



The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone

By Joseph S. Nye

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Not since the Roman Empire has any nation had as much economic, cultural, and military power as the United States does today. Yet, as has become all too evident through the terrorist attacks of September 11th and the impending threat of the acquisition of nuclear weapons by Iran, that power is not enough to solve global problems--like terrorism, environmental degradation, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction--without involving other nations. Here Joseph S. Nye, Jr. focuses on the rise of these and other new challenges and explains clearly why America must adopt a more cooperative engagement with the rest of the world.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

"Unilateralism, arrogance, and parochialism" the U.S. must abandon these traits in a post-Sept. 11 world, says Nye, former assistant secretary of defense and now dean of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. He explains eloquently the principles he believes should govern American foreign policy in the decades ahead. His starting point is the preponderance of American power in today's world. Nye distinguishes between hard power (military and economic strength) and soft power (openness, prosperity and similar values that persuade and attract rather than coerce others). Nye argues that a dominant state needs both kinds of power, and that the current information revolution and the related phenomenon of globalization call for the exercise of soft more than hard power. It is, Nye believes, dangerous for the U.S. systematically to opt out of treaties and conventions endorsed by the great majority of nations. The U.S. should participate in world debate on transnational issues such as global warming and nuclear defense, not simply declare American interests paramount to the exclusion of all other views. Nye quotes a summarizing insight from a French critic: "nothing in the world can be done without the United States, [A]nd... there is very little the United States can achieve alone." As the author points out, in the aftermath of September 11, the policy issues this book addresses are magnified rather than diminished in importance. This reasoned and timely essay on the uses of power makes a valuable contribution to American public discourse. (Mar.) Forecast: Blurbs by Madeleine Albright and Henry Kissinger highlight that this should be required reading for foreign policy wonks. Oxford is backing this with a \$50,000 marketing budget and is counting on major media attention. Still, whether this finds a wider audience may depend on whether Americans' interest in the world at large survives six months after September 11.

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From [Booklist](#)

Nye, former assistant secretary of defense under Clinton and current dean of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, offers a prescription for America's new role in the world that calls for a broader, more responsible, and cooperative relationship with the rest of the world. Nye sees September 11 as a "wake-up call" to Americans that negates our decade-long sense of invincibility and invulnerability in the wake of the invisible power now held by NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) and stealthy terrorist organizations. The main instigator of this dissipation of traditional American power is the technological revolution, which has been diffusing power away from governments during the post-Soviet decade and thus empowering individuals and groups to act globally in ways that were previously the domain of governments. Nye calls upon the U.S. to counter these forces by the use of "soft power," by which he means, for instance, a more focused and intelligent use of new forms of mass communications. A very thoughtful look ahead at American power through this century. *Allen Weakland*

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Review

"This elegantly constructed essay is about why an unrivalled military and economic power still needs allies or partners, and why, as world leader, America should rely also on the soft, persuasive kind of power: the appeal of its values and culture."--*The Economist*

"This reasoned and timely essay on the uses of power makes a valuable contribution to American public discourse."--*Publishers Weekly*

"Admirably compact...illuminating."--*Christian Science Monitor*

"Joseph Nye--consistently one of the wiser heads around--has produced, yet again, a lucid, forceful critique of American foreign policy and a sensible, far-sighted prescription for making American power more palatable and more effective around the world. In the wake of September 11, *The Paradox of American Power* could hardly be more timely. It reflects Nye's multiple experiences in government as well as his perspective as a scholar and thinker."--Strobe Talbott, Yale University

"Joe Nye is one of the most astute observers of the changing nature of international politics. His new book provides an excellent framework for viewing U.S. role in the 21st century and especially after the events of September 11."--Madeleine Albright

Users Review

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