Power, Soft or Deep? An Attempt at Constructive Criticism

El poder, ¿blando o profundo? Un ensayo de crítica constructiva

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ABSTRACT This paper discusses and criticizes Joseph Nye's account of soft power. First, we set the stage and make some general remarks about the notion of social power. In the main part of this paper we offer a detailed critical discussion of Nye's conception of soft power. We conclude that it is too unclear and confused to be of much analytical use. However, despite this failure, Nye is aiming at explaining an important but also neglected form of social power: the power to influence the will and not just the behavior of other agents. In the last part of this paper we briefly discuss Steven Lukes' alternative view of a "third dimension" of power and end with a sketch of a more promising way to account for this neglected form of power.

KEYWORDS Social Power; Soft Power; Joseph Nye; Steven Lukes.

RESUMEN *El articulo discute y critica las propuestas de Joseph Nye acerca del poder blando. Primero, abrimos la discusión con unos comentarios generales sobre la noción del poder social. En la parte principal de este artículo, ofrecemos una crítica detallada de la concepción del poder blando propuesta por Nye. Concluimos que esta concepción es demasiado opaca y confusa para tener mucho potencial analítico. Sin embargo, a pesar de tal fracaso conceptual, Nye apunta a aclarar una forma muy importante y desatendida del poder social: el poder de influir sobre la voluntad y no solo el comportamiento de otros actores. En la última sección del articulo discutimos brevemente la concepción alternativa propuesta por Steven Lukes acerca de la "tercera dimensión" del poder, y concluimos con el esbozo de una manera más prometedora de dar cuenta de esta forma desatendida del poder social.*

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Power is both much desired and of a mixed reputation. Jacob Burckhardt's remark that power as such is evil (Burckhardt, 1905/1956, p. 25) or Lord Acton's remark that power "tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely" (Acton, 1907, p. 504) are just the tip of the iceberg of power's mixed reputation. Whatever the reasons for this, power is usually considered as something rather tangible or *hard* in some sense. All the more remarkable is the increased interest in recent decades in less hard or more *soft* forms of power. Nye's work on soft power has received an enormous amount of attention from politicians, practitioners of *public diplomacy* as well as political commentators and journalists. One could even suspect that the popularity of talking about soft power is one of its most impressive effects (see Nye, 2011b). However, Nye's views have not received nearly as much attention from scholars of power. The very success of the term *soft power* among the wider public seems to suggest that there is a need for it. Yet, since Nye did not clearly define what soft power is, there is also the need for a more systematic scholarly discussion.

We will refrain here from discussing the state of the art of research on power in the field of International Relations. This may seem strange at first sight. After all, Nye introduced the notion of soft power in order to illustrate the capacity of states, that is, mainly the United States, to build and defend positions of leadership in the international system. Yet, the fact is that the mechanisms supposedly at work in Nye's accounts of soft power are not restricted to the sphere of international relations. Indeed, they refer to social relationships in general.[1]

We will discuss theoretical alternatives to Nye's conception (see section "What then?") but we cannot discuss in any detail but only briefly touch upon other somewhat less closely related theories —like, e.g., those of Gramsci (1971) or the Frankfurt School (as in Horkheimer & Adorno [1969] or Marcuse [1964]), of Bourdieu (1977), Foucault (1983) or Deleuze & Guattari (1972)—. Going more into all these theories would lead us too far away from our main points. Finally, the following can also be seen as raising very basic questions about the nature of power like this one: Is it a resource of agents or is it an

1 See also the very critical survey of the use of *power* in current International Relations-research in Bially Mattern (2008).

aspect of social systems and structures (see the classics Weber, 1921-1922/1978; and Parsons, 1951)? We cannot tackle this question here as it would require a different project of its own.

In order to set the stage for our discussion of Nye (section "Power, Soft"), we first need to make a few rather general remarks about the notion of power (section "Power"). Following up on our discussion of Nye, we will discuss some alternative accounts of non-hard power before advancing some proposals of our own as to how to analyze this still neglected form of power (section "What then?"). Nye's notions of power, we suggest, are too befuddled to provide useful tools to analyze the workings of power. Our alternative account, moreover, suggests that this form of non-hard power should be called *deep* rather than *soft*.

Power

No agent can accomplish just anything she might want to accomplish. Abilities are limited and obstacles are many. I would like to walk up the mountain in half an hour but I can't, especially given the strong winds and muddy grounds. A group of friends might try to push a car out of a dig but fail. Agents (individual or collective ones) differ in their abilities to overcome this or that obstacle. The degree to which an agent is able to reach a given goal is often called the *power* of the agent; we can also follow common practice and call it *power-to*. Thomas Hobbes talked about power in this sense: "The Power *of a Man*, (to take it Universally,) is his present means, to obtain some future apparent Good" (1651/1909, p. 66 [41]). Bertrand Russell agreed on the basic idea: "Power may be defined as the production of intended effects" (1938, p. 35). Talcott Parsons is also part of this tradition of thinking about power when he says that power has "to do with the capacity of persons or collectivities 'to get things done' effectively" (1963, p. 232; see also below). An agent can have the power to do one thing but lack the power to do another thing. With other words, power-to is relative to specific goals.[2]

2 Power-to is thus a binary relation between an agent and a goal. One might argue that there are additional relate like, e.g., circumstances but we can leave this issue aside here. Sometimes people try to aggregate the specific powers-to of an agent into their *overall* power. However, one should be skeptical of such attempts. It is, for instance, not at all clear whether the different

Sometimes the obstacles to an agent's attainment of goals are presented by other agents. Their behavior might stand in the way: They might have different plans and, what is more, they might act accordingly. There are different ways to secure the cooperation of others. One of them is rational persuasion. You want to get the car out of the dig, which requires that we both push; I am initially unwilling to do anything but you convince me that it is in my interest, too, to get the car out of the dig; convinced by rational argument I decide to cooperate.[3]

The scope and influence of rational persuasion, however, is quite limited. Very often agents choose other means of securing the cooperation of others. A very prominent one is social power. The police, for instance, typically use force against those they want to capture. A robber in the park typically uses threats in order to make their victim hand over the money. This form of power is essentially social (in a sense to be explained in more detail) and is usually called *power-over.* A classical definition stems from Max Weber: "'Power' (Macht) is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests" (1921-1922/1978, p. 53).[4] Like power-to, power-over is relative to specific goals. Weber's explanation does not (as we will see) cover all forms of power but it captures core forms. Weber's explanation has an advantage over alternative explanations. Consider, for instance, Dahl's classic explanation: "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that

specific powers can be weighed against each other in a non-arbitrary way. We can leave this question aside here, too.

3 Of course, a rational or even irrational persuasion can also lead to cooperation. Affectual or traditional types of motivation are important factors of social life and bases of social cooperation (see, e.g., Weber, 1921-1922/1978, pp. 24-25). Whether the persuasion based on them should count as rational, irrational or beyond rational and irrational (a rational) is a moot question. It seems uncontroversial, however, that there are irrational forms of persuasion. Racist demagoguery would be one of many examples. Also see below for more on non-rational persuasion.

4 The German word *Chance* is here translated as *probability*; one might prefer to translate it as *ability* or *chance*. The phrase *despite resistance* translates "*auch gegen Widerstreben*", dropping the "*auch*" (also); perhaps "even despite resistance" would be more adequate as a translation. Also see the passage by Parsons, 1963, p. 232 quoted above together with its continuation: power has "to do with the capacity of persons or collectivities 'to get things done' effectively, in particular when their goals are obstructed by some kind of human resistance or opposition".

B would not otherwise do" (1957, pp. 202-203). Suppose, A asks B what time it is and B answers "3pm" but would not have said anything had A not asked. Does this mean that A has power over B? This seems incorrect. Dahl's explanation of the concept of power-over is too broad; it collapses social power into social interaction.[5]

Power-to can have a social aspect, for instance in the case of collective agents. But the power-to of a collective agent does not as such constitute a case of power-over or social power in a more specific sense. A group of people can achieve some goal (e.g., cook a meal together) without there being any relevant power-over involved. Power-over is social in the specific sense that it enables an agent to secure the cooperation of others even when they initially are unwilling to cooperate.

Power-to can be distributed equally as well as unequally. All full citizens of a country might have an equal power to vote. However, even if powers-to of one kind are distributed unequally this is still not sufficient for the existence of a corresponding power-over. Some people are better singers than others but this does mean that they have power over those others. Even if there is a singing competition where the best singers win based on their singing abilities (their "power to"), this still does not constitute some kind of power over those who don't win the competition. An unequal distribution of abilities and resources is sufficient for an unequal distribution of the corresponding powers-to but not sufficient for a corresponding power-over. More is required to turn power-to into power-over.

In contrast, inequality of abilities and resources is necessary for power-over. Consider Weber's explanation again. Roughly, A has power over B insofar as A can reach their goal even against B's resistance. However, if B can reach their goal even against A's resistance, then A cannot have power over B. Hence, power-over is essentially asymmetry and based on an unequal distribution of the relevant resources and abilities. We get the same result if we generalize Weber's explanation

5 Similar for the notions of power and influence in French & Raven, 1959. Also see Wrong, 1979, p. 2, passim. Michel Foucault seems to have a similar notion in mind when he describes the social "productivity" of power (see Foucault, 1977, passim, and 1988 passim) or when he later speaks of power as a relation of mutual impacts of different strengths (see Foucault, 1983).

a bit: Power is the ability of an agent to secure cooperation (or at least prevent disruption) from others for the attainment of their goals even if those others were initially not willing to cooperate (whether they intended to put up active resistance or not). If A and B have conflicting goals and are unwilling initially to cooperate with each other, and if A can still secure B's cooperation, then it seems to follow that B cannot at the same time be able to secure A's cooperation.[6]

Power-over is thus a special case of power-to. For the study of social relations it is a particularly interesting form of power. It is useful and also common practice to use the term *social power* in the specific sense of power-over. We propose to do the same here.

In order to get a firmer grip on the notion of power-over or of social power it is necessary (as we will see soon) to make a distinction between the preferences and the goals of an agent. Preferences are relatively stable dispositions of agents to rank options or states of affairs according to their desirability for the agent.[7] I might prefer having an afternoon stroll through the park when the sun is out to spending the afternoon reading a book when the sun is out; however, when it's raining I might prefer spending the afternoon reading to strolling through the park. What I will do in the afternoon is not fully determined by my preferences; it also depends on what the circumstances of the situation are or, more precisely, what I take them to be. Given the above preferences I will go out if the sun is out (or more precisely: if I take it to be out) but stay in if I'm assuming or expecting bad weather. My goals (to stroll through the park, to read a chapter at home) are determined by my preferences and my (perceived) circumstances. Goals are a function of preferences in combination with perceived circumstances.[8] Goals change with changing

6 One might protest here and claim that an *equilibrium* of power is possible and even often happens. One can reply to this that these cases are rather ones of an equilibrium of powers-to than powers-over. But even if one accepted a notion of power that is not essentially asymmetric cases of equilibrium would still be special cases. We would still have good reasons to regard the cases involving inequality of resources and abilities as the primary ones.

7 We are using the notion of a strict preference here which excludes indifference between two options. One can also use a broader notion of preference according to which someone prefers X to Y just in case they either find X more desirable than Y or as desirable as Y. Nothing substantial depends on the choice of the notion of preference here. We choose the notion of strict preference because this allows for a more straightforward discussion here.

8 Another way to express this is to say that choices are the result of subjective utility functions

situations while the underlying preferences explain why the goals change the way they do, given changed (perceived) circumstances.

We can now distinguish between different forms of social power (power-over). First, there is a very straightforward and blunt form of power: the ability to incapacitate another agent. Only in extreme cases does this involve complete incapacitation in all respects (e.g., by killing the other agent). In the typical and most common cases the incapacitation is restricted to specific actions relevant to the goal of the agent using this kind of power. Suppose A and B are at an auction. A would like to make an offer and raise his arm. B, however, does not want A to make an offer. B is stronger than A and by sheer force keeps A's arm down. The ability to incarcerate another agent is another example of incapacitating power. Again, this is a specific incapacitation: The incarcerated person cannot leave the room as they please but they can still whistle or think about politics. In the case of incapacitating power the agent "in power" can prevent the other agent from acting in the relevant way. Insofar, the other agent does not even play the role of an agent. According to the explanation given above, power is the ability of an agent to secure cooperation (or prevent disruption) from others for the attainment of their goals even if those others were initially not willing to cooperate. Incapacitating power enables agents to prevent disruption (rather than secure active cooperation).

A second from of social power is based on the use of sanctions. The case of negative sanction is perhaps more salient than the case of positive sanctions; let us look at it first. An agent A has social power over an agent B based on negative sanctions just in case A can credibly and effectively threaten B into acting a certain way. This is relevant in a situation where both have different and conflicting goals: A wants B to do X (e.g., hand over his wallet) rather than Y (keep his wallet) while B initially prefers doing Y to X. A's credible threat makes B believe that A will bring about negative consequences for B (e.g., being shot at) if B does Y (and will not bring about those negative consequences if B does X). If the threat is effective, B comes to believe that the negative

and subjective probability functions. For more on this see, e.g., Resnik, 1987. We are using this kind of view as a descriptive tool rather than a normative guideline about how to make choices. We can leave the more technical details aside here.

consequences will be so bad for him that according to his underlying preferences (e.g., preferring being alive without the wallet to losing the wallet and perhaps also his life) he changes his goals from Y to X and acts in the way desired by A.[9]

The case of positive sanctions is parallel. An agent A has social power over an agent B based on positive sanctions just in case A can make a credible and effective offer to B, which motivates B to act in a certain way. Suppose B initially prefers keeping his car to giving it away to A while A has the reverse preferences. A credible offer (e.g., of a good sum of money) makes B believe that A will bring about positive consequences for B (receiving a good sum of money) if B hands over his car (and will not do so if he doesn't hand over his car). If the offer is effective, B comes to believe that the positive consequences will be so good for him that according to his underlying preferences (e.g., preferring having the money but not the car to keeping the car but missing the money) he changes his goals from keeping to handing over his car and acts in the way desired by A.[10]

In both cases of sanction-based social power it is essential that the other person understands and acts accordingly. Threats or offers fail if the addressee panics, loses his mind or faints. In both cases the agent using power influences the goals of the other agent but not their underlying preferences: They are given as fixed. Sanction-based power is one form of the ability of an agent to bring about and secure cooperation from others; it is quite different from incapacitating power.[11]

9 If A wants his sanction-based power to be stable he will stick with his announcement not to apply the negative sanction in the case of compliance. If he doesn't stick with it, he is undermining the credibility of his threat and his power in the future. There is also the possibility of a bluff where the agent does not possess the resources necessary for the application of the relevant sanction. Even though this can sometimes work it is a risky and non-standard way of threatening others. We can put such cases aside here. Normally the agent is not only able to apply the negative sanction but the costs of doing so are not so high that he would rather not apply them.

10 The remarks made in footnote 8 about sticking with one's announcements, bluffs, and costs in the case of negative sanctions also hold, mutatis mutandis in the case of positive sanctions.

11 Thibaut & Kelly, 1959, pp. 102-103; called the two forms of power *fate control* and *behavior control*.

There are further forms of power, apart from incapacitating or sanctioning power, which are certainly not coercive. The two forms of power mentioned so far have in common that the preferences of the other person remain unaffected. A third possibility worth exploring is that one agent has power insofar as he can change the underlying preferences of the other person so that the possibility of conflict doesn't even arise in the first place (and coercion is certainly absent from the start). So, what about this third form of social power?[12] Here is where, following Nye, "soft" power comes in.

Power, Soft

The term soft power has been coined and made popular (much more outside of academia than inside it) since the late 1980s by Joseph S. Nye. The basic concept it expresses, however, is much older. Nye develops it into a more detailed, albeit not very systematic, view or conception of power, which deserves a closer look. Nye is applying this conception to international relations but it concerns social phenomena much more generally.[13]

Nye makes some general remarks about the nature of soft power: it is the "ability to shape what others want" (1991, p. 267, footnote 11), "the ability to shape the preferences of others" (2004a, p. 5; see also 2008, p. 29, 2011a, p. 20, 1990). These explanations are still very broad and vague. Nye adds more content when he points out that soft power "comes from preference formation" (2011a, p. 16) and deals with "establishing preferences" (2011a, 11). Soft power hence does not only influence pre-existing preferences but also creates new preferences. Nye adds, more specifically, that soft power is "the ability to affect

12 We are not suggesting that there aren't more forms of power than these three. On the contrary, we take it that there are more and suspect that *power* covers a pretty heterogeneous set of cases. Perhaps Bourdieu (1977) has something different in mind with his "symbolic power". See also van Ham: "Social power includes agenda-setting, framing, public diplomacy, as well as (place) branding. Social power is often used to advance policy issues not against the interests of others, but by co-opting other actors, rather than coercing them" (2010, p. xiii). Van Ham also includes belief in legitimacy here.

13 For discussions of Nye in general see Bially Mattern, 2005; Lukes, 2007; Bilgin & Elis, 2008; Layne, 2010; Zahran & Ramos, 2010; Gallarotti, 2011; Rothman, 2011; Kearn, 2011. For a related view see Boulding, 1989, pp. 24-25, 29, chapters 7, 11 on the idea of *integrative power* which brings people *together*.

others' preferences so that they want what you want and you need not command them to change" (2011a, p. 11; see also 1991, p. 31, 2004a, pp. 2, 5). This is fine as a general explanation but one wonders how soft power works. It is certainly a form of power-to but the crucial question is whether it is a form of power-over (see above).

Nye throws some additional light on things when he compares and contrasts soft power with two other forms of power, the two forms of hard power: "But there are several ways to affect the behavior of others. You can coerce them with threats; you can induce them with payments; or you can attract and co-opt them to want what you want" (2004a, p. 2, see also 2004a, p. x).[14] He mentions military power and economic power in contrast to soft power (see Nye, 2004a, pp. 7, 30-31; see also Mead, 2004 and Nye, 2007, p. 165); these are important cases of power based on threats or offers (see Nye, 2008, pp. 27, 29), or on carrots or sticks (see Nye, 2004a, pp. 10-11, 2011a, pp. 11, 16). The use of carrots and sticks is costly and risky in several ways; soft power, in contrast, is supposedly not that costly or risky and therefore a valuable alternative for an agent who wants to secure the cooperation of others.

The contrast between soft power and sanction-based power (both positive and negative) is useful but it still leaves many questions over. First, Nye seems to leave out incapacitating power (see above); at least it is not clear how he would categorize this form of power. More importantly: The contrast with hard power helps us to see what soft power isn't but we are still lacking a more informative account of what it is and how it works.

But let us not give up too soon. There are some other general hints as to the nature of soft power in Nye's texts. More recently, and perhaps in response to critics who complained about the vagueness of his earlier writings, he added: "Fully defined, soft power is the ability to affect others through the co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction in order to obtain

14 It seems that most of the time Nye considers only threats to be coercive, not offers. However, a bit further down from the quote above he seems to suggest that all forms of sanction-based power are coercive, in contrast to soft power (Nye, 2004a, p. 5). On the other hand he characterizes soft power in another context as coercive, at least to some degree (see Nye, 2008, p. 142). We have to leave this question about the relation between power and coercion (in general and in Nye's view) open and aside here.

preferred outcomes" (Nye, 2011a, pp. 20-21; see similarly 2011a, pp. 93-94 and 16 where he speaks of *agenda-setting* rather than of *framing* the agenda).[15]

Let us start with agenda-setting or framing (see also Nye, 1991, p. 31, 267 footnote 11, 2004a, p. 5). This idea goes back to classic works by Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz (1962, 1963) who argued that one form of social power consists in the ability to prevent the discussion of, or the making of decisions concerning particular topics and issues (in contrast to the ability of having one's way when there is deliberation and decision-making). Following Steven Lukes (1974, 2005) this form of power has often been referred to as the *second dimension* or the *second face* of power (Nye, 2011a, p. 13 has some brief remarks on Lukes). Nye explicitly includes this second face of power as one aspect of soft power (see Nye, 1991, p. 31, 2010a, p. 17, 2010b, p. 217).[16]

It is plausible to consider the setting or framing of agendas as one more form of social power. It is different from both incapacitating and sanction-based power. What is unclear is in what way agenda-setting can shape or establish preferences of other agents —which is an essential trait of soft power, according to Nye—. So, why should one consider it to be an aspect of soft power then? Lukes (1974, 2005) is more helpful here. He distinguished clearly and with good reasons between what he calls the *second* and the *third* face, i.e., preference

15 Elsewhere Nye speaks of "setting the agenda and attracting others" (2008, p. 29), leaving out persuasion. In Nye, 2012, pp. 99, 104; he speaks of the power of stories or narratives but without explaining this in any detail.

16 Compare Nye, 2008, p. 156, footnote 6: Soft power "builds on but differs from what Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz called the 'second face of power'". It is not quite clear why Nye has in mind in this passage. The phrase "builds on but differs from" seems a bit too weak if agenda-setting is one of the three basic aspects of soft power. But does he want to say (against other passages like the ones referred to above) that the second form of power is different from soft power? He seems to suggest this in Nye, 2011a, p. 11 (see also pp. 10-18) when he distinguishes between 3 different forms of power: "commanding change, controlling agendas, and establishing preferences". We have to leave all these questions open here; Nye's texts don't seem to offer conclusive hints here which would resolve the puzzle. Commentators are also divided on this: While Gallarotti p. 11, 29 holds that agenda-setting is different from soft power, Rothman, 2011, pp. 53-54; thinks it is a form of it. In another puzzling passage Nye lists Lukes' three dimensions of power and argues that each of them has soft as well as hard forms (see 2011a, pp. 90-91). If the first is a form of hard power and the other two forms of soft power, then Nye is claiming that there are both hard and soft forms of both hard and soft power. It is not easy to make much sense of this.

shaping power. That, for instance, the United States' delegates in NATO's North Atlantic Council prevent discussion or even deliberation about certain topics does not mean or entail that any member would have a different position on these topics if it were discussed (do people's views change just because there is debate?). The preferences of the involved agents don't change because of that; not even their goals change because of that (see above). It is unfortunate that Nye doesn't say much about agenda-setting and very little if anything that explains why it should be considered to be an aspect of soft power.[17] To be sure, Nye mentions "the ability to manipulate the agenda of political choices in a manner that make actors fail to express some preferences because they seem to be too unrealistic" (1991, p. 267, footnote 11) but this is only about the expression of preferences not about their modification or change. The relation to soft power remains unclear.

The second of the three basic resources of soft power that Nye mentions is persuasion. Now, there is persuasion and persuasion: persuasion by rational argument and persuasion by (at least partly) other means. What Nye usually calls *persuasion* includes both rational arguments and non-rational ways of convincing others (see2011a, pp. 93-94, 2008, pp. 31, 38-39, 157, footnote 9). Rational persuasion can certainly change the goals of the persuaded agent, and perhaps also their underlying preferences. But if the change is rational, then it is not clear at all in what sense this change should be considered an effect of power. It simply does not seem to be a case of power-over. It is certainly a case of power-to but this is neither here nor there: If A rationally persuades B of something then A has a power to persuade but B has a power to be persuaded (acknowledging the quality of a good argument and accepting it on that basis requires abilities at least as sophisticated as presenting good arguments). If you, the better driver, drive and I, the better mapreader, read the map, then we have different powers-to but this fact does not seem to imply anything relevant to social power between us. Similar things hold for power to persuade and power to be persuaded. Jürgen Habermas (2001, p. 23) aptly speaks in such contexts of the "unforced force of the better argument".

17 One could speculate about indirect and long-term effects of systematic agenda-setting which could lead to changes of underlying preferences. This project is very interesting and goes beyond what Nye seems to have in mind (see also below).

Non-rational forms of persuasion are different. Nye mentions indoctrination, propaganda, ideology, rhetoric, brainwashing, manipulation, etc. (2008, pp. 142-143). These are good candidates for power over the preferences of other agents. However, the big challenge here is to explain how exactly these mechanisms work and in what sense they constitute mechanisms of power. What is more, these seem to contradict the notion of *soft*. Unfortunately, Nye himself does not engage in this exercise but prefers to focus more on the sunny side of persuasion (see below).

All this leaves us with "attraction" as the third main mechanism or resource of soft power (see also Nye, 2008, pp. 27, 29, 31 and 2011a, pp. 91-93). Nye mentions a whole set of more specific and quite disparate resources of soft power. In order to make constructive sense of all this, we need to distill the essential core from his different remarks. Here are a couple of quotes from Nye to work with:

> The soft power of a country rests primarily on three resources: 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, 2004a, p. 11, see also p. 8; see also almost exactly the formulation in Nye, 2011a, p. 84).

> Seduction is always more effective than coercion, and many values like democracy, human rights, and individual opportunities are deeply seductive. (Nye, 2004a, p. x).[18]

> A country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries-admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness-want to follow it. (Nye 2004a, p. 5; he mentions leading by example several times: see Nye, 2008, pp. 29, 143).

> Or you can appeal to a sense of attraction, love, or duty in our relationship and appeal to our shared values about the justness of

18 "Soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others. At the personal level, we are all familiar with the power of attraction and seduction" (Nye, 2004a, p. 5).

contributing to those shared values and purposes. (Nye, 2004a, p. 7; see also 2008, pp. 30-31).

Nye also mentions "the attraction of one's ideas" (Nye, 1991, p. 31), the appeal of one's "culture, ideology, and institutions" (Nye, 1991, p. 32; see in addition Nye, 2011a, p. 21; see also 1991, p. 267, footnote 11 where he mentions the legitimacy of institutions, and 2004a, pp. 10-11 or 2008, p. 157, footnote 9 where he mentions the legitimacy of a country's power; see 2003, p. 74 on credibility and legitimacy), an "attractive personality" (2004a, p. 6; see also 2008, p. 30), the procuring of public goods (see Nye, 2010b, p. 225), "a positive domestic model, a successful economy, and a competent military" (2011a, p. 99; see also 2007, pp. 165-168), the "universalism" of a country's culture or values (see 1991, p. 33 and 2004a, p. 11), charisma (see 2008, pp. 38-40, 53, 53-61, chapter 3),[19] connections with others, expertise and control of information (see 2008, p. 157, footnote 9; Nye refers vaguely to French & Raven [1959] without additional comments).[20]

How can one group and categorize the items in this mixed bag? Since Nye doesn't do it himself, his readers should feel free to do it. Here is an attempt. First, we can leave a couple of the many factors Nye mentions aside. He uses the term *seduction* a few times but we take it that he just means *attraction* by it. For consistency's sake, we assume that he doesn't have a darker sense of seduction in mind, which includes manipulation and deception.[21] Some of French and Raven's *bases of power* he briefly mentions also have an unclear relation to soft power. Connections with others are certainly useful and contribute to one's power-to. It is not clear, however, how they can contribute to power-over; in particular, it is not plausible that connections with others change the preferences of others (those one is connected to

19 It seems that Nye finds talk about charisma a bit unclear and not very useful. He favors "transformational leadership" (see Nye, 2008, pp. 61-69).

20 For details of what Nye takes to be some of the attractions of "American culture" or values see Nye, 1991, pp. 193-195 and 2004a, pp. 33-34. For Europe's or Japan's soft power resources see Nye, 2004a, pp. 76-77 and 85-86. Looking at lists like the ones presented here one might wonder whether almost anything could count as a resource of soft power. Problems of measurement and aggregation of different aspects might even seem insuperable.

21 Interesting as an analysis of seduction in the latter sense might be —it will probably not apply to collective agents like states—.

or others). Expertise is also a very important and useful resource. It may very well attract others into a cooperative relation but this would rather make it a (positive) sanction than a resource for affecting other people's preferences. Finally, information control: This is very plausibly a resource of power. The interesting question here is whether it is a resource of soft power or, more generally, a resource of power concerning the preferences of others. Unfortunately, Nye does not develop this point (or the other two) at all, hence we drop them for now but will return to the role of information later).[22]

Most of the remaining factors Nye mentions apply to collective agents, especially countries and states, or they apply rather to them than to individual agents. In some cases one can find analogues in relations between individuals but we will go with Nye's focus on collective agents here.

This leaves us with two main (basic or primary) categories of attraction: normative attraction and non-normative attraction. Normative attraction would result from (in increasing strength of normative urgency):

(a) the belief in the legitimacy[23] (by others) of a country's policies and institutions as well of the country's power itself;

(b) the attractiveness (to others) of a country's values, especially political values like democracy, human rights or room for individual opportunities (under the condition that the country takes those values seriously or is perceived in such a way);[24]

(c) the (perceived) moral authority of a country's policies.

These three aspects are closely connected with each other but also different. I can believe in the legitimacy of the traffic police's order to leave the right lane without believing that the order itself is based on

22 Moreover, they don't fall under what Nye considers to be the basic or primary resources of soft power.

23 In a good Weberian way Nye has the belief in the legitimacy of X in mind and leaves the normative question aside whether X is indeed legitimate.

24 One can include what Nye calls *ideas* or *ideology* under this heading. Nye focuses on values which many people strongly support. However, Nye explicitly agrees that soft power can also be based on values one might strongly reject. See, e.g. Nye, 2008, pp. 32-33. Culture also includes values; however, Nye seems to focus on non-normative aspects of culture (see footnote 19 above).

values. And some people believe in the value of the arts without giving them moral status.

Starting with legitimacy (a) one wonders how a country's power itself, not just its policies and institutions, can be legitimate in the international community. One might even think of legitimacy in Weber's sense of *Herrschaft* (see Weber, 1921-1922/1978, pp. 53-54, 212-216, 941-948; see the brief mention in Nye, 2008, pp. 37-38) here. Perhaps Nye would want to argue (he is not explicit on this point) that the legitimacy of a country's power consists in the legitimacy of its institutions and policies, more precisely: its international policies and the international institutions with which it is identified. But in what sense can such policies or institutions be seen as legitimate? In what sense can NATO or the IMF be seen as legitimate? Or the US war in Afghanistan beginning in 2001? True, institutions as well as policies can be justified as good or useful. Suppose this is the case: Why and in what sense is this a case of power (power-over)? Nye does not seem to have an answer to this question. Apart from that, it is unclear again how belief in legitimacy can change preferences; it rather seems to presuppose certain preferences. The relation between legitimacy and soft power remains unclear and unexplored in Nye.[25]

How about values (b)? Nye talks about the case where a country's values are admired or shared by others; sometimes he even talks about the *universality* of such values (or the corresponding culture).[26] But where is the power then? Perhaps one can talk about and make sense of the *power of values* but in this case none of the agents sharing the values seems to have a power (-to or -over, soft or hard) that the others lack (or don't possess to the same degree). Not much changes if one thinks of one agent educating other agents about values that are not initially shared between them —as long as no force or fraud is involved

25 Nye says: "If a country can shape international rules that are consistent with its interests and values, its actions will more likely appear legitimate in the eyes of others. If it uses institutions and follows rules that encourage other countries to channel or limit their activities in ways it prefers, it will not need as many costly carrots and sticks" (2004a, pp. 10-11). One would like to hear more about this. As it stands, it remains very unclear how the shaping of rules (or institutions) can create belief in legitimacy.

26 But compare this remark: "American values are not universal in some absolute sense" (Nye, 2011a, p. 87). Nye does not explain what he means by "absolute"; so, it is not clear what kind of restriction he might have in mind.

in the spreading of values—. If one individual, for instance, convinces another agent with good reasons of the value of the arts, then this might be due to some power-to of the convincing agent but there seems no power-over involved. The goals of the convinced agent changed, to be sure, but it would be a hard piece of work to show that the underlying preferences change, too, and in a way that justifies the application of the word *power*. If, on the other side, the *export* of values happens via force or fraud (and related mechanisms of minor reputation), then this would constitute a case of power-over. However, one would have to show how this works and how in particular the relevant power resources are used to change the preferences of other agents. Nye does not go into this at all.[27]

The third aspect (c) of moral authority seems overly strong. This is not because Nye claimed moral authority for some country's policies; what he has in mind is rather perceived (by others) moral authority, no matter whether it is indeed there or not.[28] But still, this

27 Some of Nye's examples are empirically questionable (and some would add: also normatively dubious). For instance, he says: In Argentina, American human rights policies that were rejected by the military government of the 1970s produced considerable soft power for the United States two decades later, when the Peronists who were earlier imprisoned subsequently came to power. Policies can have long-term as well as short-term effects that vary as the context changes. The popularity of the United States in Argentina in the early 1990s reflected Carter's policies of the 1970s, and it led the Argentine government to support American policies in the UN and in the Balkans. Nonetheless, American soft power eroded significantly after the context changed again later in the decade when the United States failed to rescue the Argentine economy from its collapse (Nye, 2004a, pp. 13-14).
Nye does not mention the US involvement in the establishment and continued support of the Argentine military junta by the Nixon or the Reagan administration. It is, for instance, well known in Argentina that Washington gave green light to the Argentine Junta's request for permission to throw opponents of the regime out of airplanes while they're still alive. There is good reason to assume that this damaged the image of the US in Argentina and its soft power quite a bit. Is Nye himself falling for the PR of the US? A "victim" of US soft power?

28 Perhaps we need to qualify this claim a bit. Nye often talks from the first person (plural) perspective (we, us) when referring to the US, and often one can sense something like the conviction that the US excels morally (see also footnote 26 on Argentina). In the following comment on George W. Bush, however, he focuses on analysis rather than the expression of moral patriotism: "President Bush's comments at a White House press conference on October 11, 2001, illustrate the nature of our problem: "I am amazed that there is such a misunderstanding of what our country is about that people would hate us [...]. Like most Americans, I just can't believe it. Because I know how good we are, and we've got to do a better job of making our case". But the first step in making a better case is a greater understanding of how our policies appear to others and of the cultural filters that affect how they hear our

seems too strong, at least for the reality of international relations and the relations between collective agents more generally. It is interesting that Nye sometimes even talks about a sense of *love* (a moral one, we assume), *duty* and *justice* (for instance: of securing *public goods*). It would be interesting to have cases presented where one country impressed other countries and other agents, especially collective ones, morally. Even if it happens, objections concerning talk about power arise which are analogous to the ones raises about the soft power of values above.

So much for normative attraction. What about non-normative attraction? One can group the factors Nye mentions into groups. Such attraction can, according to Nye, result from:

(a) the meeting of other agents' interests (e.g., the provision of public goods);

(b) the model and perceived promise of certain goods like prosperity, liberality, individual opportunities;

(c) traits of a country's culture (way of life, technology, arts and sciences, etc.);[29]

(d) certain personal characteristics (e.g., an "attractive personality"; perhaps also, to some degree, charisma (but see above);

(e) success and power itself (Nye, 2011a, p. 99: "a successful economy, and a competent military").

We can put (a) aside quickly: Cooperation based on interest, especially self-interest, has little to do with cooperation secured by power.[30] A bit more (but not much more) promising is the idea (b) that the possession of goods desired by others can be attractive and a source of soft power. Many states would like to be in the possession of nuclear weapons but that doesn't seem to give those in possession soft power in relation to them. But perhaps other examples are better? Take prosperity. Many people come to the US searching for a way out of poverty and perhaps into some kind of prosperity but this would rather fall under (a) above. And even if prosperity is attractive, the

messages" (Nye, 2004a, p. 125).

29 See also footnotes 19 and 23 above.

30 A twist: If soft power changes the preferences of others and if interests are constituted by preferences, then soft power would change the very preferences on which it and the cooperation secured is based.

prosperous might not be. To be sure, the comparative prosperity of the US might attract others but how does this change the preferences of those others? One agent might be chosen by others as a *model* to be followed or even imitated in certain respects but this does not mean or imply that the role model can secure the cooperation of others. On the contrary. Successful business models, for instance, are usually adopted with the intention of pushing the original source off the market (see Nye, 2004a, p. 15, and also Baumann & Cramer, 2015, p. 13). And again, there is no reason to assume that change of the underlying preferences of others is involved in any of this; on the contrary, underlying preferences have to be taken as given here.

Similar things hold, mutatis mutandis, for traits of a country's culture (c). Nye sometimes mentions elements of culture that are *universal* or *universalist* and perceived as such. If they are it is hard to see how they could be treated as one agent's culture rather than another agent's culture, and how they could thus be a resource of power of one of the agents rather than the others. If, however, the attraction is by a particular (particularist) culture, then, like in the case of certain desired goods (b), the relation to power and to soft power is missing (see Nye, 2003, p. 74 for some reservations and in reply to Ferguson, 2003, p. 21; see Laïdi, 2008, pp. 19-22 for economic and hard power backgrounds of cultural "attraction"; see also Baumann & Cramer, 2015, p. 14).[31]

An "attractive personality" (d) can certainly be a basis and resource of social power. Examples abound, not all of them attractive to everyone. It is not quite clear why Nye does not want to use the long tradition of research into the role of charisma (and, e.g., its applications in many types of populism). One can even generalize this to what one could call the "politics of emotion" and add all kinds of strategies to exploit common human cognitive weaknesses (as studied

31 But compare Galtung, 1971, pp. 91-94 for the notion of cultural imperialism and of communiation related imperialism. Here is Galtung's contrast to Nye on cultural attraction: "Thus, structures and decisions developed in the 'motherland of liberalism' or in the 'fatherland of socialism' serve as models by virtue of their place of origin, not by virtue of their substance" (Galtung, 1971, p. 92). And: "nothing flatters the Center quite so much as being encouraged to teach, and being seen as a model, and that the Periphery can get much in return from a humble, culture-seeking strategy" (Galtung, 1971, p. 93).

in detail by cognitive psychologists). An agent who is powerful in this respect can certainly affect and change the goals of others even to the point of leading them into self-destruction, but it doesn't follow that the underlying preferences are being changed, too.

A similar problem has to be diagnosed in the case of the attraction of success and power itself (e). To be sure, common sense and experience tell us that power itself (or better: the perception of it) is often a source of a derived kind of power: The perception of power can not only create fear or hope of benefits but also admiration of the powerful and a certain willingness to follow them (Nye, 2004a, p. 26 agrees, quoting Osama bin Laden; see also 2011a, p. 52 and chapter 3, pp. 85-86 and chapter 4). This may very well be a very interesting and important aspect of political and human psychology. But again, this mechanism works with unchanging underlying dispositions and preferences. Hence, the influence on the preferences of others, the essence of soft power, is missing again.

In general there seems to be a certain unresolved ambiguity in Nye's approach to soft power. On the one hand, soft power, as a form of power, is considered to be based on an unequal distribution of relevant resources. On the other hand, soft power, as something soft, is considered to allow for symmetry and equality. For instance, with respect to democracies Nye remarks: "Instead of just shaping others to their will, leaders have to attract support by also shaping themselves to their followers. […] wielding soft power often requires learning and adapting to followers' needs" (2008, pp. 140-141). So, who is shaping whom? If both are shaping each other equally, then the point of talking of power is lost. A similar ambiguity between domination and consensus can be found in Nye's talk about *leading by example*, *emulating examples* or wanting to *follow* others.

Sometimes Nye' reluctance to acknowledge the asymmetric aspect of soft power takes the form of characterizing soft power as a form of power-to rather than power-over:

> We can also distinguish between simply wanting power over others and wanting power with others. Getting what you want and enabling others to do what they want can be reconciled or

> linked by soft power skills of listening, mutual persuasion, communicating, and education. Power in a relationship need not be a zero-sum situation, and, as described earlier, empowering followers can better enable a leader to achieve his or her desired outcome. (Nye, 2008, p. 143; see also 2010b, p. 222).

Power-with is the power-to of a collective agent. The problem with seeing soft power as (potentially) a form of power-with is that any interesting sense in which it might be power is lost (see above on power-to and power-over). That one cannot reduce soft power to power-to (or -with) can be illustrated in the case of attraction. Suppose the United States is attractive to other countries. This constitutes a certain power-to. However, if this kind of power is distributed equally amongst countries, then every country is attractive to every other country. This might be pleasant but not a case of social power. What if the power of attraction is distributed unequally and the United States is more attractive for others than others are for the US? If this power is compatible with the free and rational choices of the other agents, then we haven't identified an interesting form of social power (but see to the contrary: Nye, 2007, pp. 169-170, 2008, pp. 141-143, 2011a, p. 254, footnote 2). We have, however, if it isn't compatible with that. Then we are dealing with a form of power-over: power as the ability of an agent to secure cooperation (or at least prevent disruption) from others for the attainment of their goals even if those others were initially not willing to cooperate (whether they intended to put up active resistance or not), and even against their rational freedom.

The last explanation would be a promising starting point for an analysis of a form of power that consists not in incapacitation or sanctioning but in an asymmetric chance to influence the underlying preferences of others in a fitting way. Nye, however, doesn't go there. He is rather caught in a dilemma: His general conceptual explanations of the nature of soft power (on the shaping of preferences as well the contrast with sanction-based power) are too vague and abstract to be of much use; his remarks about the resources of soft power (the forms of attraction) are very (perhaps even overly) specific but they don't fit with the basic idea of soft power as a form of power.[32]

32 In Nye (2004a) he talks a lot about how context matters to the way power can or cannot work.

So, Nye's attempt to give a conceptually mature and empirically solid account of soft power fails.[33] His general conceptual explanations of soft power are too vague while his descriptions of specific phenomena are not recognizable as cases of soft power and sometimes not even as cases of power in general. Nye's views are characterized by an unresolved (and unanalyzed) tension between *consensualist* and *conflictivist* approaches to power (see, e.g., Arendt, 1970 for the first and Weber, 1921-1922/1978, p. 53 for the second approach). There is, however, a phenomenon of power over the preferences of others. This form of power certainly deserves to be investigated —all the more so because it has traditionally been neglected as a topic of inquiry—. Nye is up to something after all[34] but one has to look elsewhere for ways to analyze and investigate this form of power.[35]

This is correct but in the case of Nye it might be an expression of a lack of a substantial enough account of soft power.

33 In the literature on Nye, there is quite some expression of dissatisfaction with the vagueness of Nye's term *soft power* and of the need to give a better explanation: see Lukes, 2007; Layne, 2010, p. 58; Zahran & Ramos, 2010, p. 16; Gallarotti, 2011, pp. 26-33; Rothman, 2011, p. 50; Kearn, 2011, p. 66.

34 No matter what the insufficiencies of Nye's views are, Niall Ferguson seems quite wrong when he says: "Soft power is merely the velvet glove concealing an iron hand" (Ferguson, 2004, p. 24). Or: "But the trouble with soft power is that it's, well, soft" (Ferguson, 2003, p. 21; see also the reply in Nye, 2003 and in 2004b, p. 127). Even Theodore Roosevelt might not have meant to go quite as far when he advised to "speak softly and carry a big stick". Compare from the other side of the political spectrum Layne, 2010, p. 73: "Soft power is just a polite way of describing the ideological expansionism inherent in US liberal internationalism. […] Dressing up liberal internationalism as 'smart power' does not make it wise or intelligent". Finally, Leslie Gelb: "Soft power now seems to mean almost everything" (Gelb, 2009, p. 69). However, this claim is based on a misreading of Nye as (recently) including military and economic power in soft power (see Gelb, 2009, p. 69; see also Nye, 2009, pp. 160-161).

35 Nye has some interesting things to say about the relation between soft and hard power: He thinks they only differ in degree and presents a "spectrum" of power (see Nye, 1991, p. 267, footnote 11, 2004a, pp. 7-8, 2008, p. 30, 2011a, p. 21; see also Baumann & Cramer, 2015, pp. 15-16). Nye also holds that hard and soft power can reinforce each other as well as interfere with each other (see Nye, 2004a, p. 25, 2008, p. 41). Apart from that, he acknowledges that the same resources can lead to different forms of power (see Nye, 1991, p. 267, footnote 11, 2004a, p. 9, and especially 2011a, pp. 21, 40, 48, 52, 85-87 as well as chapters 2-4 more generally). Finally, he recommends to politicians the use of "smart power", that is, the combination of hard and soft power (see Nye, 2004a, pp. 32, 147, 2008, p. 43, 2011a, pp. xiii-xiv, 22-23, chapter 7). This is not the place to discuss these issues.

What then?

Even though thinking about power has traditionally focused on *harder* forms of power like incapacitation, the use of sanctions and similar methods, there is also quite a tradition of thinking about power over the preferences of others. One can think of the 16th Century author Étienne de la Boétie and his idea of "voluntary servitude" (1576/1978).[36] Marxist conceptions of ideology (and hegemony) also come to mind (see amongst many Gramsci [1971] —to whom Nye, 1991, p. 31, 2002, p. 9 and 2004b, p. 125 briefly refer—; but see also Zahran & Ramos, 2010 on this).[37] Almost two decades before Nye started publishing on soft power, Steven Lukes presented an interesting attempt to conceptualize and explain in more detail what power over the preferences of others is and how it works (see Lukes, 1974, 2005). Lukes is doing some of the conceptual work one is missing in Nye. It is therefore well worth taking a look at his approach.[38]

Lukes distinguishes between three dimensions of power of which the third one is the one he is focusing on, that is, the power to influence the preferences of others (and thus avoid conflicts with others), as opposed to the two dimensions which refer to the ability to change others' behavior and to the ability to frame the agenda. Lukes says:

36 Compare the latter echo in Deleuze & Guattari, 1972, p. 306: "*Il arrive qu'on désire contre son intérêt. Comment expliquer que le désir se livre à des opérations qui ne sont pas des méconnaissances, mais des investissements inconscients parfaitement réactionnaires?*" (It happens that one desires against one's interest. How can one explain that the desire gives itself up to processes which are not ones of ignorance but unconscious investments which are perfectly reactionary?)(see also 325ff.)

37 For a darker version (not directly related to the notion of power) see in the tradition of the Frankfurt School, e.g., Horkheimer & Adorno, 1969, pp. 128-176 on "Kulturindustrie" (culture industry) or Marcuse 1964 on "one-dimensional society".

38 See also Lukes, 1978, p. 669, 1986, pp. 9-10. Some authors criticize Lukes and develop alternative accounts of the same phenomena: see West (1987); Benton (1981, 1982); Isaac (1982); Smith (1977, 1981); Abell (1977, 1982). For empirical studies using Lukes' ideas see Gaventa (1980) or Herzog (1989). For further criticism see Goldman (1977) and Kernohan (1989) as well as Hindess (2006) and Hayward (2006). Morriss (2006) agrees with Lukes insofar as his account is taken as one of domination rather than power. For friendly further development of Lukes' views see Dowding (1996) as well as Shapiro (2006) who proposes further empirical investigation and normative inquiry. See also Lukes (2006) and defending him Plaw (2007).

> A may exercise power over B by getting him to do what he does not want to do, but he also exercises power over him by influencing, shaping or determining his very wants. Indeed, is it not the supreme exercise of power to get another or others to have the desires you want them to have that is, to secure their compliance by controlling their thoughts and desires? (Lukes, 2005, p. 27).[39]

What is striking here is that Lukes does not make a distinction between goals and underlying preferences (see above); he just talks about wants, desires, and preferences using these terms as synonyms. This has the drawback of not allowing for drawing a clear line between the third dimension of power and, say, the power exerted through the use of negative sanctions. In the latter case A also influences B's wants, desires or goals. However, the influence on the preferences of others Lukes has in mind is to be of a very different kind.

Lukes also has this to say:

> Is it not the supreme and most insidious exercise of power to prevent people, to whatever degree, from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things, either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they see it as natural and unchangeable, or because they value it as divinely ordained and beneficial? (2005, p. 28).

It springs to one's eyes that Lukes is listing another aspect apart from the shaping of preferences: the shaping of cognition (presumably including cognition about one's own preferences?). This shaping of cognition either leads to false factive views concerning alternative social arrangements or to unjustified moral views (about divine orders). Unfortunately, Lukes does not indicate what the shaping of cognition consists of and how it works; neither does he explain how the shaping of cognition is related to the shaping of preferences (but see below).

Lukes rather "maintains that people's wants may themselves be a product of a system which works against their interests, and, in such

39 Since the first chapter of Lukes 2005 is a "virtually unaltered" (Lukes, 2005, p. 12) reproduction of Lukes 1974, we are quoting from the second edition of 2005.

cases, relates the latter to what they would want and prefer, were they able to make the choice" (2005, p. 28). He says little if anything about how this works: how people can (be made to) develop preferences, which go against their real, objective interests (see Lukes, 2005, pp. 14-15, 148-150, passim; also see Dowding, 1996, pp. 138-139). Moreover, the notion of objective or subjective interests remains in need of clarification: Are these different kinds of interests people "really" have? If yes, what is the difference between them? Or do people only have their real interests while subjective interest only refers to a merely imagined interest one doesn't really have (see Bradshaw, 1976, p. 122; see also Lukes, 2011)? Finally: What determines the real interest of people? Lukes doesn't say much at all here (see the debate between Hay [1997], Doyle [1998] and Hay [1999]; also see Hay, 2002, pp. 179-182). It doesn't help much to say that real interests are determined by what people would prefer if they had the choice. We need to specify in a non-arbitrary way the conditions under which we would say that someone is "able to make the choice" (see Young, 1978, pp. 641ff.).[40] At one point Lukes says that qualified choice is given when people can make their decisions "under conditions of relative autonomy and, in particular, independently of A's power" (Lukes 2005, p. 37). The uninformative circularity is obvious: People's preferences are under the influence of power if they haven't had a genuine choice, and they haven't had a genuine choice if they were under the influence of power (see Lukes 2005, pp. 48-52).[41] The last resort for Lukes might be to embrace a normative view of power and interests (see Lukes 2005, passim for the essentially contested nature of the concept of power; see for a critique

40 For more critique and discussion of Lukes' notion of real or objective interest see Bilgrami, 1976, pp. 269ff.; Hindess, 1976, p. 330; McLachlan, 1981, p. 408; Abell, 1977, p. 20, 1982, pp. 140ff.; Benton, 1981, p. 173, 1982, pp. 23ff.; Kernohan, 1989, p. 716; West, 1987, pp. 142-143; Hyland, 1995, pp. 202-205; Ledyaev, 1997, chapter 8. See also Lukes, 1976, pp. 121-122, 129.

41 It doesn't help to point to extraordinary circumstances (see Lukes, 2005, pp. 49-51) under which people might for instance find the opportunity "to escape from subordinate positions in hierarchical systems" (Lukes, 2005, p. 50). A criterion of absence of power and real interest is already presupposed here. In the second chapter of Lukes (2005) he modifies some of the views expressed in Lukes (1974) and states that power can also work in favor of others' interests (see also Lukes, 2005, p. 109). The problem with this move is that his criterion for the identification of the third face of power□violation of real interests□ only works for some of the cases: cases of power over the preferences of others which works against their real interests. Ironically, it doesn't work for the forms of power he just let into the theoretical picture.

Clegg, 1989, chapter 5). This, however, gives up on the project of a descriptive analysis of power. Lukes has an advantage over Nye in that he sees more clearly what the task is. However, in the end it remains unclear how third-dimensional power works and why and in what sense one should consider it to be a form of power.

Having explained how not to conceive of soft power or third-dimensional power, we would like to end on a more positive note by sketching some more constructive ideas about how to conceive of the power one agent can have with respect to the preferences of another agent. We approach this question by asking what factors determine preferences.

First, preferences are neither given nor fixed but develop in environments and in response to traits of the environments. It is not surprising that a taste for skiing is more prevalent amongst people living in higher mountains than in flatter environments. Adaptive preferences —the adaptation of what one wants to what one can get (or thinks one can get)— are an inversion of the case in which one tries to change the world according to one's preferences (see, e.g., Elster, 1982). However, to some degree all preferences are *adaptive*: in the sense that in different environments different preferences are more or less likely to develop. Hence, an agent who can shape the environment of another agent in a certain way can thus also shape their preferences. Work organizations, for instance, are often very good at creating an environment that creates or strengthens certain work motivations. One could also mention the long-term effects of agenda-setting (see above) which can influence the preferences of others.[42] We can call this *channel* of influence on preferences *ecological*.

Preferences also depend on other attitudes of an agent. The environment of an agent interacts with their preferences through their beliefs about the environment. Someone who can influence and manage the information another agent gets or is able to get, can thus also influence their preferences. Lukes mentioned (see above) the case in which people are not informed or misinformed about the availability of

42 This modifies but doesn't go against Lukes' distinction between the second and the third dimension of power: They interact. This also follows up on Nye's inclusion of agenda-setting in soft power (which he does not spell out: see above).

certain alternatives; given the adaptivity of preferences, someone who can control the information available to others can thus also influence their preferences (see, e.g., Rorty, 1983, pp. 808ff.).[43] Another relevant attitude are emotions. They also influence preferences, especially in the long run. It is not hard to imagine, for instance, parents who instill a deep fear of homosexuals in their children and thus influence their perception of their own sexual preferences. What one could call *emotion politics* is an important resource of power. Finally, we would like to mention the resource of self-confidence, which is often distributed unequally in social groups, organizations and societies. Agents who suffer from a relative lack of self-confidence are more open than others to the shaping of their preferences by others. Thus, leaders of cults and sects have better chances of shaping their followers' wills if the latter have low self-confidence. We can call this kind of channel of influencing others' preferences *attitudinal*.

Less tangible is a third channel. Preferences and volitive states in general are indeterminate in two different ways. First, they are not spelled out in all possible details but many things are left open. I might have a strong preference for living in a particular city but lack any attitude towards different neighborhoods (which is not the same as being indifferent between them). Second, preferences themselves are partly constituted by what the subject thinks they are (see, e.g., Bem, 1970, p. 50, passim). Suppose I want to go to the theatre tonight —but why? Is it the main actor I want to see or do I just need some company? There might not be a fact of the matter before I give a particular answer to that question (see Waismann, 1983, pp. 134-135 for this example). An agent who can influence the interpretative schemata another agent uses to make sense of their preferences can thus also influence their preferences. We can call this channel of influence on others' preferences *interpretational*.

Finally, preferences and motivational states in general are also subject to normative expectations. Human beings are able to form evaluative and normative attitudes (higher-order attitudes) towards

43 This is closely related to sociological accounts of the "definition of the situation" and the power influencing it. See, as a classic source: Thomas & Znaniecki, 1958, I, p. 68; Thomas, 1966, p. 160; Thomas & Thomas, 1970, p. 572; Thomas, 1917.

their own volitional states (see Frankfurt, 1971). Someone might want to have a cigarette but also prefer not to have that wish. Agents' normative attitudes towards their first-order preferences can shape and change those preferences —sometimes or to some degree—. An agent who can influence another agent's normative ideas about their own preferences can thus also influence their preferences. Work organizations, for instance, might propagate a certain work ethics and thus shape their members' work attitude, including their work-related preferences. We can call this channel of influence on others' preferences normative (see also, discussing Nye, Rothman, 54-59).

To these four channels correspond four forms of power over the preferences of others: ecological, attitudinal, interpretational and normative power over other agents' preferences.[44] What is needed to turn such influence into power is a certain inequality or asymmetry. If one agent (A) in a social relation but not the other agent (B) is able to secure the other's cooperation (or at least prevent disruption) even if the other agent was not initially willing to cooperate, and even against their rational freedom, then A has power over B's preferences (see above).[45]

Having thus made an effort to spell out how the power over the preferences of others might work, we should hasten to say that it makes little sense to call this kind of power soft. After all, the resources involved in the exercise to "make others want what you want" may be very hard indeed.

Conclusion

The main aim of this paper was to discuss Nye's view of what he calls soft power. We argued that Nye fails to give a conceptually stringent and empirically convincing account of a kind of phenomenon that we ourselves take to be an important but not that well investigated aspect of social life: the power over others' preferences. In order to

44 On normative power more generally see, e.g., Etzioni, 1968, pp. 357ff.; or Laïdi, 2008, chapter 2 (esp. pp. 35 and 43); or Mann, 1986, pp. 22ff. on *ideological power* which has elements of normative influence as well as power over the definition of the situation.

45 For applications of such a concept of power to phenomena at the micro-level of social interaction, the meso-level or social organizations, and the macro-level of societies see Baumann, 1993, part II.

make our case we had to start with some general remarks about power. Since it is always better to end in a constructive way we also briefly sketched our own view on the topic. Building on the crucial distinction (neglected by Nye) between preferences and goals we distinguished between ecological, attitudinal, interpretational, normative channels of influence over other's preferences. To identify these channels and analyze how they work is crucial to any conception of power over the preferences of others. One could speak of "deep power" rather than "soft power" but that would sound pretentious and since we don't need slogans we just leave it at that.

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