

The Concept of Soft Power in China's Strategic Discourse

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The evolving discourse on soft power within China's strategic studies community offers a unique window into Chinese thinking about non-coercive strategy. This article provides an initial assessment of the discourse, covering the conceptualization of soft power development as a key component of China's grand strategy, as well as three particular means through which soft power resources are envisioned as useful in service of larger strategic objectives. These include culture transmission, leadership in the developing world, and reassurance to states that perceive China's rise as a threat. The conclusion critiques the ideas addressed within the discourse, and offers avenues for continued research.

KEYWORDS: China; strategy; power; security; discourse.

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From the late 1990s, and especially in the last few years, there has been an upsurge of interest in the concept of "soft power" within China's strategic studies community.¹ Analysts have

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¹For valuable comments on previous drafts of this article, I wish to thank Richard Betts, Gerald Curtis, Scott Harold, Yanzhong Huang, Andrew Nathan, Joseph Nye, and three anonymous referees for *Issues & Studies*. Any omissions or errors are my responsibility alone.

asked both fundamental questions, such as what soft power is and how it relates to "hard power," and more specific questions, such as how various forms of soft power can be developed and used to attain foreign policy objectives. Research has been carried out by a plethora of well-known experts, usually in major universities (including Tsinghua 清華 and Fudan 復旦), research centers (for instance, the Central Party School 中央黨校), and relevant branches of the government (such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 外交部). The products of their analyses have appeared in leading academic and policy journals, and have also trickled down to the level of general periodicals and popular commentary.²

The discourse that has resulted from this interest is not a closed system.³ That is, it is not simply the product of academics mulling ideas among themselves. External inputs include state ideology (such as references to China's "peaceful rise," "scientific socialism," and the goal of building a "harmonious world"); Western publications (including, especially, the writings of Joseph Nye,⁴ as well as Western analyses of Chinese soft power);⁵ and ongoing developments in Chinese foreign policy itself

²Examples include: Zhu Majie, "Xin shiji guoji guanxi zhong de ruan guoli jingzheng" (Competition for soft power in international relations in the new century), *Guoji zhanwang* (World Outlook), January 2001, 7-11; Han Song and Huang Yan, "Guojia zhanlue xin luodian" (New aspects of national strategy), *Liaowang* (Outlook Weekly), 2007, no. 11:20-23; and "Ruan shili tisheng Zhongguo xiyinli" (軟實力提昇中國吸引力, Soft power raises China's attractiveness), *Beijing ribao* (北京日報 Beijing Daily), December 29, 2006.

³For a summary of the evolution of "soft power" in the Chinese literature, see: Liu Qing and Wang Litao, "Jinnian guonei ruan lilian lilun yanjiu zongshu" (A summary of recent domestic research on soft power theory), *Guoji luntan* (International Forum), 2007, no. 3: 38-43; and Zheng Yongnian and Zhang Chi, "Guoji zhengzhi zhong de ruan lilian yiji dui Zhongguo ruan lilian de guancha" (Soft power in international politics and observations on China's soft power), *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* (World Economics and Politics), 2007, no. 7: 7 nn. 2, 3.

⁴See, especially: Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "The Changing Nature of World Power," *Political Science Quarterly* 105, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 177-92; Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990); and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

⁵These include: Joshua Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power Is Transforming the World* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007); Phillip C. Saunders, ed., *China's Global Activism: Strategy, Drivers, and Tools* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2006); Joshua Cooper Ramo, *The Beijing Consensus* (London: Foreign Policy Centre, 2004); and Bates Gill and Yanzhong Huang, "Sources and Limits of Chinese 'Soft Power'," *Survival* 48, no. 2 (June 2006): 17-36. For other Western treatments

(such as the establishment of hundreds of "Confucius Institutes" [*Kongzi xueyuan*, 孔子學院] around the world).⁶ Although the discourse is a hybrid of various sources, it has become increasingly detailed, has involved a growing number of participants, and has evolved both in its dynamism and in its analytical complexity.

There is also a probable linkage between the discourse community and the foreign policy decision-making process. This may function as a feedback loop through which leaders seek the advice of civilian experts, the research of whom is, in turn, constrained by the decisions of policy elites. We are able to perceive one side of this process through the opinions of scholars, which is useful because experts are in demand as sources of advice on exactly these types of issues.⁷ Nevertheless, it is important to disclaim that the ideas put forward by participants in the discourse do not, or will not, necessarily result in actual foreign policy decisions, and that the relative influence of particular analysts is variable.⁸

of Chinese soft power, see: Yanzhong Huang and Sheng Ding, "The Dragon's Underbelly: An Analysis of China's Soft Power," *East Asia* 23, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 22-44; Sheng Ding, "Soft Power and the Rise of China: An Assessment of China's Soft Power in its Modernization Process" (Ph.D. dissertation, Rutgers University, May 2006); Andrew Erickson and Lyle Goldstein, "Hoping for the Best, Preparing for the Worst: China's Response to U.S. Hegemony," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 29, no. 6 (December 2006): 955-86; Jean A. Garrison, "China's Prudent Cultivation of 'Soft' Power and Implications for U.S. Policy in East Asia," *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 32, no. 1 (March 2005): 25-30; and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "The Rise of China's Soft Power," *The Wall Street Journal Asia*, op-ed, December 29, 2005. For a U.S. government assessment, see Thomas Lum et al., *China's "Soft Power" in Southeast Asia*, CRS Report for Congress (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, January 4, 2008). My thanks to Scott Harold for bringing this to my attention.

⁶On this topic in particular, see Tom Hyland, "Confucius Say ... Universities at Risk in Link-up with Chinese Government," *The Age* (Australia), November 17, 2007, <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2007/11/17/1194767024579.html>, and Jocelyn Chey, "The Gentle Dragon," YaleGlobalOnline, November 29, 2007, <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=10034>.

⁷For instance, Thomas Christensen has argued that Hu Jintao (胡錦濤) has made use of "moderate" civilian experts from institutions such as the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (中國社會科學院) and the Central Party School (including Zheng Bijian 鄭必堅 and Wang Jisi 王緝思). See Thomas J. Christensen, "The Party Transition: Will It Bring a New Maturity in Chinese Security Policy?" *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 5 (Winter 2003): 3-19. Zheng Bijian is known for crafting the "peaceful rise" theory of Chinese development. See Zheng Bijian, *China's Peaceful Rise: Speeches of Zheng Bijian, 1997-2005* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005).

⁸This echoes the disclaimer made by Allen Carlson on the nexus between policy experts and decision-makers in the Chinese discourse on state sovereignty. See Allen Carlson, "Helping

For the outside observer, the utility of examining the discourse is that it has subsumed a range of ideas related to non-coercive strategy. It has become a focal point for discussion of issues ranging from how to transmit traditional cultural values to foreign actors, to how to retain and enhance leadership in the developing world, to the ways in which anxious interlocutors (such as the United States and Southeast Asian countries) may be reassured even as China's economy and military grow at unprecedented rates. Unfortunately, the discourse has been either unnoticed or ignored in the West.⁹ Based on a wide review of the literature, the objective of this article is to provide an introduction to China's strategic discourse on soft power, and, by doing so, illuminate how non-coercive strategy in the PRC has been conceived in recent years.

The article proceeds in four main sections. The first establishes the relationship between soft power, taken in the abstract, and the larger discussion about the nature and direction of China's grand strategy. The following three sections identify and explain three non-coercive strategies explicated within the discourse. First is the transmission of traditional culture and the cultivation of foreign elites; second is the desire by the PRC to maintain and expand its leadership role within the "Third World"; and third are the means through which China may be able to reassure other states that its rise is non-threatening and that China is acting as a responsible, system-maintaining power. The conclusion critiques these strategies, and offers suggestions for continued research.

to Keep the Peace (Albeit Reluctantly): China's Recent Stance on Sovereignty and Multilateral Intervention," *Pacific Affairs* 77, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 10-11. Reflecting a long lineage of methodological quandaries in this domain, Carlson points out that the exact linkages between the two sets of actors are "exceedingly difficult to trace." Note, especially, page 10 (note 4) for citations on contemporary research into the structure of China's foreign policy research community.

⁹An exception will be Hongying Wang, "Chinese Conceptions of Soft Power and Its Policy Implications," in *China in the New International Order*, ed. Wang Gongwu and Zheng Yongnian (London: Routledge, forthcoming). For a summary of the evolution of "soft power" in the Chinese literature, see note 3 above.

Grand Strategy and the Development of Soft Power

Alongside the growth of economic and military resources, Chinese strategists have concluded that the development of "soft power" is a critical element of achieving long-term strategic objectives.¹⁰ China's grand strategy is currently discussed with reference to a "peaceful rise" (*heping jueqi*, 和平崛起), "peaceful development" (*heping fazhan*, 和平發展), or the building of a "harmonious world" (*hexie shijie*, 和諧世界). In more specific terms, Men Honghua (門洪華), a researcher at the Central Party School, has identified three stages in the process of China's rise: first, by 2010, to establish a "leading position" (*zhudaoxing diwei*, 主導性地位) in East Asia, symbolized by the opening of the China-ASEAN free trade zone; second, by 2020, to play a leading role as a "quasi-world power" (*zhun shijie daguo*, 准世界大國) in the larger Asia-Pacific region; and third, by 2050, to develop into a "world-level power" (*shijiexing daguo*, 世界性大國).¹¹

Reaching these stages is inextricably linked to the growth of China's "comprehensive national power" (CNP, *zonghe guoli*, 綜合國力). As Michael Pillsbury has demonstrated, CNP was developed in the 1980s as an analytical construct through which progress in China's overall power position could be tracked and measured against other states.¹² Although different systems of calculating CNP were established, the main categories

¹⁰The term "soft power" itself has been translated in at least four different ways: *ruan shili* (軟實力), *ruan quanli* (軟權力), *ruan lilian* (軟力量), and *ruan guoli* (軟國力). For a discussion on the subtle differences between these terms, see Liu and Wang, "Jinnian guonei ruan lilian lilun yanjiu zongshu," 38-39.

¹¹Men Honghua, "Zhongguo ruan shili pinggu baogao, xia" (Report on the analysis of China's soft power, part 2), *Guoji guancha* (International Observer), 2007, no. 3:43. The term "world-level power" differs from the language used by Zheng Bijian, considered to be the chief architect of the "peaceful rise" discourse, who states that China will, by 2050, strive to achieve the status of a "middle-ranking great power." See Zheng Bijian, "China's 'Peaceful Rise' to Great-Power Status," *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 5 (September/October 2005): 18-24.

¹²Michael Pillsbury, *China Debates the Future Security Environment* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2000), chapter 5. The annual reports on China's military power published by the U.S. Department of Defense also include very general references to CNP and its role in China's grand strategy.

of power tended to include tangible factors, such as natural resources, economic growth, military capabilities, and social development. Beginning in the early 2000s, analysts added "soft power" as an abstract rubric into the CNP toolbox. For instance, Li Jie (李杰), an official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has written that "the status and influence of soft power in CNP is rising, and it [soft power] is steadily becoming an important form of international competition."¹³ Similarly, Guo Linxia (國林霞), a professor at Shandong University (山東大學), has argued for the need to strike a "balance" between hard and soft power as components of CNP, and that the development of both should proceed concurrently.¹⁴

Interest in soft power likely derived from the notion that hard power resources alone would be insufficient for China to reach the level of a global power. Men Honghua notes that, "Whether or not China can truly rise depends not only on hard power, but also requires an emphasis on soft power. A true rise is one in which both types of power complement each other."¹⁵ Men notes that the rise of prior great powers, including ancient Rome, imperial Britain and France, and the two Cold War-era superpowers (i.e., the United States and the Soviet Union), relied not simply on coercive power, but also on attractive values, cultural influence, institutional innovation, and other factors. These same themes informed a 12-part China Central Television documentary on "The Rise of Great Powers" (大國崛起), which aired in 2006 and assessed the divergent ways in which nine powers throughout history were able to succeed.¹⁶

Likewise, the decline of soft power has been equated with a deterioration of CNP. According to Zhu Majie (朱馬傑), a scholar at the Shanghai

¹³Li Jie, "Ruan shili jianshe yu Zhongguo de heping fazhan" (The construction of soft power and China's peaceful development), *Guoji wenti yanjiu* (Research on International Problems), 2007, no. 1:21-26.

¹⁴Guo Linxia, "Zhongguo ruan shili xianzhuang fenxi" (An analysis of the present state of China's soft power), *Dangdai shijie* (The Contemporary World), 2007, no. 3:39-41.

¹⁵Men Honghua, "Zhongguo ruan shili pinggu baogao, shang" (Report on the analysis of China's soft power, part 1), *Guoji guancha*, 2007, no. 2:17.

¹⁶Refer to the homepage of the series, online at <http://finance.cctv.com/special/C16860/01/index.shtml>. For an English introduction, see "TV Docu [sic] Stimulates More Open Attitude to History, China, the World," *People's Daily Online*, November 26, 2006. http://english.people.com.cn/200611/26/eng20061126_325264.html.

Institute for International Studies (SIIS, 上海國際問題研究所), a key reason for the collapse of the Soviet Union was its "failure in the competition for soft power."¹⁷ A downward trend in the United States' CNP has also been attributed to waning soft power. Fang Changping (方長平), a professor at Renmin University of China (中國人民大學), attributes this to three causes: the unpopularity of U.S. unilateralism, as exemplified by failure to join the Kyoto Protocol and the International Criminal Court; reduced attention to and funding for U.S. public diplomacy programs; and an alienation of the world audience due to the Iraq War.¹⁸ The point is that, for a country to achieve and maintain great power status, it needs not only formidable hard power capabilities, but also substantial soft power.

How is soft power supposed to be useful in this respect? Broadly speaking, Chinese strategists assert that the utility of soft power lies in its ability to foster an external environment conducive to China's rise as an economic and military power. Writes Yu Xintian (俞新天), a scholar at SIIS, "China's modernization requires a long-term, peaceful, positive international environment," citing especially the need to acquire resources, receive the acceptance of neighboring states, and reduce suspicions of China's intentions.¹⁹ Fang Changping similarly explains, "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 community, and garner support for

¹⁷Zhu, "Xin shiji guoji guanxi zhong de ruan guoli jingzheng," 11.

¹⁸Fang Changping, "Zhong-Mei ruan shili biji ao 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. Li Jie (李捷) generally concurs, but argues that the United States has "learned its lesson," and has given a higher priority to improving its soft power in the second George W. Bush administration. See Li Jie, "Tisheng ruan quanli dui shixian woguo heping jueqi zhanlue de zuoyong" (Raise the role of soft power in achieving China's peaceful rise strategy), *Taipingyang xuebao* (Pacific Studies Journal), 2005, no. 12:66. See also Xiao Huan, "Lengzhan hou Meiguo ruan shili de xiajiang jiqi qishi" (Insights on the decline of U.S. soft power after the Cold War), *Guoji zhengzhi yanjiu* (International Political Studies), 2006, no. 3:152-60.

¹⁹Yu Xintian, "Ruan shili jianshe yu Zhongguo duiwai zhanlue" (Soft power development and China's foreign strategy), *Zhongguo yu shijie zhuanlun* (Forum on China and the World), 2008, no. 2:17.

China's peaceful development."²⁰

It is important to note that strategists have not elaborated on soft power as a competitive tool in itself, nor have they explicated the ways in which forms of soft and hard power may be used as parts of more complex strategies to achieve particular foreign policy goals.²¹ Analysts have either not spent time conceptualizing soft power in these ways, or, more likely, discussion of soft power in a competitive sense has been kept out of the open-source literature, even though pure comparisons of Chinese soft power vis-à-vis the United States and others have been undertaken.²² Thus, for instance, we do not find soft power treated as resources that may be employed in a "soft balancing" strategy against the United States, nor do we find suggestions that Chinese soft power may be used to reduce U.S. influence in East Asia.²³

However, from the conceptual level of soft power as a rubric of CNP, the discourse has evolved into a detailed examination of specific ways

²⁰Fang, "Zhong-Mei ruan shili bijiao jiqi dui Zhongguo de qishi," 24.

²¹This does not imply that multiple forms of influence cannot be, or have not been, brought to bear on specific and nettlesome foreign policy problems. For an example of how China has done so in the case of its Taiwan strategy, see Joel Wuthnow, "The Integration of Co-optation and Coercion: Beijing's Taiwan Strategy Since 2001," *East Asia* 23, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 22-45.

²²See, especially: Fang, "Zhong-Mei ruan shili bijiao jiqi dui Zhongguo de qishi"; and Yan Xuetong and Xu Jin, "Zhong-Mei ruan shili bijiao" (A comparison of Chinese and American soft power), *Xiandai guoji guanxi* (Contemporary International Relations), 2008, no. 1:24-29.

²³Soft balancing refers to methods by second-tier states to constrain the hegemon, especially with respect to the use of force. Soft power resources that may be useful in this respect include emphasizing the norm of state sovereignty, use of international institutions to deny legitimacy to interventions, and forming diplomatic coalitions to check the hegemon. On soft balancing theory, see Josef Joffe, "Gulliver Unbound: Can America Rule the World?" (John Bonython Lecture, Center for Independent Studies, Sydney, August 5, 2003); T. V. Paul, "Soft Balancing in the Age of U.S. Primacy," *International Security* 30, no. 1 (Summer 2005): 46-71; Robert A. Pape, "Soft Balancing against the United States," *ibid.*, 7-45; Stephen M. Walt, *Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. Primacy* (New York: Norton, 2005); and Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion Revisited: The Coming End of the United States' Unipolar Moment," *International Security* 31, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 7-41. For criticisms, see Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wolforth, "International Relations Theory and the Case against Unilateralism," *Perspectives on Politics* 3, no. 3 (September 2005): 509-24; and Keir A. Lieber and Gerard Alexander, "Waiting for Balancing: Why the World is Not Pushing Back," *International Security* 30, no. 1 (Summer 2005): 109-39. For a rare Chinese treatment of the concept, see Yang Shaohua, "Ping 'ruan zhiheng lun'" (On "soft balancing theory"), *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi*, 2006, no. 7:40-45.

through which China's broader ambitions can be achieved. Because the notion of "soft power" is vague, strategists have considered a wide range of resources and attendant strategies as elements of soft power. At times, they stick closely to Joseph Nye's definition of the term: i.e., soft power occurs "when one country gets other countries to *want* what it wants," via "intangible power resources such as culture, ideology, and institutions."²⁴ Elsewhere, they follow scholars, such as Joshua Kurlantzick, who focus on China's use of economic tools to gain leverage in places like Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.²⁵ Given this diversity of ideas, the discourse offers a valuable source of information on the ways in which analysts believe that soft power can facilitate China's grand strategy.

Specifically, three such mechanisms have appeared consistently throughout the discourse. First is the project of transmitting traditional Chinese culture to foreign actors, by means of Confucius Institutes and other activities; second is a focus on China's leadership in the developing world and, especially, the use of economic incentives to develop diplomatic goodwill; and third are means through which the PRC may be able to reassure neighboring states and others that its strategic intentions are benign and that it is behaving as a "responsible great power" (*fuzeren de daguo*, 負責任的大國). The remainder of this article details and critiques these three non-coercive strategies.

Culture Transmission and the Search for Understanding

Loosely defined as an amalgam of Confucian social and political values, folk and high customs and art, and the Chinese language, "culture"

²⁴Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Soft Power," *Foreign Policy*, no. 80 (Autumn 1990): 166-67. Nye does argue that economic "resources," such as the model of a "successful economy," can form a basis for soft power, though actual economic "inducement" lies in the domain of hard power. My thanks to Professor Nye for pointing this out. See Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Think Again: Soft Power," *Foreign Policy*, Web Exclusive (February 2006).

²⁵Among the sources listed in note 5 above, Gill and Huang hew closely to Nye's definition of soft power, while Kurlantzick, and Erickson and Goldstein are more concerned with China's economic leverage.

is widely considered to be a core component of China's soft power.²⁶ In general, the relevance of culture is not that it, by itself, is a determinant of states' perceptions and policies toward the PRC, but rather that it lays a foundation of respect and tolerance by foreign actors, who, over time, may help to shape an international environment conducive to China's growth. Yan Xuetong (閻學通) and Xu Jin (徐進), both professors at Tsinghua University, explain: "A state's ability to transmit its culture internationally will lead to the understanding, sympathy, and acceptance of its cultural values by outsiders."²⁷

Three avenues through which culture may serve China's strategic goals have been considered. First is what is sometimes seen as a natural advantage of "cultural attractiveness" (*wenhua xiyinli*, 文化吸引力) both among the Chinese Diaspora and in other "Confucian" states, including Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and Vietnam. Regarding the former, Guo Linxia argues that the "network" of overseas Chinese has been important to the PRC both as a source of investment capital, and as a respectable symbol of Confucian virtues, such as hard work and family solidarity.²⁸ In terms of Chinese influence around its periphery, Li Jie (李捷), a professor at Lanzhou University (蘭州大學), channels the 1990s discussion of "Asian values" to assert that China may emerge as the leader of an integrated East Asian political society rooted in Confucian values and practices.²⁹

However, China's ability to leverage its image as a Confucian society has been critiqued on several grounds. First is the realist argument that states' interests are defined not merely by an affiliation with "Confucianism," but by geography and resultant security dilemmas, contested access to scarce resources, historical tensions, and a host of other factors that make

²⁶See discussion on how various scholars have defined "soft power" in Liu and Wang, "Jinnian guonei ruan liliang lilun yanjiu zongshu," 40.

²⁷Yan and Xu, "Zhong-Mei ruan shili bijiao," 26. Moreover, Men Honghua points to the Han (漢朝) and Tang (唐朝) dynasties, in which he claims that Chinese norms were so widely esteemed that the need to use military force was reduced. See Men, "Zhongguo ruan shili pinggu baogao, shang," 20.

²⁸Guo, "Zhongguo ruan shili xianzhuang fenxi, xia," 37-38.

²⁹Li, "Tisheng ruan quanli dui shixian woguo heping jueqi zhanlue de zuoyong," 68.

cultural regionalism a dim prospect.³⁰ Second is that, in some respects, China's cultural influence in the region pales in comparison to the United States and others.³¹ For instance, exports of Chinese films are minuscule compared to exports of U.S. films which are said to transmit Western values, such as individualism and plural democracy. Third, in terms of promoting itself as a Confucian society, China is impaired because, over the past thirty years, its society itself has been shaped by the dynamic infusion of Western values and customs.³²

Since China cannot depend on its image alone, most analysts advocate the strengthening of "cultural diplomacy" (*wenhua waijiao*, 文化外交). The programs contained under this heading form the second and third avenues of culture as a way to facilitate China's rise. One involves efforts to raise the stature and appeal of Chinese civilization both within the region and in the wider world. This includes cultural and academic exchanges, artistic exhibitions, "cultural years," sister city relationships, and even the celebration of the 600th anniversary of Admiral Zheng He's (鄭和) voyage to the west coast of Africa.³³ For instance, Li Jie (李杰) recalls the 2004 China-France Cultural Year, in which more than two million French residents were directly exposed to Chinese culture and art, and which also achieved significant media attention. This led to the growth of interest in aspects of Chinese culture, such as traditional dress, calligraphy, painting, and herbal medicine.³⁴

³⁰Wang Jue, "Dongya diqu Zhongguo guojia xingxiang jixi" (An analysis of China's national image in the East Asian region), *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi luntan* (World Economics and Politics Forum), 2007, no. 5:69.

³¹The pop culture attraction of South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong may also dilute the ability of the PRC to transmit more traditional values.

³²Men, "Zhongguo ruan shili pinggu baogao, shang," 23; and Yan and Xu, "Zhong-Mei ruan shili bijiao," 27-28.

³³On this last project, Luo Jianbo argues that it demonstrates China's historically peaceful intentions, in contrast with the history of Western exploitation and colonialism. See Luo Jianbo, "Zhongguo dui Feizhou waijiao shiye zhong de guojia xingxiang suzao" (The crafting of national image in China's foreign policies toward Africa), *Xiandai guoji guanxi*, 2007, no. 7:52-53.

³⁴Li, "Ruan shili jianshe yu Zhongguo de heping fazhan," 20; and Guo, "Zhongguo ruan shili xianzhuang fenxi," 37.

Strategists note two deficiencies associated with these types of programs. First is that they tend to be transitory and rather superficial. Chen Yugang (陳玉剛), a professor at Fudan University, argues that "liking" a culture is merely a first step in culture transmission; internalization of cultural values is much more tedious and problematic.³⁵ Second, related to this, individuals in much of the world are far more accustomed to their own cultures, and only marginally familiar with China's heritage. For instance, Luo Jianbo (羅建波), a scholar at the Central Party School, notes that the influence of Christian and Islamic civilization is so entrenched in Africa that it would be exceedingly difficult for Confucianism to make significant inroads.³⁶ In short, it is dubious whether these efforts, however ambitious, may be able to change individuals' fundamental beliefs about China.

What is needed, then, is more extensive exposure by foreign actors. The main focus of this third avenue is education. Studying Chinese language, history, and culture is viewed not only as a way to engender respect for China, but also as a way to cultivate a pool of foreign talent that will be better equipped to form personal ties with Chinese counterparts and to sympathize with the PRC.³⁷ By analogy, Zhang Yiping, (章一平), a professor at Shenzhen University (深圳大學), has noted that, with respect to the rise of the United States during the Cold War, the Fulbright Program was useful in amassing support among foreign elites.³⁸ While the connection between education and elite attitudes is usually not made explicit, a telling exception is Liu Yumei (劉渝梅), a doctoral candidate writing in a

³⁵Chen Yugang, "Shilun quanqiu hua Beijing xia Zhongguo ruan shili de goujian" (On the construction of China's soft power in the context of globalization), *Guoji guancha*, 2007, no. 2:40.

³⁶Luo, "Zhongguo dui Feizhou waijiao shiye zhong de guojia xingxiang suzao," 52.

³⁷For an excellent conceptualization of this process, see Huang and Ding, "The Dragon's Underbelly," 24-26. My thanks to Yanzhong Huang for suggesting this. Although not mentioned in the discourse, one might point to Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, a Mandarin speaker who some believe will be more friendly to Beijing based on his education and experiences living in mainland China. See, for instance, "Observing Rudd's China Approach," *Jakarta Post*, November 29, 2007, 7. Online at: <http://www.tmcnet.com/usubmit/2007/11/29/3128421.htm>.

³⁸Zhang Yiping, "Ruan shili de neihan yu waiyan" (Soft power: connotation and denotation), *Xiandai guoji guanxi*, 2006, no. 11:56-57.

notable foreign affairs journal. Liu contends that some African students pursuing Chinese studies will later hold "high-level government positions," or become "elites in all fields." This will both enhance "mutual friendship and understanding" and "increase China's influence in Africa."³⁹

Education as a means of soft power development takes two main forms. The first includes students who pursue study in the PRC itself. As of 2006, there were over 140,000 foreign students studying in mainland China (compared to about 560,000 in the United States). Based on proximity, economic motives, increased difficulty in gaining U.S. visas in the aftermath of September 11th, and, perhaps, pure interest in the culture, about 75 percent of foreign students in China hailed from East Asia.⁴⁰ The United States also ranks among the top five sources of foreign exchange students.⁴¹ Continuing a practice of attracting students from the developing world that originated in the Mao era, the number of students from other places has also been increasing. For example, by 2009, China plans to raise the number of government scholarships for African exchange students from 4,000 to 8,000.⁴²

The second form focuses on initiatives undertaken outside the PRC. Here, the most obvious example has been the establishment of "Confucius Institutes," which are centers for the teaching of Chinese language and culture sited in universities around the world. The goal is that, by 2010, there will be 500 such institutes in operation. More broadly, by 2010, the Chinese government estimates that there will be as many as 100 million students learning the Chinese language.⁴³ In addition, analysts refer to

³⁹Liu Yumei, "Ruan shili yu Zhong-Fei guanxi de fazhan" (Soft power and the development of China-Africa relations), *Guoji wenti yanjiu*, 2007, no. 3:19.

⁴⁰Men, "Zhongguo ruan shili pinggu baogao, shang," 23.

⁴¹Wang Qian, "China Sees Rising Influx of Foreign Students," China.org.cn, July 9, 2006. Posted online at: <http://english.hanban.edu.cn/english/2006/Jul/174007.htm>.

⁴²Luo, "Zhongguo dui Feizhou waijiao shiye zhong de guojia xingxiang suzao," 50.

⁴³Gao Ying, "China to Host Second Confucius Institute Conference," www.chinaview.cn, December 6, 2007. Posted online at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-12/06/content_7212089.htm. In December 2007, there were 210 Confucius Institutes open in 64 countries or regions. Note also that participation in the Chinese-language HSK (漢語水平考試) examination (which is the equivalent of TOEFL) has been increasing annually by about 40-50 percent, matching the ten-year average growth rate of participation in TOEFL.

other programs designed to enhance positive interactions. For instance, in the wake of the 2006 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) summit in Beijing, China announced a plan for 15,000 Chinese personnel to conduct training programs in sub-Saharan Africa.⁴⁴ While education is considered a promising long-term method of facilitating China's strategic objectives, there has, unfortunately, been no mention in the discourse of the perceived progress that has been made in shaping the minds of foreign actors.

Development Style and Leadership in the "Third World"

Since the 1950s, a key goal of Chinese foreign policy has been to establish a leadership position in the developing world. However, in contrast to its Cold War-era objectives, which centered on fomenting anti-colonial struggle in Africa and Southeast Asia, as well as building a diplomatic bloc to confront both American "imperialists" and Soviet "social revisionists," the objectives in the reform era have concentrated on earning diplomatic "capital" which may be used, for instance, in UN votes on positions favored by the PRC, and securing access to scarce natural resources.⁴⁵ Still, from a rhetorical point of view, China casts its diplomatic strategy in the "Third World" in altruistic terms, stressing especially non-interference in states' internal affairs.⁴⁶ It is no coincidence that Hu Jintao first promulgated the

⁴⁴Liu, "Ruan shili yu Zhong-Fei guanxi de fazhan," 19.

⁴⁵My thanks to Andrew Nathan for clarifying this argument. In terms of UN votes, Nathan points to rejection of Taiwan's regular applications for UN admission, and tabling of motions in the UN Human Rights Council that are critical of China's human rights record. I am also indebted to Michael Doyle for pointing out that China continues to seek the approval of G77 countries in the UN General Assembly (that is, states that associate themselves with the developing world).

⁴⁶For instance, both scholars and officials regularly cite the "five principles of peaceful coexistence," which were originally crafted by Zhou Enlai (周恩來) as part of the program of winning support from Third World states, regardless of their affiliation with Communism. The Bandung Conference was convened in Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955 by Indonesia and a group of other newly-independent states that wished to form closer relations with China and resist the influence of both superpowers. Zhou Enlai was China's chief representative. His moderate attitude reflected what later become known as the "Bandung Spirit."

idea of a "harmonious world," based on mutual respect and the importance of state sovereignty, on the 50th anniversary of the Bandung Conference.⁴⁷

Within the discourse, two mechanisms of enhancing China's influence in the developing world have been emphasized. First is reliance on the attractiveness of the PRC's "development style" (*fazhan moshi*, 發展模式). Chen Yugang describes three salient, interlocking values that may be appealing to other developing states. First is "coordinated, complete, and scientific development," that avoids high social and environmental costs. Second is "stability," conceived broadly to include the stability of governments, firms, associations, and society in general. Third is "harmony," which refers to the desire to minimize damage in relations among individuals, between individuals, society, and the environment, and between states. In this sense, the popular moniker "harmonious society" (*hexie shehui*, 和諧社會) flows into the international theme of constructing a "harmonious world."⁴⁸

Specific attention has been paid to the notion of a "Beijing Consensus" (*Beijing gongshi*, 北京共識), a term crafted by former *Time* magazine editor Joshua Cooper Ramo. Compared with liberal prescriptions for growth based on democratization and the intervention of the international financial community (known as the "Washington Consensus"), the "Beijing Consensus" stresses political stability and the flexibility of states to choose a development path based on experimentation and the peculiarities of specific situations. Men Honghua observes:

Because of the failure of the "Washington Consensus" in Latin American and other developing countries, these states have increasingly turned to the Chinese model of economic growth and political stability. African leaders have been interested in how China has achieved rapid growth while maintaining political control, and have frequently visited China to seek advice.⁴⁹

⁴⁷Luo, "Zhongguo dui Feizhou wajiao shiye zhong de guojia xingxiang suzao," 50.

⁴⁸Chen, "Shilun quanqiu hua beijing xia Zhongguo ruan shili de goujian," 41-42. Chen contrasts these three values to Western emphases on democracy, freedom, and equality, although he suggests that both sets of values may be useful in long-term development strategies.

⁴⁹Men, "Zhongguo ruan shili pinggu baogao, xia," 38. Note that the "Beijing Consensus"

The hope is that some foreign policy leverage may accrue to Beijing simply due to the desire by others to emulate the Chinese model.

However, there is considerable pessimism that China may be able to use itself in this way. Fang Changping asserts that some developing states do not possess the "prerequisites" or the "willingness" to replicate China's development model, and thus "it would be difficult for this to form an influential component of China's soft power."⁵⁰ Zheng Yongnian (鄭永年) and Zhang Chi (張弛) write that, due to deficiencies in its own reform process, China cannot offer others a cohesive model on which to base their own efforts, and that, as a result, it is far too soon to talk about a "consensus" derived from the Chinese experience.⁵¹ Men Honghua himself similarly argues that, on account of domestic problems such as a widening income gap, environmental pollution, and social instability, it would be difficult for the PRC to be used as a "touchstone" (*shijinshi*, 試金石) for other states.⁵²

The second, more promising, mechanism is "economic diplomacy" (*jingji waijiao*, 經濟外交). The use of economic instruments to foster positive relations in the developing world is not new. Luo Jianbo recalls that, between 1956 and 1977, China donated more than US\$2.4 billion in aid to African states.⁵³ Current foreign aid practices have evolved in a way

also stands in contrast to the so-called "Moscow Consensus," which focused on industrialization of the "second world." See Men, "Zhongguo ruan shili pinggu baogao, shang," 19.

⁵⁰Fang, "Zhong-Mei ruan shili bijiao jiqi dui Zhongguo de qishi," 27. The "willingness" that Fang refers to likely includes the desire by some states to democratize and receive the assistance and advice of organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

⁵¹Zheng and Zhang, "Guoji zhengzhi zhong de ruan liliang yiji dui Zhongguo ruan liliang de guan cha," 12. They also point out that the Chinese government has resisted using the term "Beijing Consensus." Although their article appears in a leading Chinese foreign affairs journal, the authors are, respectively, a professor and doctoral student at Nottingham University in the United Kingdom.

⁵²Men, "Zhongguo ruan shili pinggu baogao, xia," 39.

⁵³Luo, "Zhongguo dui Feizhou waijiao shiye zhong de guojia xingxiang suzao," 48. According to Luo, this aid accounted for more than 58 percent of China's total foreign aid budget during this period. It should be noted that Africa is discussed here primarily because this region has been the focus within the discourse. This is likely due to Africa's strategic importance as a source of resources, and to the perceived interest within China in boosting its soft power resources on the continent.

that seeks to facilitate positive ties and minimize friction due to China's growing economic involvement in far-flung regions.⁵⁴ At a bilateral level, the first function is exemplified by China's relationship with Angola, which has overtaken Nigeria to become Africa's largest source of oil reserves. Liu Yumei describes China's strategy in terms of basic infrastructure development aid, including investment in transportation networks, hospitals, schools, and agriculture. The PRC has also offered some US\$3 billion in low interest loans, even though the value of its oil contracts was only about US\$1.4 billion in 2007. This has allowed Angola to "cast off" IMF assistance for the first time.⁵⁵

At a regional level, China's search for cooperative relations in Africa is symbolized by the establishment in 2000 of FOCAC, which is an organization through which Beijing can not only re-emphasize the importance it places on state sovereignty, but, more practically, convene high-level meetings⁵⁶ and flaunt the "public goods" it has provided throughout the continent, such as development aid, debt forgiveness, assistance in combating disease, and so on.⁵⁷ Likewise, Luo Jianbo notes that, between 1990 and 2007, China allocated over 3,000 personnel to six separate UN peace-keeping operations in sub-Saharan Africa, the most of any of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council.⁵⁸ Strictly speaking, this participation is not an act of "economic diplomacy," but does represent a more active effort by China to develop goodwill in the region.

A second function of economic diplomacy is to reduce animosity related to China's increasingly robust economic presence in developing

⁵⁴Spelling out the logic of these programs, Yan Xuetong has invoked the specter of colonial-era wars over natural resources to argue that pure pursuit of economic interests would likely be counter-productive and that, instead, the PRC should pay more attention to its public diplomacy initiatives. See Yan Xuetong, "Zhongguo ruan shili youdai tigo" (The path for China to increase its soft power), *Zhongguo yu shijie guancha* (China and World Affairs), 2007, no. 2:2.

⁵⁵Liu, "Ruan shili yu Zhong-Fei guanxi de fazhan," 17-18.

⁵⁶For instance, thirty-four African heads of state and six prime ministers attended the 2006 FOCAC summit in Beijing. That same year, Premier Wen Jiabao (温家宝) and President Hu Jintao conducted extensive trips throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

⁵⁷Guo, "Zhongguo ruan shili xianzhuang fenxi," 38-39.

⁵⁸Luo, "Zhongguo dui Feizhou waijiao shiye zhong de guojia xingxiang suzao," 48.

regions. In Africa, strategists have noted a backlash against the tendency by Chinese firms to rely on Chinese labor, environmental degradation caused by resource extraction, and trade practices that disadvantage local firms.⁵⁹ To counter the perception that China is behaving as a "neo-imperialist" power, policies such as better monitoring of Chinese firms and protection of indigenous industry have been designed. For instance, China experienced a virulent reaction in South Africa due to the flooding of the market with light manufactures, appliances, and other Chinese-made goods. In response, the PRC imposed unilateral restraints on its exports and offered technical assistance to local companies.⁶⁰ Although scholars have not offered a specific assessment of the results of these types of programs, they are cautiously optimistic that China's soft power, through economic diplomacy, is on an upward trajectory.⁶¹

Reassurance and the Projection of Responsibility

Chinese strategists have long been aware that China's economic and military rise has been perceived as a threat to other states, especially those with significant strategic interests in East Asia. Wang Jue (王珺), a research scholar at the Shanghai International Studies University (上海外國語大學), has written that some states have been "worried that China will seek regional hegemony," and may even be concerned that China is attempting to resurrect a type of "imperial" order in which it, the PRC, commands attention from the center.⁶² Most have labeled these types of anxie-

⁵⁹Ibid., 50-51.

⁶⁰Liu, "Ruan shili yu Zhong-Fei guanxi de fazhan," 17-18.

⁶¹Liu Yumei concludes that China has, indeed, "won prestige and influence in Africa" and has "crafted an image of a responsible great power that protects the interests of developing countries." Ibid.

⁶²Wang, "Dongya diqu Zhongguo guojia xingxiang jixi," 69-70. Wang draws inspiration for this argument from David Kang. See David C. Kang, "Hierarchy, Balancing, and Empirical Puzzles in Asian International Relations," *International Security* 28, no. 3 (Winter 2003/4): 165-80.

ties as forming the basis of a "China threat theory" (*Zhongguo weixielun*, 中國威脅論), which in turn undermines China's efforts to foster an international environment conducive to long-term growth.⁶³ As Li Jie (李捷) remarks, "As soon as a country is perceived as a threat, its security and space for development are necessarily reduced."⁶⁴

Part of the way in which regional and global fears are to be assuaged depends on employing passive and benign-sounding diplomatic language. As noted above, the key phrases used to describe China's intentions have centered on adjectives such as "peaceful," "harmonious," and "responsible." Recently, the phrase "peaceful rise" has even been replaced with the less ominous label "peaceful development." Wang Jisi explains: "To the Chinese leadership, being rhetorically assertive in foreign affairs without being able to deliver tangible results might be politically useful in the short term, but it would not add to its authority and credibility in the long run."⁶⁵ However, diplomatic rhetoric is simply a frontline approach. Soft power development, as a way to counter the "China threat" theory, has proceeded as a series of tangible programs at three levels.

At the global level, strategists point to the need to engage in multilateral diplomatic activities that signal its intention to uphold the international system as it is currently ordered.⁶⁶ Deng Xianchao (鄧顯超), a scholar at the Central Party School, notes that, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, China has supported efforts to achieve common peace and security.⁶⁷ Men Honghua points to China's accession to the Biological

⁶³For representative examples of these perceptions in the popular U.S. discourse, see Bill Gertz, *China Threat: How the People's Republic Targets the U.S.* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2000); and Constantine C. Menges, *China: The Gathering Threat* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005).

⁶⁴Li, "Tisheng ruan quanli dui shixian woguo heping jueqi zhanlue de zuoyong" 68.

⁶⁵Wang Jisi, "America in Asia: How Much Does China Care?" *Global Asia* 2, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 27.

⁶⁶For an excellent English-language treatment of these themes, see M. Taylor Fravel and Evan S. Medeiros, "China's New Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 6 (November/December 2003): 25-30.

⁶⁷Deng Xianchao, "Qiaoran jueqi de Zhongguo ruan shili" (China's quietly rising soft power), *Pandeng* (Ascent Monthly), 2005, no. 6:91.

Weapons Convention, and other international agreements, as a form of global reassurance.⁶⁸ Su Changhe (蘇長和), a professor at Shanghai International Studies University, contends that, over the past five years, China's track record of participation and credible promises in the World Trade Organization demonstrates that the PRC is committed to maintaining the status-quo international financial system.⁶⁹

Beyond participation in international institutions and regimes, an emphasis has been placed on specific programs that underwrite Beijing's image as a "responsible great power." For instance, Guo Shuyong (郭樹勇), a professor at Shanghai Jiaotong University (上海交通大學), has written that China's involvement in UN peacekeeping operations is a way in which the PRC can appear to be an "internationally-socialized country" (*guoji shehuihua de guojia*, 國際社會化的國家).⁷⁰ For his part, Luo Jianbo addresses ways in which China can improve its image as a responsible actor in sub-Saharan Africa. In addition to actively engaging with the United Nations and the World Bank on pertinent issues, he calls for enhanced coordination with the United States on issues such as the humanitarian crisis in Darfur and the development of oil and other natural resources. He also suggests that China downplay its drive for resources by stressing, for instance, that China's African exports account for only 40 percent of those to the United States, and that Africa accounts for only 2 percent of China's total trade.⁷¹

At a regional level, most analysts have focused on Asia as a target for reassurance. Mirroring the desire for deeper cooperation with global institutions, scholars point to the need to strengthen cooperation with regional organizations, such as the ASEAN+3 arrangement, the ASEAN Regional Forum, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which was established

⁶⁸Men, "Zhongguo ruan shili pinggu baogao, xia," 40-41.

⁶⁹Su Changhe, "Zhongguo de ruan shili" (China's soft power), *Guoji guan cha*, 2007, no. 2: 33.

⁷⁰Guo Shuyong, "Xin guoji zhuyi yu Zhongguo ruan shili waijiao" (The new internationalism and China's soft power diplomacy), *Guoji guan cha*, 2007, no. 2:51.

⁷¹Luo, "Zhongguo dui Feizhou waijiao shiye zhong de guojia xingxiang suzao," 53.

in 2001 as a cooperative security arrangement involving China, Russia, and several Central Asian states.⁷² China's leadership role in the six-party talks with North Korea has also been interpreted as a way for the PRC to bolster its image as a country interested in the peaceful resolution of threats to international security, despite its historical ties to, and narrow security interests in, the DPRK.⁷³

More concrete steps to foster positive relations within the region have also been advocated. These include agreements with Southeast Asian states to develop a framework for peace in the South China Sea; the resolution of long-standing border disputes with Russia, India, Vietnam, and others; and the opening, by 2010, of the China-ASEAN free trade zone.⁷⁴ Elements of "economic diplomacy" also appear in this respect. Chen Xiansi (陳顯泗) recalls efforts following the 1997 Asian financial crisis to monetarily support the governments of Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and others, and also notes the goodwill produced by China's announcement in 2002 of an "early harvest" policy in Southeast Asia, in which import duties on hundreds of products would be reduced or waived by January 1, 2004.⁷⁵ Based on these types of initiatives, Deng Xianchao optimistically states that, "Today, Asian states no longer view China's development as a threat, but rather see it as an opportunity and an engine for regional growth."⁷⁶

The third level through which China can work to reassure the international community is within the PRC itself. According to Men Honghua, "The construction of national image is not entirely a type of international behavior; a country's image in international society is even more an extension of its internal politics and affairs."⁷⁷ The impetus is that, in evaluating

⁷²Men, "Zhongguo ruan shili pinggu baogao, xia," 25.

⁷³Deng, "Qiaoran jueqi de Zhongguo ruan shili," 91.

⁷⁴Chen Xiansi, "Lun Zhongguo zai Dongnanya de ruan shili" (On China's soft power in Southeast Asia), *Dongnanya yanjiu* (Southeast Asian Studies), 2006, no. 6:44-47.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 45.

⁷⁶Deng, "Qiaoran jueqi de Zhongguo ruan shili," 92.

⁷⁷Men, "Zhongguo ruan shili pinggu baogao, shang," 20.

China's acceptance of international rules and norms, observers not only assess China's external behavior, but also ground their opinions on the nature of state-society relations within China. Anticipating the recent turbulence in Tibet (Xizang, 西藏), Yan Xuetong argues that domestic problems can easily degrade China's image as a responsible power. As a corrective, he suggests the need for domestic programs designed to enhance social justice, including measures to achieve more balanced and sustainable growth.⁷⁸ Known in the discourse as "internal soft power,"⁷⁹ this theme is linked back to the broader objective undertaken in the Hu Jintao/Wen Jiabao period to develop a "harmonious society."

Conclusion

To recap, in recent years there has been a significant interest in the concept of "soft power" within China's strategic studies community. Soft power is generally considered to be an inextricable element of China's grand strategy, as evidenced by its role in the conceptualization of CNP. Three mechanisms through which soft power can support the PRC's long-term growth have been discussed. First are efforts to earn international respect and understanding of its Confucian heritage and, especially, to court students. Second involves China's leadership position in the developing world, and an emphasis on "economic diplomacy." Third are policies through which China can enhance its image as a responsible power, especially within Asia.

The development of China's soft power can be critiqued, and avenues for further research identified, along three interlocking dimensions. First is the extent to which the non-coercive strategies identified in the dis-

⁷⁸Yan, "Zhongguo ruan shili youdai tigao," 2.

⁷⁹As Men Honghua argues, factors such as political stability, the implementation of "democratization," and principles of justice within the PRC directly enhance its global appeal. See Men, "Zhongguo ruan shili pinggu baogao, xia," 44. For further discussion of the distinction between "external" and "internal" soft power, see Liu and Wang, "Jinnian guonei ruan liliang lilun yanjiu zongshu," 40.

course can, by themselves, be useful in shaping an international environment conducive to China's long-term growth. Some programs, such as cultural initiatives, and the appeal of the "Beijing Consensus" have already been criticized by strategists. However, it is questionable that any programs that do not bear directly on other states' foreign policies, such as Confucius Institutes, involvement in peacekeeping operations, and initiatives to achieve more balanced growth within China, will have a salient impact on the ways in which others treat the PRC, at least in the short run. Research to determine the causal mechanisms through which these sorts of programs actually affect the foreign policies of other states toward China should be continued.

Second is whether, and the extent to which, the various aspects of China's soft power are mutually compatible. In essence, the analysis has illuminated a desire to project three disparate images to the world: first, as an ancient civilization worthy of respect; second, as a leader of the developing world and the attendant emphasis on the norm of state sovereignty; and third, as a modern state that accepts and adheres to the Western-led international order. We have already noted an argument within the discourse that China's ability to market itself as a Confucian state is hampered by the infusion of Western values over the course of modernization. Perceptions of China as a responsible state are also troubled by its association with Third World states, such as Myanmar, Zimbabwe, and the Sudan, that have been the subjects of international opprobrium. Hence, analysts of Chinese soft power should assess how these multiple images, and the duties that correspond to them, can or cannot be reconciled.

Third is the broader question of whether China's non-coercive strategies may effectively blunt the global anxiety produced by its hard power development, especially its search for scarce resources, its growing economic prowess, and its rapidly modernizing military. Although strategists have identified ways in which this may be done, foreign leaders and publics are also exposed to information about the negative aspects of China's growth through intelligence collection, the media, commentators, and various other channels. Unfortunately, there is little mention in the discourse about the probability that any of the strategies suggested therein may ulti-

mately be capable of making a dent in concerns by actors within Asia and around the world that China's rise will truly be a "peaceful" one. For this reason, ongoing research on the determinants of global perceptions of China should be sustained, with an eye to the relative efficacy of China's growing soft power.

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China has been for many years pushing its central foreign policy message of "peaceful rise". But this has not been wholeheartedly embraced by all its neighbours, partly due to its outstanding bilateral issues with certain Asian states over territorial disputes in the South China Sea. But China's single greatest hurdle is its lack of "soft power". Xi Jinping had realized this, and he had accordingly pledged to raise China's "soft power" by developing China into a "socialist cultural superpower". The same is not true for China's soft power. As a country ruled by an ideological Communist Party with limited political freedom for its people, China is admittedly unattractive to many countries. Thus, many studies have put China at the bottom of international soft-power ranking. The concept of "soft power" came to prominence in Chinese political and academic discourse in the mid-2000s and is now arguably a deliberate and integral part of Chinese foreign policy, facilitating China's rise by shaping the external environment. Examples of Chinese soft power include economic diplomacy with the global South, the "Beijing Consensus," public diplomacy initiatives like Confucius Institutes, and even tourism. This study expands on the existing body of scholarly literature on Chinese soft power by exploring its integration with China's security strategy. China's use of soft power in its handling of the SCS disputes has three strategic aims. First, it seeks to control the terms of discussion. China's goal is to strengthen the legitimacy of its claims in the SCS. China has been making major efforts to increase its ability to influence others without force or coercion. But as long as the government fans the flames of nationalism and holds tight the reins of party control, China's soft power will remain limited. China has been making major efforts to increase its ability to influence other countries without force or coercion. In 2007, then-President Hu Jintao told the Communist Party that the country needed to increase its soft power; President Xi Jinping repeated the same message last year. The evolving discourse on soft power within China's strategic studies community offers a unique window into Chinese thinking about non-coercive strategy. This article provides an initial assessment of the discourse, covering the conceptualization of soft power development as a key component of China's grand strategy, as well as three particular means through which soft power resources are envisioned as useful in service of larger strategic objectives. China has taken on the concept of soft power, using it as a means to capture the hearts and minds of people inside and outside, all on its way to become a leading world power. View. Show abstract. 4. See Young Nam Cho and Jong Ho Jeong, "China's Soft Power: Discussions, Resources, and Prospects," *Asian Survey* 48, no. 3 (May-June 2008); Joel Wuthnow, "The Concept of Soft Power in China's Strategic Discourse," *Issues & Studies* 44, no. 2 (June 2008); Hongying Wang and Yeh-Chung Lu, "The Conception of Soft Power and Its Policy." In so doing, China can resist the image and values imposed on it by the West and assert its own discourse rights.²³ Anger over Western media coverage of protests in Tibet and the Olympic torch relay in the spring of 2008 revived long-standing suspicions that U.S. "cultural hegemony" was being used to weaken and destabilize China and led to.