politicians who get stuck on the tangible dimensions of power for reasons of convenience. Regardless of whether or not political scientists manage to use "soft power" to accumulate knowledge within the rigid confines of naturalist, empiricist standards, the concept is out there being used – and even if one thinks that soft power causes more trouble than it is worth for *theoretical* approaches to power, it is entirely possible (even likely) that taking the intangible, elusive soft power into consideration when developing foreign policy is a good idea. At the end of the day, you want "soft power" to be something that you can use in foreign policy analysis.

It is not, however, *obvious* that soft power is practically useful in this sense – for several reasons. One reason is that what Nye describes as a nation's soft-power resources are often their own reward. Prosperity, for instance, is something which one is likely to strive for regardless of

one's power ambitions. Also, there is the question of who you *have* soft power over, and who *want* to have soft power over.

At a minimum here, soft power should be easily understandable, and provide *clear* policy advice. Taken out of context "be popular!" does not sound like very good policy advice, but the policy prescriptions that Nye derives from soft power are not about being popular for just anything;

- You establish yourself, with norms/rules/values.
- Soft power is a resource to be used or lost. You lose soft power by acting arbitrarily.
- You are not going to do just anything to be popular; be popular within the norms that you set up yourself.

This limits you as a superpower – but if Nye is correct, it becomes a cost-benefit analysis: do you gain more or lose more by acting arbitrarily? This is a useful thing for a decision-maker to be aware of, and deciding that soft power is helpful in focusing the attentions of policymakers has important implications for political strategy.

Soft power as "deliberately" *wielded* power is "wielded" by means of communication. Moreover, wielding soft power is the communication of *values* rather than threats and incentives. Despite the very real problems with demonstrating soft-power successes, which can certainly put a hamper on getting the necessary *funding*, it is hard to see any pernicious side-effects of *Nye's* soft-power policy prescriptions – though interestingly, there are those who disagree with me on that. Nye's advice that sometimes the powerful should be willing to give up some control to gain credibility (Nye 2004: 115) will not get unmitigated support from those hard-power enthusiasts who would still rather not deal with the *full spectrum of power.*

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