



Going Soft? the Us and China Go Global

Priscilla Roberts

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What is "soft power"? How can a country acquire and enjoy it? Is it the product of public or private initiatives? How significant is "soft power" in world affairs? The concept of "soft power," the idea that international success depends not just upon weaponry, force, and military coercion, but also on admiration and respect for a country's culture and way of life, is winning ever-greater global attention. As China enjoys ever-increasing heft on the global scene, many Chinese officials seek to emulate the past success of the United States in dominating the world, not simply militarily, but in terms of influence and prestige. Most are very conscious that "soft power" can be extremely valuable in terms of supplementing and boosting their country's military and strategic position, but are often uncertain as to how to deploy the instruments of propaganda and cultural diplomacy most effectively. The essays in this volume, largely written by scholars based in mainland China, represent an extended effort to debate and assess the theoretical concept of "soft power" and just what it means and how it works in practice. The authors focus upon the practical impact and implications of "soft power" in diverse settings and situations in the United States past and present. How, they ask, does "soft power" relate to issues of religion, gender, race, and social equality, at home and abroad? What do American elections and political rhetoric do for American "soft power"? Will China succeed in rivalling the United States in power, whether hard, soft, or smart? And how will "soft power" feature in US-China relations, present and future?

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Ethel Davidson:

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