



The Powers to Lead

By Joseph Nye

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What qualities make a leader succeed in business or politics? In an era when the information revolution has dramatically changed the playing field, when old organizational hierarchies have given way to fluid networks of contacts, and when mistrust of leaders is on the rise, our ideas about leadership are clearly due for redefinition.

With *The Powers to Lead*, Joseph S. Nye offers a sweeping look at the nature of leadership in today's world, in an illuminating blend of history, business case studies, psychological research, and more. As he observes, many now believe that the more authoritarian and coercive forms of leadership--the hard power approaches of earlier military-industrial eras--have been largely supplanted in postindustrial societies by soft power approaches that seek to attract, inspire, and persuade rather than dictate. Nye argues, however, that the most effective leaders are actually those who combine hard and soft power skills in proportions that vary with different situations. He calls this smart power. Drawing examples from the careers of leaders as disparate as Gandhi, Churchill, Lee Iacocca, and George W. Bush, Nye uses the concept of smart power to shed light on such topics as leadership types and skills, the needs and demands of followers, and the nature of good and bad leadership in terms of both ethics and effectiveness. In one particularly instructive chapter, he looks in depth at contextual intelligence--the ability to understand changing environments, capitalize on trends, and use the flow of events to implement strategies.

Thoroughly grounded in the real world, rich in both analysis and anecdote, *The Powers to Lead* is sure to become a modern classic, a concise and lucid work applicable to every field, from small businesses and nonprofit organizations to nations on the world stage. This paperback edition includes a new preface by the author.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Leadership gurus since Machiavelli have argued over whether a leader should be loved or feared. In this evenhanded primer, Nye, a professor at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and soft power theorist, takes a resolute stand in between the two sides. Modern leadership, he contends, requires smart power, a judicious situational balance of hard power (getting people to do what you want, with carrots, sticks and bullying) and soft power (getting people to want what you want, with inspiration, charisma and propaganda). Nye embeds his argument in a lucid, if somewhat dry, survey of leadership studies, touching on everything from bonobo behavior to Freudian psychology, and illustrates it with references to noted leaders like former General Electric CEO Jack Welch, Lincoln, Hitler and Subcomandante Marcos. (George Bush's presidency provides a recurring object lesson in bad leadership.) The author takes a skeptical, down-to-earth view of leadership fads and hype. But he can't quite break free of mystical notions like vision or vague buzz concepts like contextual intelligence (a head-scratcher that boils down to judgment and wisdom); his smart power formula is therefore more truism than concrete guide to action. Nye's is a useful introduction to the theory, but not the practice, of leadership. (Mar.)

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From [Booklist](#)

Nye, a distinguished academic, explores leadership as it relates to hard power (coercion) and soft power (influence and persuasion), and he calls the mixture of these powers smart power. He urges soft power whenever possible and defines power as the ability to obtain outcomes through others, noting the difference between wanting to dominate followers and sharing influence with them. Some leaders succeed in one context but fail in another, and Nye discusses contextual intelligence, which is an intuitive diagnostic skill that helps a leader to align tactics with objectives to create smart strategies in varying situations. It includes the ability to identify trends in complex circumstances and being adaptable while trying to shape events. The author quotes an ancient source, Lao Tzu: A leader is best when people barely know he exists; not so good when people obey and acclaim him; worst when they despise him. This excellent book offers important insight into leadership with valuable analysis and anecdotes for leaders and aspiring leaders. --Mary Whaley

Review

"Mr. Nye has performed a valuable service in rounding up and summarizing the various academic studies and theories of leadership into a single, slim volume. He examines different approaches to leadership, the morality of leadership and how the wider context can determine the effectiveness of a particular leader. There are plenty of anecdotes and examples, both historical and contemporary, political and corporate."--*The Economist*

"This excellent book offers important insight into leadership with valuable analysis and anecdotes for leaders and aspiring leaders."--*Booklist*

"*The Powers to Lead* at once ranges broadly and is concise. Anecdotes run from Lyndon Johnson and Jack Welch to Mahatma Gandhi...and the book treats the latest "leadership as process" theories alongside

Machiavellian realism and Lao Tzu's self-effacing style. All these, together with many sensible suggestions for advancing oneself, are presented with a clear focus on power and group needs."--*New York Sun*

"One of the first to include new scholarship on the youngest emerging leaders, Nye readily demonstrates his ability to traverse the intellectual and pragmatic without becoming esoteric or pedantic...Highly recommended."--*CHOICE*

"A lucid...survey of leadership studies, touching on everything from bonobo behavior to Freudian psychology... with references to noted leaders like former General Electric CEO Jack Welch, Lincoln, Hitler and Subcomandante Marcos."--*Publishers Weekly*

"Finally, a book that analyzes what leadership really means and how it relates to power. It will be invaluable for both political and business leaders alike. Nye developed the concept of hard and soft power, and now he shows how the best leaders use both in a smart way."--Walter Isaacson, author of *Einstein: His Life and Universe*, and President, the Aspen Institute

"*The Powers to Lead* is an outstanding primer on leadership and all its dimensions. Nye cuts through the many bromides surrounding the subject to present a sharp, gracefully written introduction to leadership that will benefit anyone from Washington to Wall Street."--General Brent Scowcroft, former U.S. National Security Advisor

"Nye has written better and more creatively on the importance of soft power as a political and diplomatic weapon than anyone else. Now he brings this knowledge and all his governmental and academic experience to bear on the oldest question in politics-how do leaders emerge and what distinguishes the good ones from the bad? There couldn't be a better primer for a presidential election year, in which all of us, whether or not we are American citizens, have such a big stake."--Chris Patten, Chancellor of Oxford University

"This book will change not only the way leaders think about how they themselves should use power-but also how they can respond more creatively and effectively to others' power moves. This book will-and *should*-find a permanent place on the bookshelves of academics and practitioners alike."--Roderick M. Kramer, William R. Kimball Professor of Organizational Behavior, Stanford Graduate School of Business

"This book represents an important intellectual odyssey. Nye has long been acclaimed as one of the world's foremost thinkers about international affairs, helping us understand, for example, the differences between soft and hard power. Now, to our great good fortune, he has turned his mind to the vexing questions of how power relates to leadership. The result is a conceptual tour de force-one of the best works on leadership since James MacGregor Burns wrote his breakthrough book three decades ago. What a splendid journey!"--David Gergen, Professor of Public Service and Director, Center for Public Leadership, Harvard's Kennedy School

of Government

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Helen McCormick:

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