

# Assessing China's Soft Power Diplomacy and its Implications on Asia Cooperation

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## Introduction

China's influence in Asia has increased remarkably over the past decade. This can account for various China threat theories and the argument of China Rising in academic narratives. Analysis and debates concerning China's rise is focused almost entirely on the economic and military aspects of its growing power. Yet soft power is increasingly recognized as the essential components of Great Power status. Some scholars point out that besides increase in its steaming economic growth and military strengthening, the reinforcing of China's soft power has been crucial in expanding the country's regional influence. During the last decade, not only have Chinese media and scholars increasingly paid more attention to the development and wielding of China's soft power, but also Beijing has adopted more and more soft power-based foreign policies. With the continued momentum of China's rapid economic growth and China's ever-increasing influence in the world, the inevitable question is how has China developed its own soft power resources and wield them in its foreign relations? Is there any intricate connection between Chinese idea of soft power and its power behavior? And if China's soft power really rising in Asia as a lot of analysts argued?

This elicited a lot of discourses within and without about China's intentions with its soft power diplomacy. First is the power balance discourse. It is often interpreted in this school of thought that China seeks to shape the region's emerging political-institutional contours and to encourage movement toward an "East Asian Community" in order to balance the declining influence of the United States. They think that China is using its soft tools to balance the influence of outside player, especially the US. As they argued, China appears to be using its soft power to incrementally push Japan, Taiwan, and even the United States out of regional influence.

<sup>1</sup> The second is the regional hegemony discourse. This school of thought mainly argue that China's soft power is uniform to its grand strategy. In Asia, it means to seek for the leadership and the dominant role, holding its regional hegemony. China is no longer a "clumsy elephant" to its Southeast neighbors, but an "agile dragon" in the quest for restoring its regional hegemony. Soft power is imperative to play a hegemonic leadership role in shaping policies in the region. <sup>2</sup> China is determined to

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<sup>1</sup> David Shambaugh, Focus on China: China's New Diplomacy in Asia. Foreign Service Journal, May 2005. David Shambaugh, China Engages: Reshaping the Regional Order, international security, vol.29.no, 3, 2004. Joshua Kurlantzick: China's charm: implications of Chinese Soft Power, Policy Brief of Carnegie Endowment for international peace, Washington, no.47, June 2006. Chien-Peng Chung: China's approach to the institutionalization of regional multilateralism, Journal of Contemporary China (2008), 17(57), November, 747-764. Denise E. Zheng: China's use of soft power in developing world: strategic intentions and implications for the United States. See Implications for the United States-----competition and cooperation in the developing world. A Report of the CSIS Smart Power Initiative. edited by Carola McGiffert, Center for Strategic & International Studies. March 2009.

<sup>2</sup> H.H.Michael Hsiao and Alan Yang: Soft Power Politics in the Asia Pacific, Chinese and Japanese Quests for Regional Leadership, Japan Focus. And Transformation in China's Soft Power toward ASEAN. From China Brief, Volume VIII, Issue 22, November 24, 2008. Bates Gill and Yanzhong Huang: Sources and Limits of Chinese 'soft power', Survival, Vol.48 No.2 Summer 2006, pp1.7-36. Johannes Dragsbaek Schmid, China's soft power diplomacy in Southeast Asia, translated by Yin Jiwu, guowai lilun dongtai, 2009, 3. Meng Honghua: Report on the Analysis of China's Soft Power, part 2, Intentional observes, Guoji GuanCha, International Observer, 2007, no.3. Joel Wuthnow: the concept of soft power in China's Strategic Discourse, Issues and Studies 44, no.2 (June 2008):

demonstrate its commitment to a peaceful foreign policy as an important contributor to its further economic development and regional leadership. The third is image-building discourse. In recent years, the perception of the China threat, along with China's series of domestic dilemmas become the main obstacles for China to project its national image. Hence, many scholars think that China call for a good world image through its soft power diplomacy.<sup>3</sup> The fourth is the discourse of reducing China threat and legitimatizing China rising. Chinese strategists have awared that China's economic and military rise has been perceived as a threat by the external world, especially those with significant strategic interest in Aisa. Then, these scholars explain, "China hopes that, through soft power, it can achieve its most important goals, which are, at a regional and global level, to mitigate the "China threat theory", earn the understanding of the international commnity, and garner support for China's peaceful development."<sup>4</sup> The fifth is hard power limits discourse. This school of thoughts claims that at present, China possesses few, if any, forward-deployed military forces in Southeast and South Asia. Hard power resources alone would be insufficient for China to reach the level of a global power. China's capacity to shape events in this region (Asia) through coercion or military-to-military contacts remains limited. In this situation, soft power will serve as an alternative.<sup>5</sup> The sixth is geopolitics discourse. This school states that China's fundamental interests lie in Asia. This makes China place more weights in this area. They think China used soft power diplomacy in Asia region in order to allay suspicions in Asian countries what wary of its great power ambitions and foster perceptions that the nation's return to the nautical arena.<sup>6</sup> The finally is the national interests-oriented discourse.<sup>7</sup> It is commonly

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1-28. Implications for the United States-----competition and cooperation in the developing world. A report of the CSIS Smart Power Initiative. edited by Carola McGiffert, Center for Strategic & International Studies. March 2009. Li Xing & Zhang Shengjun: China and Regional Integration in East Asia: Opportunities, Constraints and Challenges, CCIS (Centre for Comparative Integration Studies) Research Series Working Paper No.9. ISSN: 1902-9718. Gary D. Rawnsley. A Survey of China's Public Diplomacy, May 12, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> C.F. Bergsten, C Freeman, N. lardy, D. Mitchell: Soft Power in China's Foreign Policy, from People's Daily Online, <http://englishpeopledaily.com.cn/>, February 05, 2009. Ingrid d Hooghe, the Rise of China Public Diplomacy, Netherlands Institution of IR, July 2007. See Lijie: Tisheng ruanshili dui shixian woguo heping jueqi de zuoyong; Guo Shuyong: xin guojizhuyi yu zhongguo ruanshili wajiao; Su Changhe: Zhongguo de Ruanshili; Alastair. Iain. Johnston: Zhongguo Canyu Guoji Tizhi de Ruogan Sikao, shijie jingji yu zhengzhi, 1999, 7. Xiao Huanrong: China's great power responsibility and its regionalism strategy. World Economics and International Politics, 2003(3).

<sup>4</sup> Young Nam Cho and Jong Ho Jeong: China Soft Power: discussion, resources, and prospects, Asia Survey, Vol. XLVIII, No.3. May-June 2008. Fang Changping: Zhongmei Ruanshili Bijiao Jiqi dui Zhongguo de Qishi, "A Comparison of Soft Power between China and the US and its Implications for China", Shijie Jingji Yu Zhengzhi, World Economics and Politics, No.7, 2007. pp.21-27. Sheng Ding: To build a harmonious world: China's soft power wielding in the global south. Journal of Chinese Political Science. Vol.13, No2, 2008. Also see Sheng Ding's PhD thesis: soft power and the Rise of China: an Assessment of China's Soft Power in its Modernization Process. Bonnie S. Glaser and Melissa E. Murphy: Soft power with Chinese characteristics---the ongoing debate. Ma Jianying: guojia jueqi bu ke hu shi de lilian: ruanlilian. Journal of Sheng Yang University, Vol. 18, No.5.

<sup>5</sup> Toshi Yoshihara and James R. Holmes: China's Energy-Driven Soft Power, Winter, 2008. Bruce A. Elleman, Waves of Hope: The US Navy's Response to the Tsunami in Northern Indonesia (Newport, R.I.: Naval War College Press, February 2007), pp. 103-105.

<sup>6</sup> Pang Zhongying: Transformation of China's Asia Policy: Challenges and Opportunities, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/singapur/04601/2007-2/zhongying.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Ma Jianying: guojia jueqi bu ke hu shi de lilian: ruanlilian. Journal of Sheng Yang University, Vol. 18, No.5. Pang Zhongying: China's soft power. See Liao Wang (Outlook News Weekly). Ren Xiao: Between Adapting and Shaping: China's role in Asian Regional Cooperation, Journal of Contemporary China (2009), 18(59), March, 303-320. Li Mingjiang: China debates soft power, Chinese journal of international politics, Vol. 2, 2008, 287-308. Gao hongqiang : zhongguo muling wajiao zhong ruanyingshili de goujian jiaodu. Esther Pan: China's Soft Power Initiative may 18, 2006. Gary D. Rawnsley. A Survey of China's Public Diplomacy, May 12, 2007.

believed that Beijing is trying to convince the world of its peaceful intentions, secure the resources it needs to continue its soaring economic growth, and isolate Taiwan. It must be served to the national interests and the basic goals of China's foreign policy which is to "preserve China's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity," and "to create a favorable international environment for China's reform and opening up and modernization construction."<sup>8</sup>

Certainly, these discourses can explain China's intentions with its soft power in Asia. Also, based on these discussions, a number of observers see China's soft power is rising in Asia and other part of the world.<sup>9</sup> This paper examines the recipient of Taiwan's response toward China's soft power diplomacy in an effect to diagnose if China's soft power rising or not in Asia, aiming to clear about the academic dispute. In this paper, I challenge the conventional views and argue that these interpretations are methodologically problematic and empirically insufficient. As I will argue throughout the following research, the central problem of the preceding interpretations is that they can not offer a persuasive explanation that can adequately as well as comprehensively assess China's soft power. And they missed the lens of the recipient's response to investigate China's soft power diplomacy. Meanwhile, in the existing scholarly literatures on Chinese foreign policy, there is no adequate or persuasive study on the relations between Beijing's policy of peaceful development and Beijing's soft power wielding in its rising process.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In the first, I presented the conventional approaches on China's soft power, pointing out their limits and the academic string in this research. Then, I design a conceptualization plan about China's soft power, aiming to normalize the concept based on Chinese context and Chinese discourse. To assess China's soft power, I intend to employ the case study of cross-strait relations to illustrate my hypothesis which is that China's soft power diplomacy may not work as well as discussed owing to its limits in its soft power resource and the existing variables in Asia politics.

### **Conventional Interpretations**

The concept of soft power is initially coined by Professor Joseph S. Nye, but why this foreign concept has become so salient in the Chinese discourse. In the 1990s, since the term come into surface, the discussion of soft power on the question of what soft power is and how it should be defined in the Chinese context sprung up. Soft power becomes a heated topic in China's academic circle and served as a frequently talked word in some official articles or speeches. The main reason is that Nye's theoretical framework seems to answer some fundamental questions faced by contemporary China. First, China wants to be a great power so that it has to ask the question of what makes for a great power. Meanwhile, Nye's theory was introduced into China as the country was undertaking an in-depth investigation into the rise and fall of great nations, seeking not only to escape the fate of the Soviet Union but to transform China

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<sup>8</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of PRC, "China's Independent Foreign policy of Peace," August 18, 2003. <<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjzc/t24881.htm>>

<sup>9</sup> Bates Gill and Huang Yanzhong: "the Dragon's Underbelly: Assessing China's Soft Power" (Unpublished paper, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC, 2005)

into great power. Nye's framework informed the Chinese of the component of a great power. Second, China has to participate in international competition which includes the soft power competition. China has not been alone in embracing the notion of soft power. In East Asia, the same has been true of the scholarly and policy communities of Taiwan, Japan and Korea. What's more, in the globalization era, to materialize the national power relies upon the use of soft power. Third, China's rapid growth generated suspicions and concerns around the world especially its Asia neighbors. Hard means can only worsen the situation. Forth, the concept of soft power is of compatibility with Chinese traditions and culture. The theory resonates with traditional Chinese concept; for example, Confucianism extols a king who relies on moral force not physical force, believing that the kingly way [wangdao] will triumph over the hegemony's way [badao]. All of the aforementioned suggest the reasons of the sizable audiences of soft power in China.

Previous literatures approach the topic of China's soft power under the framework of the western conceptualization, or they understand the issue in a way not accommodating to the contemporary China's context. They interpret China's soft power mainly from two lenses. One is from the perspective of source, another is from behavior. As a result, they assess China's soft power from either of them but never both of them. Along with those discussions, a debate is unfolding on that if China's soft power rising in Asia. Foreign scholars and a minority of Chinese interlocutors hold the optimistic view that China's soft power is rising in Asia, while the mainstream Chinese scholarly pessimistically argue that China's soft power remains weak and lags behind that of the main great powers, especially the U.S. Methodologically, several approaches are attributable to their arguments:

The first approach is from the perspective of otherness. Through investigating other great power's soft power, these analysts reached this conclusion. They think that it is owing to the U.S.'s declining influence which left a power vacuum in Asia. China's soft power has benefited from the decline of U.S.'s soft power in the region; due in large part to America's perceived over-emphasis on the war against terror and the accompanying changes in its foreign policy. Chinese analyst attributes US's decreasing soft power to three causes: the unpopularity of US's unilateralism, reduced attention and funding for U.S.'s public diplomacy program, and an alienation of the world audience due to Iraq War.<sup>10</sup> The negative regional response to U.S. counterterrorism policy has made China look good by not doing anything.<sup>11</sup> Other players like Japan's soft power is limited by its history issue, demographic challenges, inward-looking culture and un-widely-spoken Japanese language. However, in contrast to the U.S., China places more soft power-based policy emphasis on regional organizations working toward regional solutions.<sup>12</sup> Such as China's role in the

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<sup>10</sup> Fang Changping: zhongmei ruanshili bijiao jiqi dui zhongguo de qishi (A comparison of U.S. and Chinese soft power and insight for China), shijie jingji yu zhengzhi, 2007, no.7:25.

<sup>11</sup> Lief-Eric Easley: the Hard Politics of Soft Power: prospects and limitations in Cross-Strait and Inter-Korean Relations, JoongAng Daily (With International Herald Tribune), Nov. 9,2007, p11; IHT-Asahi Shinbun, Nov. 6, 2007, p28; China Post, Nov.4, 2007, p4; OMNI, Nov.10,2007.

<sup>12</sup> China in Asia Seminar Series, Seminar 8, Summarized by Joshua Kurlantzick: Will China Wield Soft Power in Asia? December 12, 2005. <[http://www.ndu.edu/inss/Repository/INSS\\_Proceedings/AEI-NDU%20China%20Seminar%20Series%202005/Seminar\\_8\\_December05/ChinainAsiaSeminar8summary.pdf](http://www.ndu.edu/inss/Repository/INSS_Proceedings/AEI-NDU%20China%20Seminar%20Series%202005/Seminar_8_December05/ChinainAsiaSeminar8summary.pdf)>

Six-party talks on the North Korea nuclear issue, the enhanced relationship with South Korea, Russia and the new development of relations across the Taiwan Strait, has made the U.S. feel that its dominance in the East Asia has been weakened.<sup>13</sup> Beijing already is using its soft power to limit America's role in the region.<sup>14</sup>

The second is comparative approach covering quantitative and qualitative means. Chinese Professor Yan Xuetong and his colleague Xu Jin compared China and the U.S.'s soft power. They measured the China's soft power using the quantitative method, calculating and comparing two players' international mobilization, international attractiveness, and domestic mobilization. In their research, they adopted a lot of indexes, like the attractiveness of state mode, culture, the number of military alliance; decision-making right in international community, etc.<sup>15</sup> There are some analyst who did comparative studies on China and the U.S.'s soft power through philosophical thinking, comparing a series of features of the two actors' soft power.<sup>16</sup> To observe the two plays' soft power through case study is also an alternative for the observer to do comparative study.<sup>17</sup>

Thirdly, based on the behavioral perspective, through observing some specific phenomena and various government behaviors in China's diplomatic activities in recent years, they jump to this conclusion. For instance, the forefather of soft power, Nye, and Chinese soft power watcher Joshua Kurlantzick think China is the looming giant of Asia, viewing China's soft power is increasing.<sup>18</sup> According to Nye, the rising of China's soft power is shown in three aspects, namely, the carrying forward of Chinese traditional culture, the demonstrating of China's constructive economic achievements, and the promoting of China's international image. Other scholars mentioned the Chinese language study and foreign enrollment and China's rapid economic growth has won it admiration.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, China's disaster aids, trade system, financial cooperation, assistance institution, regional security cooperation are also referred by some analyst.<sup>20</sup> Some scholars like Alastair. Iain Johnston, Su Changhe, and Fang Changping assessed China's soft power from the angle of international institutions. Through China's more membership in international

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<sup>13</sup> Yuan Peng: New Changes and New Challenges. Global Times, April 5, 2006

<sup>14</sup> Joshua Kurlantzick: China's Latest Export: soft power, from the Los Angeles Time, <<http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/la-op-kurlantzick2sep02,0,645303.story?coll=la-opinion-righttrail>>

<sup>15</sup> Yan Xuetong & Xu Jin: Zhongmei Ruanshili Bijiao, "A Comparison of Soft Power Between China and the U.S." Xiandai Guoji Guanxi, "Modern International Relations", No.1, 2008. pp24-29.

<sup>16</sup> Fang Changping: Zhongmei Ruanshili Bijiao Jiqi dui Zhongguo de Qishi, "A Comparison of Soft Power between China and the US and its Implications for China", Shijie Jingji Yu Zhengzhi, World Economics and Politics, No.7, 2007. pp.21-27.

<sup>17</sup> Li Qingsi: Zhongmei Ruanshili Waijiao Bijiao Yanjiu: yi Dongnanya Diqu wei li, Comparative Study on China and the U.S. s Soft Power Diplomacy, case study on the Southeast Asia, Jiaoxue yu Yanjiu, Teaching and Study, 2009(2).

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Nye: Soft Power matters in Asia, the Japan Times, Monday, Dec. 5, 2005. <<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/print/eo20051205a1.html>> Joshua Kanlantzick: China's growing influence in Southeast Asia, edited by Riordan Roett & Guadalupe Paz, China's Expansion into the Western Hemisphere-----implication for Latin America and the United States, Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press. 2008. p.194. China's Soft Power in Southeast Asia: What does it mean for the region, and for the U.S., on June 13, 2006, the CEIP hosted a talk, as Pei Minxin as the mediator with the interviewee of Joshua Kurlantzick.

<sup>19</sup> See Bates Gill and Yanzhong Huang: Sources and Limits of China's Soft Power, Survival, Summer 2006. Also see David Ting: China's soft power growth writ large, Wednesday, August 13, 2008. From the China Post, <<http://www.chinapost.com.tw>>

<sup>20</sup> Chen Xiansi: Lun Zhongguo zai Dongnanya de Ruanshili, "China's soft Power in Southeast Asia", Dongnanya Yanjiu, "Southeast Asia Studies", No. 6, 2006. pp.43-48.

institutions and the frequent debuts in world stage, they assessed China's soft power. Fang thinks that a country's soft power is in a direct proportion to the capacity of lobby, mobilization, propaganda in international society.<sup>21</sup>

Forth, some professional survey institutions or broadcasting organs did public polls about China's soft power. An Asian soft power survey did by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs made a public opinion survey on China's soft power and some other main Asian players' soft power through the so-called overall "Soft Power Index" which includes economics, culture, human capital, diplomacy, and politics. With regards to China, the survey indicated that China's growing economics and military might have not yet been fully translated into the elements of soft power. This survey approves that the US still remains to be most influential in perceptions of its diplomatic, political, and human capital soft power.<sup>22</sup> An recent BBC World Service poll, also did the similar survey on China's influence on the world.<sup>23</sup> This BBC survey mainly look at polling data measuring China's popularity, in part because popularity is a good first approximation of both how attractive a country appears and the costs that are incurred by unpopular policies.<sup>24</sup> And some other institution like Pew Global Attitudes Project released in July 2008, which surveyed 21 countries in all regions of the world, surveyed China's soft power in Asia and other regions. Also, the Financial Times and Harris Interactive also conduct the similar polls on China's soft power.

In summary, previous literatures assessed China's soft power mainly based on two windows (source and behavior) and employing three methods (comparative, quantitative and qualitative). Let's have a deep look at these windows and approaches. The first comparative method evaluate China's soft power by the comparison with the U.S. and other major Asian players, pointing out those actors' declining soft power leave room for China's rising soft power. The second method is from the perspective of China's foreign behaviors, examining Chinese government's efforts to spread the Confucius Institutions, to offer foreign aids, to participate in international organizations and so on. The third method is calculating China's soft power source, like China's GDP growth rate, human capital, and cultural assets. The fourth method used by those professional survey projects, through designing various questions related to China's soft power and doing the people-to-people interviews, evaluated China's soft power.

Certainly, the previous studies to some degree reflect China's soft power, and to some degree they can explain China's soft power is rising or not. But there are research limits and blind spots. **Firstly**, most studies, both in domestic and on abroad, abused

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<sup>21</sup> See Alastair. Iain. Johnston: Zhongguo Canyu Guoji Tizhi de Ruogan Sikao, Shijie Jingji yu Zhengzhi, World Economy and politics, 1999, 7. Fang Changping: Zhongmei Ruanshili Bijiao Jiqi dui Zhongguo de Qishi, "A Comparison of Soft Power between China and the US and its Implications for China", Shijie Jingji Yu Zhengzhi, World Economics and Politics, No.7, 2007. pp.21-27. Su Changhe: zhongguo de ruanshili-----yi guojizhidu yu zhongguo de guanxi weili, "China's soft power-----an example in the relationship between China and International institutions", Guoji Guancha, International Observations, No. 2, 2007, pp.27-35. See also Su Changhe: Zhongguo de Ruanshili.

<sup>22</sup> Christopher B. Whitney& David Shambaugh: Soft Power in Asia: Result of a 2008 Multinational Survey of Public Opinion, the Chicago Council in partner ship with East Asia Institution.

<sup>23</sup> PIPA and Globescan, "22-Nation Poll Shows China Viewed Positively by Most Countries Including Its Asian Neighbors," available at <<http://www.pipa.org/OnlineReports/BBC Worldpoll/030505/html/bbcpoll3.html>>

<sup>24</sup> Nye, Soft Power, p. 18.

the concept in source level and in behavioral level. This misunderstanding over the concept of Chinese soft power accordingly misled the problematic approaches, through which it may fail to give a comprehensive and objective assessment on China's soft power. **Secondly**, no matter the approach that is numbering China's soft power resources or the one calculating Chinese government's behaviors in reinforcing its soft power, this can not rush to the argument of China's rising soft power. To evaluate one country's soft power, not only the quantitative sources should be taken into account, but the quality as well. That is to what extent and in which level the soft power influenced other actors and shaped others' preference. For example, a lot of elite scholars and analysts in and out, when they diagnose China's soft power, they mentioned the attractiveness and success of the Chinese development model, but how many countries adopted this model is a puzzle. In reality, to measure the appeal depends on that if the desired goals have been realized or if shaped others preferences. Even the comparative method only concerned some specific aspects of soft power, arguing one part's advantages and the other's disadvantages. Although soft power is a universal accepted topic on academic agenda, it enjoys different context and the diverging connotations. Therefore, this compare stands on an unequal footing. **Thirdly**, the problem of the previous literature, when they assess China's soft power, they focused their attention exclusively on the supply of China's soft power, such as observing Chinese government's behavior or figuring China's recourse, discussing China's soft power from the standpoint of China itself. To know China's soft power is rising or declining or to learn if China's soft power really outpaced other Asian players, it is imperative to examine carefully the recipients of China's soft power diplomacy in Asia.

This gap is to be filled through this research inattentively. In this paper, I challenge the conventional interpretations stated by experts and scholars in international studies within and without China. I do not intend to argue that their explanations are completely wrong; instead I just want to stuff up their missed theoretical perspective that is to turn to the investigation on the receiver of China's soft power diplomacy. Evaluating the effectiveness of a country's foreign strategy cannot be separated from how this country wields its national power, including both hard power and soft power, to achieve its foreign policy goals. It is difficult to calculate one country's soft power. In doing so, both the source and the behavior aspect must be included. What's more, more in-depth, theoretically-informed, empirically-grounded work and case study is terribly needed to assess China's soft power in Asia. This issue not only matter China's further growth but also matters the forwarding of the Asian cooperation even the entire world politics. For in today's world roadmap, China is the big problem as well as the hopeful solution. Before this thesis starts empirical analyses, it is necessary to set up a conceptual framework on the term of soft power.

## **I. The conceptualization of soft power**

In Nye's framework, soft power refers to the ability to obtain preferred outcomes through attraction rather than coercion or payment.<sup>25</sup> He further pointed out that the

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<sup>25</sup> Nye: *Soft power: the means to Success in World Politics*, New York: Public Affairs, 2004; and Joseph S. Nye:

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). The parenthetical conditions are the key to determining whether soft power resources translate into the behavior of attraction that can influence others toward favorable outcomes. For Nye's purpose, he chose the definition of power that is quite close to the common usage implied by the dictionary-----the ability to influence others to obtain the outcomes one wants. Of the three ways to affect others' behavior-----coercion, payment, and attraction-----he used the term soft power for the third.

Nye's definition, based on the behavioral perspective, is descriptive and normative. From his discussion, soft power resource includes culture, political values and policies. All of them can be generalized to culture alone covering two levels and two forms. One is the inside idea level including values, thinking ways, principles and spirits which can be called as idea culture. The other is the outside institutional level which is the socialization of culture. It is involved in national strategies, policies, norms and rules which can be called as institutional culture. Anyway, these two sorts of culture are all source power, put it in other way, it is soft power resource. Even Nye himself mentioned that "it is important not to confuse the resources that may produce behavior with the behavior itself. Whether the possession of power resources actually produces favorable outcomes depends on the context and the skills of the agent in converting the resources into behavioral outcomes."<sup>26</sup> In context of international relations, soft power is equal to the institutional culture covering strategies, policies, norms and rules.

The mainstream Chinese understanding of soft power is based largely on the conceptual framework proposed by Nye, and they also adhere to Nye's parameter of the soft power. There is currently no consensus on the definition of soft power in China. Chinese translations of soft power vary depending on the scholars based on their respective discipline field; among the choices, *ruanshili*, *ruanquanli*, *ruanliliang*, and *ruanguoli* are frequently used. Basically, two main schools of thought have emerged around which the discourse on China's soft power is centered. The mainstream view, held by China's leading sociologists and philosophers, is that "the core of soft power is culture." This is the cultural school. The minority view, held by some international relations experts, does not deny the importance of culture but focuses instead on how soft power resources are used, concluding that political power is the core of soft power. This is the political school.<sup>27</sup> Actually, what the two schools emphasized belong to different scopes. The former is embraced in the entity narrative and source angle while the later is in relationship narrative and behavioral angle. In a word, culture is the source and is source power while politics is the behavior and is political power. Then the dispute between the two schools is not on an

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Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power, New York: Basic Books, 1990.

<sup>26</sup> Watanabe Yasushi and David L. McConnell, edited: *Soft Power Superpowers: Cultural and National Assets of Japan and the United States*, with a foreword by Joseph S. Nye, Jr. M.E. Sharpe, pp. ix-xiv. 2008.

<sup>27</sup> Yan Xuetong: *Ruanshili de Hexin shi zhengzhishili*, "The Core of Soft Power is Political Power", *Geshujijian*. 2007(6).



equal footing. As a result, two definitions followed with the two schools. One is from the source perspective which refers soft power to Chinese culture, foreign policy, and international image, some particular ideas or policies and so on.<sup>28</sup> The other definition that is from the behavioral angle defines soft power as the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment.<sup>29</sup>

The cultural school has had the greatest impact on officers and policymaking: the central role of culture in the exercise of soft power has been embraced by China's leadership which is demonstrated in the official report and big potato's addresses.<sup>30</sup> As showed in President Hu Jintao's political report to the 17<sup>th</sup> Party Congress of October 2007, he stressed the urgency of building China's cultural soft power sufficiently to meet domestic needs and increase international competitiveness. Peng Fuchun, National People's Congress deputy said: "we should never underestimate the importance of building soft power as economic miracles is only one side of China's rising in the world area."<sup>31</sup> So to say, the cultural school's view which defines soft power as culture was accepted by Chinese top leaders.

Over viewing the previous discussions about the term of soft power coined by Nye, many analysts confused source with behavior through which soft power could be defined, or they paid too much attention to rebut the difference of soft power and hard

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<sup>28</sup> Yu Xintian thinks that China's soft power consists of ideology, institution, strategy and policy. (Yu Xintian: Ruanshili Duanxiang, Waijiao Pinglun "Foreign Affairs Review", No. 97, Aug. 2007.) Zheng Yongnian thinks that the Chinese mode, multilateralism, economic diplomacy and neighboring policy indicated China's soft power. (Zheng Yongnian & Zhangchi: Guojizhengzhi zhong de Ruanliliang yiji dui Zhongguo Ruanliliang de Guancha, Shiji Jingji yu Zhengzhi, No.7, 2007.) Men Honghua thinks that culture, ideas, development mode, international institutions and international image constitute the core element of soft power. (Meng Honghua: Zhongguo Ruanshi li Pinggu Baogao, "Assessment and Report of China's Soft power", Guoji Guancha, International Observer, No. 2, 2007.) Scholar Li Jie thinks that the soft power is culture, political values, ability of making the political agenda and rules of international games, information power, and legitimate foreign policy with moral authority. In addition, citizen's moral level, national image, national cohesion, political stability, leadership capacity and creative capacity should not be ignored. (Li Jie: Tisheng Ruanshili dui Shixian Woguo Heping Jueqi Zhanlve de Zuoyong, Taiping yan Xuebao, No. 12, 2005.)

<sup>29</sup> Shen Suru thinks that soft power refers to the capability of attraction or benevolence rather than strains to attain its expected goals. It comes from the culture, values and internal and external policies. (Shen Suru: Kaizhan Ruanshili yu Duiwaichuanbo de Yanjiu.) Ji Ling and Chen Shiping think that soft power is a sort of attractiveness through assimilating others rather than enforcing others to attain its goals. They view that one's soft power resource is composed of culture, values, policy, and international institutions. (Ji Ling & Chen Siping: Guoji Zhengzhi de Bianqian yu Ruanquanli Lilun, "The Changes of International Politics and Soft Power Theory", Waijiao Pinglun, Foreign Affairs Review, No. 96, Jun. 2007.) Liu AMing thinks that soft power is the ability to make others do what you want them to do, emphasizing the cooperation rather imposition. (Liu Aming: Soft power theory and China's peaceful rise, Taipingyang Xuebao, No.2, 2002.) Liu Zunyi argues that soft power is the ability to win friends and affect others morally. This ability means to treat all states fairly, never abuse power, and behave oneself in a modest way. (<http://news.163.com/40819/0/0U52KV2K0001124T.html>.) Su Changhe argues that soft power is evident in a state's international institute-building, agenda-setting, mobilization of coalitions and ability to fulfill commitments. (Su Changhe: zhongguo de ruanshili-----yi guojizhidu yu zhongguo de guanxi weili, "China's soft power-----an example in the relationship between China and International institutions", Guoji Guancha, International Observations, No. 2, 2007, pp.27-35.)

<sup>30</sup> See the political report to the 16<sup>th</sup> Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Congress in 2002, for in stance, points out: "In today's world, culture intertwines with economics and politics, demonstrating a more prominent position and role in the competition for comprehensive national power." Jiang Zemin, *Political Report to the 16<sup>th</sup> CCP Congress*, Nov. 8, 2002. President Hu Jintao made this clear at the central Foreign Affairs Leadership Group meeting on Jan. 4, 2006: "the increase in our nation's international status and influence will have to be demonstrated in hard power such as economy, science and technology, and defence, as well as in soft power such as culture." Ma Lisi "guanyu woguo jiaqiang ruanshili jianshe de chubu sikao," (Preliminary Thoughts on Accelerating China's Soft Power Building), Dang De Wenxian (Literature of Chinese Communist Party), No. 7, pp. 35-38. Hu again highlighted soft power in his political report to the 17<sup>th</sup> Party Congress of Oct. 2007, stressing the urgency of building China's cultural soft power sufficiently to meet domestic needs and increase international competitiveness.

<sup>31</sup> Soft Power: A New Focus at China's Two Sessions, National People's Congress, People's Republic of China, URL: [www.npc.gov.cn](http://www.npc.gov.cn).

power. This will negatively lead to the disparity advices on the means of improving China's soft power. The theoretical drawbacks may contribute to the failure in policy-making when Chinese government has become increasingly dependent on experts in policy making, especially policy analysts of the growing number of official and semi-official think-tanks.<sup>32</sup> Hence, the primary task to do in-depth research on China's soft power is to clarify the concept not only adhering to the acknowledged theoretical narrative but accommodating to the actual China conditions as well.

In this article, or turning to the actual Chinese case, before we come to talk about its soft power, we have to make clear about a series of conceptions. Initially, what is power? On one hand, from the source perspective, it falls into two categories: hard power (*yinshili*) and soft power (*ruanshili*). Hard power refers to one country's military building, GDP, territory, population, infrastructures, natural resources and the like. They are countable and tangible, and easy to measure. However, in this context, soft power refers to one country's culture which is uncountable, intangible and difficult to assess. Both of them build up the country's comprehensive national strength (*zonghe guoli*). On the other hand, from the behavioral perspective, a totally different picture of power will be revealed. In this context, power is one's ability to affect the behavior of others to get what one wants. Hard power is the use of coercion and payment to get what they want while soft power is the ability to materialize goals through attraction and appeal. The power defined in source term is an entity while in behavioral term is a relationship. The comprehensive national strength is the resource of these three powers based on behavioral lens.

In this research, Soft power (I would like to translate it into *ruanquanli*) based on the behavioral lens, is a relationship rather than an entity, which means the ability to gain what they want through appeal and attraction. The currency of soft power comes from the overall national strength. But considering in Chinese discourse, official documents and top leader's speaks mainly refers soft power to culture which is based on the source perspective. Then, this research will mainly investigate the role of soft power source in China's soft power behavior. Let's have a deeper look at China's cultural soft power. As I have mentioned above, soft power (*ruanshili*) in China is culture which can be summarized in two levels. One is the idea strata indicated in China's values, thinking ways, ideas and norms and the like. The other is institutional strata revealed in its output of policies, strategies, rules, and institutions. This institutional level of culture is the socialization of the culture in idea strata. In the discipline of international relations, the cultural soft power prone to refer to the culture in institutional level which is involved in one country's foreign policies, strategies and diplomacy. What's more, in the globalization era, the significance of the resource power like the cultural soft power relies upon its application in international relations. To this point, the implementation of well-thought-out foreign policy can serve as a contributor to detect one country's soft power. Turning to China, a series of "harmony" concept like the peaceful rise, peaceful development, and the new arrival of harmonious world which have been regarded as diplomatic strategies to realize

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<sup>32</sup> Wang Hongying & Lu Yen-Chung: The Conception of Soft Power and its Policy Implications: a Comparative Study of China and Taiwan, *Journal of Contemporary China* (2008), 17(56), August, 425-447.

China's goal to be a great power, can be looked upon as important diplomatic cases to examine the cultural soft power and its applications to national strategy.

Positioned in the discipline of international relations, this research will observe the role of institution-level cultural soft power in its soft power wielding. That's the relationship between source power and behavioral power, in other word; it's the observation on the connection between culture in institutional level and soft power behavior. But its focus will be on the assessment of the effectiveness of the soft power diplomacy.

Before empirical analysis, this study tries to set up a conceptual framework on the relations between the idea of peaceful development and China's soft power wielding in its rising process. Within this framework, this study examines a rising China's foreign policy toward its targeted region-----Asia. Due to Beijing's soft power-based foreign policies, the Asians has become an increasing harmonious environment for Beijing to project a favorable national image, exert its political influence on regional affairs, benefits its domestic developments, etc. Compared to the existing researches which assess China's soft power through numbering its resources or calculating Chinese government's behaviors, this study would not only cover both of them to assess China's soft power, but also move eyesight to the recipient to evaluate China's soft power wielding in Asia.

A series puzzles will be resolved and cleared out through this research. What is China's soft power? How China use its soft power? If China's soft power really effective? Or if China's soft power really rising in Asia?

## **II. Case Studies**

Taiwan is long China's greatest security challenge and most sensitive foreign policy issue. It can be as a good sensor to detect China's actions and intentions in Asia. And through examining Taiwan side's response toward China's soft power diplomacy, we may know that if China's soft power really works in Asia. A lot of scholars or analysts do not thinks there is soft power diplomacy in Taiwan issue. Taiwan is not part of China's charm offensive policies in Asia. However, as some policy advisor point out: officially and unofficially, the development of the nation's soft power has been regarded as a pressing task and is near the top of China's list of priority.<sup>33</sup> Then if this soft power strategy is also utilized in the Taiwan issue or if it has won the acclaim of Taiwan and Taiwanese, if this marks China's soft power diplomacy create a security environment in Asia?

### *Why Taiwan?*

First, the cross-strait relations can best serve to the goal of this research. This research is to assess if China's soft power diplomacy really function in Asia. Then it has to know about China's goals in Asia. As to the Taiwan issue, we could smell China's intention clearly.

Second, mainland China's policy toward Taiwan experienced a transition from earlier

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<sup>33</sup> Pang Zhongying: The Beijing Olympics and China's Soft Power, <[http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2008/0904\\_olympics\\_pang.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2008/0904_olympics_pang.aspx)>

times' hard means to recently soft ones. From "forcing the reunification" to "preventing the independence", China began to launch a charm offensive against the politicians and people in the island. For example, inviting opposition party leaders to visit the mainland, extending tuition benefits to Taiwanese studying at mainland universities, and through a zero-tariff policy on imports of Taiwan's fruit, offering export incentive perks to farmers in the south of Taiwan (traditionally a pro-Taiwan independence stronghold). Those fresh facts and figures provide with luxuriant and abundant empirical data to observe China's soft power diplomacy.

Third, to examine the implication of China's soft power diplomacy in Asia integration, it has to conduct research on some hot potato issues in Asia. So far, the Taiwan Strait issue and the two Koreas are the No. one security issue in Asia-Pacific region. They would play significant role in the progress of Asia cooperation. As a big variable to Asia affairs, it is worthy of spending time and energy on such issue.

### *Background*

Taiwan was cut off from the mainland China in 1949 when the Kuomintang or Nationalist Party (KMT) was defeated by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in a civil war. Relations across the Taiwan Strait were characterized by one crisis after another during the 1950s and 1960s. Since 1970s, China's basic Taiwan policy has been two fold: peaceful reunification and non-reunification to the use of force. The first feature of China's Taiwan policy is well-known: its ambitions at peacefully reunifying Taiwan with the Chinese mainland along the lines of a formula-----one country, two system-----that has been successfully implemented in Hong Kong since 1997 and in Macau in 1999. This policy would turn Taiwan into a special administrative region of the PRC (article 30 of the PRC constitution), granting the island with a large autonomy, including in terms of external economic, trade and cultural relations. The second feature-----the non-reunification to the use of force-----is not less important: it is aimed at containing and weakening pro-independence and pro-separatist forces on Taiwan, in other words, at creating on the island the conditions for a peaceful reunification of China.

However, it was Taiwan's democratization and its ambition to reintegrate the world community as a state entity distinct from the PRC that triggered in the early 1990s a gradual remilitarization of the Taiwan Strait, a zone that had been partly demilitarized after 1978. Shortly after Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui's unofficial visit to the US in June 1995 and in the run-up to the first direct Taiwanese presidential elections in March 1996, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) launched a series of missiles at targets in the East China Sea. The 1995-1996 episodes have been labeled as another Taiwan Strait Crisis. But this coercive strategy make the cross-strait relation suffer great regress.

It seems the active Chinese military pressure on Taiwan independence movement today, as distinct from threat, does not appear to be a very promising option for China. Analysts have argued that prospects for seizing Taiwan through amphibious assaults are poor but noted that the Chinese submarine threat to Taiwan is possibly the most serious. More importantly, a Chinese use of force against Taiwan is likely to cause a

major international crisis, and American military intervention may follow. More critical of all, such an unstable political environment will have catastrophic consequences for China's economic modernization drive, there by hindering Beijing's drive to truly global power status in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

While China's military pressure and coercive strategy can not function effectively but elicit reverse effect, Beijing's leadership and think-tank advisors began to concentrate on a more immediate priority: preventing Taiwan from moving towards independence and improving its international status.<sup>34</sup> Jiang Zemin's "eight point speech" made public in January 30, 1995 was the first indicator of this evolution, suggesting that the two sides across the Taiwan Strait start negotiations "on officially ending the state of hostility between the two sides and accomplishing peaceful reunification step by step."<sup>35</sup> Then his successor President Hu Jintao again determined to change this embarrassing situation, aiming to shift China's Cross-Strait policy with the indicator of Hu's "four points" and the recently proposed "six points". These are consistent with Hu's speech in the 17<sup>th</sup> Chinese Communist Party Congress, when he declared, "On the basis of the one-China principle, let us discuss a formal end to the state of hostility between the two sides, reach a peace agreement, construct a framework for peaceful development of cross-Straits relations, and thus usher in a new phase of peaceful development."<sup>36</sup> It seems that Beijing has adopted a peaceful offense, and economic and culture exchanges have developed rapidly in recent years.

### *Analysis*

Since the cross-straits relations suffered great setbacks under the coercive strategy, Chinese leaders and policy advisors turn to adopt a more flexible and realistic policy toward Taiwan, through which Beijing has attracted the Taiwan side to the negotiating table and put the relations in right track. For instance, due to the efforts of both the Chinese Communist Party on the mainland and the Kuomintang in Taiwan, high officials from the two parties visited each other and established a mechanism to work toward reconciliation and handle practical matters. Recently, cross-strait relations made great progress, directly resulting in the realization of direct links of transport, trade and postal services between mainland China and Taiwan. This was a historical achievement.<sup>37</sup>

Now, with fewer threats in the air, there would be more room for soft power-----the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment. Hence, China needs to present itself as a tolerant and benign government to the Taiwanese masses today. China must win the hearts and minds of the Taiwanese masses if it hopes to take over the country peacefully. I'd like to argue that Beijing's policy toward Taiwan take turns with coercive strategy and soft power strategy which are the two sides of the same coin: the attractive logic is embedded in coercive

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<sup>34</sup> Jean-Pierre Cabestan, "Cross Strait Relations-What Role for the European Union?" ECAN Policy Brief #4.

<sup>35</sup> See Jiang Zemin's speech, "Continue to Promote the Reunification of China", <[http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/zlzx/zlzx0.asp?offset=150&zlx\\_m\\_id=1527](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/zlzx/zlzx0.asp?offset=150&zlx_m_id=1527)>

<sup>36</sup> Hu Jintao, "The 17th Party Congress Political Report," Xinhua, Oct. 24, 2007, <[http://www.china.com.cn/17\\_da/2007-10/24/content\\_9119449.htm](http://www.china.com.cn/17_da/2007-10/24/content_9119449.htm)>

<sup>37</sup> Zhang Quanyi, "Interpreting China's New Taiwan Policy", Global Survey Published, January 15, 2009. <[http://www.upiasia.com/Politics/2009/01/15/interpreting\\_chinas\\_new\\_taiwan\\_policy/5293/](http://www.upiasia.com/Politics/2009/01/15/interpreting_chinas_new_taiwan_policy/5293/)>

strategy. By 2005, with the passage by the PRC National People's Congress of the Anti-Secession Law [fan guojia fenlie fa], President Hu had become associated with an approach to dealing with Taiwan embodied in the dictum "ying de geng ying, ruan de geng ruan" [the hard harder, the soft softer].<sup>38</sup> With this strategy, the PRC has signaled its intention to make its sticks more menacing while offering carrots that it hopes will be more alluring. An observer pointed out China's direct military coercion has been replaced by indirect three-in-one approaches that draw on psychology, the media and law, such as the concept of diplomatic truce, panda diplomacy and social and economic exchange transmit the good intention of the mainland.<sup>39</sup> For Beijing, Taiwan is a vital issue of unresolved sovereignty and the most important consideration in its diplomatic policy. Beijing's adoption of soft power diplomacy is a result of accumulated frustration and failure of its coercive strategy. China's peaceful policy in the whole framework of its foreign policy, in essence, comes from its Confucian and humanistic mindset toward conflict management, exemplified by the saying "blood is thicker than water," and his philosophy of concern for others.<sup>40</sup>

There are several indicators embodied in the China's soft power diplomacy. The first is the concept of China's harmonious society and harmonious world, which are the desired domestic order and international order China would dedicate to construct. The peaceful development idea served in the above mentioned guidelines imply that China would use few coercive strategies in the cross-strait relation. The second is promotion of economic and cultural exchanges and peaceful negotiations to end the military confrontation across the Taiwan Strait. The third is reservation of the use of force as a last resort. China has reiterated, in a non-ambiguous way, that to safeguard the one China principle it will not give up the use of force should the situation require it.<sup>41</sup> The fourth is making full use of every quasi-official platform; CPC leaders received various high level Pan-blue Coalition officials and tried to establish mutual trust and positive dealing with them. Fifth, China has also publicly extended friendly gestures towards the Pan-Green camp, including prominent Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) figures. This included inviting some DPP government leaders to attend in the opening ceremony of Beijing Olympic Games.<sup>42</sup> As President Hu has said: "If the DPP could change its Taiwan independence stance, we would make a positive response to them."<sup>43</sup> Sixth, cooperation closely with Taiwan's schedule, the mainland has also implemented a series of preferential policies that will serve and protect Taiwanese legitimate rights and interests, support their economic development, and practically benefit common Taiwanese students, farmers, workers and businessmen.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> "President Hu offers six proposals for peaceful development of cross-Strait relationship," Xinhua, Dec.31, 2008, <[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-12/31/content\\_10585635.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-12/31/content_10585635.htm)>

<sup>39</sup> Yu Tsung-chi, "The Shift in China's Taiwan Policy," February 11, 2009 "Max".

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Zhao Suisheng, *Taiwan: From Peaceful Offense to Coercive Strategy*, edited by Yong Deng & Fei-ling Wang, "In the Eyes of the Dragon: China Views the World", Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 1999.

<sup>42</sup> Unfortunately, no DPP leaders came to the ceremony because of their political and ideological stands. Such a visit will make them be criticized as "pro-China" and put them in a very embarrassing situation in domestic politics.

<sup>43</sup> "President Hu offers six proposals."

<sup>44</sup> "Wang Yi Declared 10 Preferential Policy towards Taiwan Facing International Financial Crisis,"

But if this soft means have effectively greased the cross-strait relation, it has to diagnose the recipient of Taiwan's responses including the degree of adjustment of Taiwan's behavior and preference, the type and pattern of cooperation they selected, and the amount of sacrifice in terms of relative capabilities toward China's soft power-based policy.

### **Inattentive Conclusion**

China's has accomplished impressive gains in its overall level of soft power. Its successful development model has won global admiration while aiding in the development of a new affinity between China and the rest of the world. Its cultural assets attract a great foreign enrolment and the Confucius Institution spreading at the end of nowhere. Its "harmonious world" concept has led to China's more active and responsible participation in international affairs, which is increasing China's agenda setting ability and improving its national image. Its international image bettered off in many areas of the world. However, the further expansion of China's soft power is historically and realistically constrained by its domestic dilemmas and international factors.

Domestically, many obstacles lie in the way of China's strengthening its soft power influence. The traditional image of China as a revolutionary communist country with a communist party still in power is a psychological and ideological obstacle in accepting China as a regional benign hegemony. The development framework and clear policy of an ideal mix of soft power resources to serve its foreign-policy agenda remains a daunting challenge for Beijing. As far as cultural attractiveness is concerned, China has great resources, but admits it is not strong in marketing its cultural products. China's development model was praised by many countries, but how many follower of that model remains a puzzle. Moreover, China's model also faces serious socioeconomic challenges at home, as the government is increasingly pressed to provide adequate public goods and services in many societal respects. The widening income gap, withering state and widespread corruption call into question sustainability and long-time appeal of China's development and the so-called Beijing Consensus. As to the diplomacy, the lack of meaningful political reform, coupled with Beijing's friendship with dictators in the developing world, creates a legitimacy problem for Beijing to cope with. As Nye has pointed out, state most likely to project soft power in an information age are those whose dominant ideas are closer to global norms which now emphasize liberalism, pluralism and autonomy.<sup>45</sup> It means such soft power should be characteristic of nationality as well as universality.<sup>46</sup> Although China actively participates in international institution and is frequently present in the table discussing world affairs, its authoritarian political system of the Communist Party dictatorship lags far from the universally-accepted values. However, this is a salient aspect of soft power. Then, another factor hinders Beijing's efforts to mobilize soft power is the lack of coherence in promoting its foreign policy. Beijing's ability to

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<[http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/gzyw/gzyw1.asp?gzyw\\_m\\_id=1806](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/gzyw/gzyw1.asp?gzyw_m_id=1806)>

<sup>45</sup> Joseph S. Nye, "Soft Power in the Information Age", luncheon lecture, Harvard University, 2 May 2000.

<sup>46</sup> Guo Shuyong, "the New Internationalism and China's Soft Power Diplomacy", *International Observer*, 2007, (2).

pursue a coherent and conciliatory foreign policy is crucial for advancing a benign and attractive image to its neighbors and around the world. In so doing, however, Beijing often finds itself burdened by history and distracted by rising nationalist sentiments. Problems with internal consistency in foreign policy also explain why China has not been able to reap significant gains in cross-strait relations. Although China extended its olive branch and launched charm offensive to the island, Beijing's influence still far short of achieving reunification with Taiwan. Indeed, the vast majority of Taiwan's citizens prefer a status quo which neither invites Chinese coercive (or worse) nor requires unification with the Communism mainland. But a combination of Beijing's soft- and hard-power instrument in recent years has stemmed the political fortunes of the pro-independence movement in Taiwan for the time being.<sup>47</sup>

In an addition, Chinese soft power is also limited by the international system itself in that the rise of China is occurring at a time when the international system is undergoing a structural transformation, which inevitably complicates China's further efforts to project its soft power. China's rising influence generates a dilemma for the international community. On one hand, China is shepherding its resources for the long term goal of being a dominant player in Asia and beyond. As Beijing attains its goals in this pursuit, it will have enormous and potentially negative implications for the current balance of power in the region. Nations balance against threats. This rise will have implications for other actors' competitiveness and diplomatic toolbox. On the other hand, many aspects of China's foreign policy which substantiate its soft power-----greater acceptance of norms governing international relations, peaceful settlement of disputes, mutually beneficial economic ties, and recognition of the need to address non-traditional and transnational security problems, peaceful development, harmonious Asia, harmonious world-----are increasingly convergent with approaches advocated by the vast majority of the international community. How the major power, and especially Washington, responds to this dilemma will be a major factor shaping the stability of Asia and restrain China's further projecting of its soft power. Also, concerned major powers and other regional powers like Japan, Taiwan should also step up their consultations about China. Beijing is coming to realize, just as Washington and Tokyo do, that for every international action it takes, an equal and opposite reaction will occur.<sup>48</sup> The rise of Chinese power no matter soft or hard generates the global response that Beijing cannot fully control and that may not be in its interest. At the same time, some problems such as its persistent historical disputes with Asian neighbors, various China threat theories, the so-called China's Neo-Colonialism in Africa, and the increased vigilance from the other players have already began to challenge Beijing's soft power effectiveness in Asia.

In summary, because of these problems, we can not rightly conclude how willingly neighboring countries will accept China's soft power and rashly jump to the conclusion of China's rising soft power in Asia. Such judgments are often exaggerated, one-sided and misled in the West and else where. The discourse of China's soft power

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<sup>47</sup> Bates Gill and Yanzhong Huang: Sources and Limits of China's Soft Power, *Survival*, Vol. 48, No. 2, Summer 2006, pp. 17-36.

<sup>48</sup> David M. Lampton: The Faces of Chinese Power, *Foreign Affairs*, January/February, 2007.



is rising has easily overestimated China's real capacity and underestimated China's problems and difficulties. Given the constant tensions between its foreign policy objectives and the still-nascent soft power resource, China still has a long way to go before becoming a true global leader. Anyway, despite such setbacks, China's soft power diplomacy is sure to continue, and it will present American and Asian policy-makers with both opportunities and challenges. Also, it is foreordained to be a key variable to observing the progressing Asian cooperation.

To some degree, this study can predict that as China continues its rising process; those challenges will not disappear in the near future. In order to construct a real harmonious world and inform the world of its peaceful development, Beijing has to adopt more creative and carefully-designed foreign policies, and put more efforts to develop and wield its soft power in its rising process.

### **Implications for Asia Cooperation**

Asians (and analysts of Asia) have begun to focus on a new level of interaction: soft power. China's rising soft power has certainly had academic and practical implications in Asia and for Asia cooperation, which are reflected in the various scholarly debates about the two. Several factors account for the improvement of China's image and rise of its influence in Asia. The most important is rapid economic growth. A little less obvious, but equally important factor is China's regional policy. Currently, China's Asia policy is summarized as: pursuing good neighbourly relations and partnership with neighbors and fostering a harmonious secure and prosperous neighbourly environment. Chinese leaders and diplomats use three Chinese word to describe it : *anling* means make the region peaceful and secure, *fuling* means pursuit of regional common development or win-win situation, *muling* means good neighbourliness and friendship. In other words, China has offered Asian countries: (1) peaceful development (2) equality and mutual trust (3) mutual benefit or win-win partnership and (4) common or cooperative security.<sup>49</sup>

China and Asian cooperation is an evolving concept, the questions of how Asian cooperation influence China's international behavior and how China's external behaviors shape the process of Asian cooperation is intensely intertwined. As previous studies have shown, China has been exhibiting a change in its attitude toward Asia since the mid-1990s: it regards Asia as a core strategic region and has actively implemented regional policies toward the continent, which had not been the case in the past. Based on its size, strategic location, and rising economic and military power, China has become the leading regional power in Asia; and factors of geography and interest have made Asia the main international arena where the Chinese government has always exerted influence. Reflecting its rising stature and influence in Asia, China has become a key player in dealing with regional hot spots. China's decision on Taiwan by military means or by peaceful means cast the decisively role in over the entire Asian security environment. China is rapidly emerging as the engine of growth in Asia, which affords it increasing influence and leverage.<sup>50</sup> For instance, China has

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<sup>49</sup> Pang Zhongying, "China's Asia Policy."

<sup>50</sup> Evan S. Medeiros and M. Taylor Fravel: China's New Diplomacy, Foreign Affairs, Volume 82 No. 6.

begun propagating various diplomatic ideas such as: responsible power, new security concept, peaceful rise and development, harmonious world and harmonious Asia, and has implemented a good neighbor policy to support these notions. These efforts have mitigated the concerns of neighboring countries and warranted China's rise as a regional power.<sup>51</sup> China's closer integration with economies in the region, along with a trend toward more assertive political and diplomatic manner, has contributed to great optimism for the economic and political regionalization in East Asia. China's active participation in international institutions creates more chances to elicit cooperation on key issues. Moreover, China now brings more resources and influence to the table. Beijing's lead role in addressing the Korean nuclear crisis is one such example. When come to the Asia community issue, the bloc should cover all actors in this region. However, owing to the awkward situation in the cross-strait relation, Taiwan is excluded from essentially all regional integration efforts in recent years. Sadly, talking about Taiwan in the context of regional integration (or anything else for that matter) remains a taboo for many Asian governments when China is in the same room. But if China's further soft power diplomacy can alleviate the confrontation, attracting the two parts on the negotiation table, this will grease the cowheel of the Asia community building.

In historical retrospect, China was the dominant regional power both politically, economically and culturally. China had substantial soft power influence and had been the hegemonic power in the East Asian region with tributary relationships with other neighboring countries in the Qing dynasty and before. And culturally East Asia region was also heavily influenced by Chinese traditional culture including language and philosophies. Similar historical and cultural ties hold true for other countries in Southeast Asia and for Vietnam in particular. This predestinates China's ongoing role in Asia's prospect. The source of China's soft power in Asia lies in Chinese civilization, which allows China to take a leading role in creating a new definition of so-called Asian values. Put differently, Chinese history and civilization are important resources because they can be reconstructed and reinvented to help create an imaged Asian identity and values.<sup>52</sup> Thus, taking advantage of its history and cultural legacies, China can attempt to increase its soft power by creating common, imagined identities and values for Asians which is of paramount significance for the further Asian cooperation and the integration. For China, it is a possible task to assume because Chinese civilization and history transcend mere representation of a single national history. The rise of China is once again making it possible to pursue Asian values based on Chinese civilization, at least in Confucian East Asian countries. As some scholar mentioned, to speak of China's role in East Asian regional integration, it is unavoidable to talk about China's soft power. This is because soft power in terms of cultural and political influence, and diplomatic relations are indispensable elements for the region to accept China's leadership role in building and influencing policy in

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<sup>51</sup> Jianwei Wang, "China's Multilateral Diplomacy in the New Millennium," in *China Rising: Power and Motivation in Chinese Foreign Policy*, eds. Deng Yong and Fei-ling Wang (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), pp. 159-200; Zhang Yunling and Tang Shiping, "China's Regional Strategy," in *Power Shift*, ed. Shambaugh, pp. 48-68.

<sup>52</sup> Young Nam Cho and Jong Ho Jeong: "China's Soft Power: discussion, resources, and prospects", *Asia Survey*, Vol. XLVIII, No.3. May-June 2008.

the region.<sup>53</sup> To China, no matter what it want to be in shaping policies in the region, political and economic power is indispensable, but soft power is imperative. Soft power diplomacy, an aspect of regional cooperation in Asia, can act as a kind of adhesion to carry out the cooperation.

In many ways, China's new appreciation of soft power has already had impact on its domestic and foreign policy. It has given the Chinese government a new way to conceptualize and exercise power both at home and abroad. It has inspired the development of new policy instruments. It has added new considerations to Chinese calculations of the costs and benefits of particular policy choices. Furthermore, both Chinese and foreign observers seem to believe that China's new policy initiatives guided by the concept have actually led to greater soft power for China in the international context. And in order for China to play a larger role as a new hegemonic driving force in regional integration in East Asia, China still needs to further accumulate soft power.

To assess China's soft power diplomacy in Asian matters for the contemporary China study and Asian regional cooperation because it gives us a new perspective to observe the roles, interests and norms of China involved, assists us in understanding how China's soft power determine the shape and speed of regional integration, and allow us to speculate on the future of the region. Meanwhile, we may know if China's soft power is rising or not. In that no matter China's soft power is rising or not in Asia, this will pose as a new variable for the further Asian cooperation and integration, even matters for the whole world politics. China's future role is vital but hard to define. However, one thing is sure that China will contribute to act as a facilitator and enforcer of Asian regional cooperation.

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<sup>53</sup> Li Xing& Zhang Shengjun: China and Regional Integration in East Asia: Opportunities, Constraints and Challenges, CCIS (Centre for Comparative Integration Studies) Research Series Working Paper No.9.ISSN: 1902-9718.

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