

*Future of European Foreign Policy Seminar**Biographical sketch***JOSEPH S. NYE, Jr. 1937 -**

Situating Joseph S. Nye, Jr. within the world of foreign policy presents a host of difficulties. The length and breadth of his career preclude a cursory synopsis of the diverse range of issues covered by his published works, the positions he has held, and his impact in both the public and academic spheres. Through his many books as well as his articles in newspapers, magazines and journals worldwide, he occupies the position of a foreign policy intellectual, a liaison between the theories of academia and their practical application at a time of heightened US international involvement, most visibly in the Middle East. His arguments have had particular resonance within the opposition to the Iraq War, especially as applied to the severe strain the conflict has placed on the transatlantic relationship.

The prominence of Nye's views is anchored in a distinguished professional history spent alternating between university positions and government service. Though he is perhaps best known as the man who coined the phrase and popularized the concept of "soft power," especially as applied to the United States, Nye began his career researching economic development in East Africa. After receiving his B.A. at Princeton University in 1958, Nye continued his studies at the University of Oxford as a recipient of the Rhodes scholarship, and finished his Ph.D. at Harvard University in 1964. After obtaining his doctorate, Nye began his teaching career at Harvard, which has remained his academic base throughout his career as a professor and then dean of the John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Nye made his major contributions to the discussion of the future of Europe, the United States, and US-European relations beginning in the early 1970s while working with longtime collaborator and prominent international relations theorist Robert O. Keohane. After publishing several papers and editing a book together, their research and discussions culminated in the seminal work, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, in 1977.^[1] The book attempted to address gaps in realist theory, which had been shaped by two world wars and later the threat of nuclear conflict. Nye and Keohane argued that realism offered an incomplete framework for analyzing state relations and especially the future prospects for state relations. The authors were specifically concerned with the role played by international institutions at the time as well as the possibilities such institutions presented in the long term. By fusing complementary aspects of realist and liberal thought, Nye and Keohane put forward a more comprehensive scheme through which to evaluate a broader spectrum of the characteristics of

the international system, not just traditional balance of power issues that could result (or had resulted) in military build up and confrontation.

Nye and Keohane's theories, however, were still firmly grounded in the key tenets of realist arguments regarding the centrality of the power and self interest, and did not represent a whole-hearted support of liberalism. The innovative aspect of *Power and Interdependence* was that it denied the winner-take-all attitude of the realism versus liberalism debate and gave a common sense credence to the strengths of both arguments. Institutions, especially well-developed ones, were presented as logical extensions of power politics between long-industrialized nations. So while realism's emphasis on relative power relationships was still paramount, Nye and Keohane felt free to advance the concept of complex interdependence in order to address the future of developed world politics.

The authors described complex interdependence as a situation in which the role of institutions and interstate reliance is sufficiently great such that it changes the nature of the relationships between states and the possible strategies that they then choose to pursue. However this type of interaction is a theorized model against which to compare a real-world set of interstate relations, as opposed to a description of the status quo, a prediction or a normative goal to be pursued. Complex interdependence is a set of conditions under which it is often in the self interest of states to pursue non-military strategies toward one another. Because of the many economic and institutional ties between states, states are able to pursue their goals of balancing or respective state interest through a growing number of channels. Institutions (entities traditionally propounded by liberal thinkers) enter into the equation in that they are created as tools to pursue member state goals- in other words, it must be in the self interest of member states to form and maintain these types of linking apparatus. Furthermore, as these institutions develop, states become increasingly reluctant to contravene institutional norms and sacrifice the benefits institutions may bestow. However, Nye and Keohane are careful to stress that states will still go against institutional rules if they perceive it necessary to do so.

After the publication of the first edition of *Power and Interdependence*, Nye's career path and interests diverged somewhat from the theoretical foundations he had mined with Keohane for most of the 1970s, though the two did reconvene to write a preface and an afterward to the book's second printing in 1989. Nye served his first stint in public office during the Carter administration as Deputy Undersecretary of State for Security Assistance, Science and Technology, and then published several books and numerous articles on the issue of nuclear non-proliferation, his focus during his State Department posting. Nye then returned to the topic of institutionalism, particularly vis-à-vis Europe and the United States, when he, Keohane, and Stanley Hoffman worked together as editors of a collection of articles discussing the repercussions of the fall of communism and the strategies pursued by the actors involved. Published in 1993, the crux of the arguments presented in *After the Cold War: International Institutions and State Strategies in Europe*^[2] represent an appropriate application of the tenets of the institutionalist school, of which Nye and Keohane's work is a cornerstone.

While the ideas explored in *Power and Interdependence* did not specifically use the formation of the European Union as a case study, their theoretical applicability to EU development are

evident in the *After the Cold War's* state-by-state examinations of the respective responses of European countries as well as the United States to the opening of the former Communist bloc. With a strong emphasis on the pragmatism of the states' actions, the various contributors to the collection showed how Western Europe and the United States in particular used the existing well-developed network of institutions to forward their agendas, and how Eastern Europe in turn tried to join these institutions as a hedge against any lingering potential threats posed by the former Soviet Union and also to further ally themselves with Western democracies. The actions of all parties tended to show that real-world cooperation was possible under conditions approaching complex interdependence, validating the proposals Nye and Keohane had presented before.

In addition to his works with Keohane, Nye has made considerable contributions on his own to the transatlantic debate, especially regarding the United States' role in a world no longer dominated by two superpowers. His position on this debate flows naturally from both his academic research, focusing on the consequences of increased interdependence, especially in the economic realm, as well as his experience in government. (In addition to his State Department work under the Carter administration, Nye served in the Department of Defense as US Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs under the Clinton administration). During the heated debate that occurred immediately following the fall of the Berlin Wall, Nye's 1990 book, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*^[3], accurately predicted (against some notable counterarguments, particularly that of the declinist camp as represented by Yale historian Paul Kennedy^[4]) that the United States was in no immediate danger of being overtaken by any economic rivals, and that the United States would be the world's sole superpower in the post-Cold War era. Furthermore, Nye argued that while the United States had no near competitors in the military realm, economic, technological and institutional developments were multiplying the levers of influence and power as well as the number of players in the international system (i.e., non-state actors such as non-governmental organizations and multinational corporations). Given the changing nature of the world politics, Nye took the position that the United States would be best able to exercise and maintain its unipolar position by the increased and deliberate exercise of "soft power." As summarized by an article in *Foreign Policy* published concurrently with *Bound to Lead*, Nye wrote:

"Soft co-optive power is just as important as hard command power. If a state can make its power seem legitimate in the eyes of others, it will encounter less resistance to its wishes. If its culture and ideology are attractive, others will more willingly follow. If it can establish international norms consistent with its society, it is less likely to have to change. If it can support institutions that make other states wish to channel or limit their activities in ways the dominant state prefers, it may be spared the costly exercise of coercive or hard power."^[5]

Again, it is clear that Nye roots his line of thought in the pragmatism of realist theory. Soft power is framed as a strategic choice, a more prudent and cost-effective means of exercising influence in other states' decisions. The importance of utilizing means of diplomacy other than military force is not a novel concept, but Nye is very consistent in presenting clear, comprehensive, and timely arguments.

Though Nye is a formidable proponent of soft power exertion, criticism toward the idea of soft power is also nothing new, especially in the United States. The simplest example of the argument against the utility of soft power is the frequent institutional bottlenecks of international organizations. Realist critics for good reason cite the United Nations Security Council's inertia due to its frequent inability to foster unanimity, or the laborious and slow progress of the EU member states' relinquishing policy sovereignty to any of the EU's supranational bodies, as proof of the inefficiency of soft power. But as much as there are examples arguing against reliance on non-hard power factors, the relevance of Nye's work in recent years is hard to dismiss. Nye further cemented his reputation as an up-to-date policy intellectual with the 2002 release of *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go it Alone*.^[6] Nye displays foresight with the work's application of the soft power concept to the future strategies that should be pursued by the United States in light of its hegemonic position, particularly in the post-September 11th world. The George W. Bush administration's handling of the war in Iraq went directly counter to ostensibly all of Nye's analysis and recommendations, especially as regards coalition-building with the US 's traditional allies in Europe . As the situation in Iraq continues to deteriorate, and as the original coalition of the willing continues to break down, it only increases the strength of Nye's position and the number of his many journal contributions and media pieces.

Nye's greatest strengths often lie in the simplicity and logic with which he presents his ideas. Depending on his audience, he balances journalistic concision, academic research and theoretical models, and immediacy through analysis of current interstate relations. As the foundations of his positions are consistently sound, though one may disagree with his recommendations, it is difficult to contradict the basic tenets of his arguments. Because of Nye's careful avoidance of overgeneralizations and sweeping predictions, particularly in his book-length works, he continues to be a reliable and moderate voice in the ever-cacophonous world of international politics.

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[1] Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1977; 3d edition with additional material, New York: Longman, 2000).

[2] Robert O. Keohane, Joseph S. Nye and Stanley Hoffmann, eds., *After the Cold War: International Institutions and State Strategies in Europe , 1989-1991* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

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

[4] Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987). Kennedy did, however, fully recant his position on the imminent decline of the United States . See Paul Kennedy, "The Eagle Has Landed: The New U.S. Global Military Position," *The Financial Times*, February 1, 2002.

[5] Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Soft Power," *Foreign Policy* 80 (Fall 1990).

[6] Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone* (New York : Oxford University Press, 2002).