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How can nations optimize their power in the modern world system? Realist theory has underscored the importance of hard power as the ultimate path to national strength. In this vision, nations require the muscle and strategies to compel compliance and achieve their full power potential. But in fact, changes in world politics have increasingly encouraged national leaders to complement traditional power resources with more enlightened strategies oriented around the use of soft power resources. The resources to compel compliance have to be increasingly integrated with the resources to cultivate compliance. Only through this integration of hard and soft power can nations truly achieve their greatest strength in modern world politics, and this realization carries important implications for competing paradigms of international relations. The idea of power optimization can only be delivered through the integration of the three leading paradigms of international relations: Realism, Neoliberalism, and Constructivism.

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