

**Soft Power in
China's Foreign Policy Discourse,
1997-2011**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled "Soft Power in China's Foreign Policy Discourse, 1997-2011" submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my work. The thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

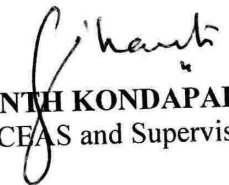

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CERTIFICATE

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The 1980s decade led to systemic transformation of international relations when bipolarity gave way to more complex form of power relations. The Soviet Union had overextended its power projection and suffered from severe economic shortages. Japan and the European Community emerged as new economic and technological powerhouses. Although America was on the verge of victory in the Cold War, its relative power vis-à-vis other liberal democracies and free market economies had declined. It seemed that a new period of multipolarity had dawned.

The dominant IR discourse Kenneth Waltz's (1959, 1979) parsimonious theory of structural realism failed to explain this systemic change. Waltz was so enamoured by the stability of the bipolar system that he had ignored the effect of domestic power resources of a nation on the overall international power relations. Other scholars like Paul Kennedy (1988), Francis Fukuyama (1989, 1992) and Samuel Huntington (1993, 1996) tried to fill the gap by providing perspectives on the nature of post Cold War international politics and its impact on America's standing.

Kennedy (1988) asserted that international power relations depend on the relative capabilities of nation-states to mobilise their economic resources for military expansion. Using historical antecedents, he explained that a rising power expands its military projection until there is an overstretching of its economic mobilisation capability and then it declines relative to other powers who can manage their economic-military potentiality conversion more efficiently. He predicted that the American power, due to economically unsustainable international security commitments, would eventually decline relative to the rising powers like Japan and China.

Joseph Nye (1990) criticises Kennedy's thesis on two counts. First, due to the destructive effects of World War II, the international distribution of economic and

military capabilities remained distorted until the 1980s. So, the apparent American decline represented just a corrective rearrangement. Second, the United States possessed another facet of power, soft power, based on intangible resources like culture, ideology and institutions, which entrenched its ability to shape international agenda and preferences.

Nye argues that there is a diffusion of power caused by 'economic interdependence, transnational actors, nationalism in weak states, the spread of technology and changing political issues,' in the aftermath of Cold War, which has made application of military force and economic sanction complicated and often counter-productive. So, the United States should rely on the attractiveness of its culture, political values and foreign policy to 'get others to want what it wants' (soft power).

Since 1992, when Nye's *Bound to Lead* was translated and published into Chinese, both academicians and policy-makers in China have shown keen interest in the concept of soft power. The 1997 East Asian Financial crisis provided an opportunity to China to improve its image in a region where it was traditionally perceived as a threat and a destabilising factor. It successfully absorbed the shocks, maintained a stable *renminbi* (despite loss in the export trade) and also contributed to the stabilisation funds. Although its contribution was insignificant in terms of monetary value compared to Japan and the US, China's swift response and benign gestures attracted the respect of both the elite and the masses, especially in South-East Asia.

Rising economic clout based on foreign investment, the manufacturing sector and export trade instilled new confidence into China who began rapid modernisation of its armed forces, while simultaneously embarking on diplomatic efforts to gain recognition as "a responsible stakeholder" in the international system. In 1999, Huang Shuofeng published *New Theory on Comprehensive National Power*, reflecting the fascination of Chinese strategic thinkers in the power discourse. He classified CNP into three components, viz., hard power (economic, science and technology, national defence and natural resource power), soft power (political, diplomatic and cultural and educational power) and coordinating power (political structures, government leadership, organisational decision-making power and management and reform coordination capabilities).

The Communist Party was equally keen on soft power as a necessary component of CNP. In 2002, the political report to the 16th Party Congress of the Communist Party of China mentioned that ‘culture intertwines with economics and politics, demonstrating a more prominent position and role in the competition for CNP’. In 2007, the political report to the 17th Party Congress of the CPC stressed ‘the urgency of building China’s cultural soft power sufficiently to meet domestic needs and increase international competitiveness’. In 2011, October 15-18, 17th CPC Central Committee was convened at Beijing to discuss cultural system transformation and promoting socialist cultural development.

In 2003, Zheng Bijian introduced the concept peaceful rise (later replaced by peaceful development) at the Boao Forum for Asia. It was basically meant to counter the threat perception in the international community, especially China’s neighbours about the rising China’s power ambitions. Peaceful rise conceals China’s revisionist intentions and emphasises that it seeks to achieve international prominence not at the cost of other states, but through soft power. 2008 Beijing Olympics, 2010 Shanghai Expo and recent mergers and acquisitions by Chinese firms display the grandeur of China’s peaceful rise.

In order to teach Chinese language, promote Chinese culture and facilitate business activity, Confucius Institutes have been opened in many countries around the world, the first one being at Seoul, South Korea in 2004. They portray a benevolent image of China rooted in traditional values.

In 2004, Joshua Cooper Ramo published *The Beijing Consensus*, which denotes the path of development pursued by China combining ideological pragmatism, rapid economic growth and stable political order, extended to the international level. The path appeals to the developing countries (especially, authoritarian regimes in Africa) as an alternative to the discredited Washington Consensus as China provides aid with no strings attached and adheres to non-interference in domestic affairs.

In 2005, President Hu Jintao made a four-point proposal for building a harmonious world in his speech at the UN’s 60th anniversary summit. He advocated

multilateralism, mutual benefit, civilisational co-existence and UN reforms. Harmonious world basically subsumes the entire gamut of earlier approaches for enhancement of Chinese soft power.

Review of the Literature

Conceptualisation of Soft Power

As far as theoretical framework is concerned, it is necessary to revisit Joseph Nye whose works spanning two decades have rigorously dealt with the concept of soft power and refined it with the changing political scenario. *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (1990a) responds to the arguments for American decline, conceptualises soft power and predicts that American power would continue to expand. The United States emerged as the sole superpower in the next decade and exercised unprecedented hegemony (the unipolar moment) in shaping international relations extended to military, economic and cultural spheres.

The 9/11 attacks shook America which was immersed in general apathy towards foreign policy issues after a decade of international preponderance and domestic prosperity. *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone* (2002) warns against two diametrically opposite tendencies, viz., isolationism and triumphalism, both detrimental to the maintenance of American hegemony in a privatised, globalised and informatised world. Terrorism was a manifestation of the threat created by a diffused state of power and only international co-operation under American leadership could salvage the situation. However, the neoconservative-dominated Bush regime embarked on the path of unilateralism and pre-emptive strikes, exemplified by the Iraq War (2003) and American soft power plummeted all over the world.

Nye asserts that the contemporary international system transformed by globalisation and information revolution contains three spheres of power structure: a unipolar military sphere with the US as the sole superpower; a multipolar economic sphere shared by the US, the European Union, Japan (and now China); and a transnational sphere consisting of both state and non-state actors. Hard power may be effective in the first and second spheres, but only soft power can work in the last sphere.

Although *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (2004) is the most systematic treatise on soft power, it limits itself to elaboration of themes discussed in earlier writings. Nye analyses the implications of Iraq War on American foreign policy and introduces the concept of smart power, which is the judicious combination of all power resources to achieve favourable foreign policy goals. The same year Nye also released *Power in the Global Information Age: From Realism to Globalization* (2004), a collection of published essays written in the span of three decades. It also emphasises on the changing nature of international politics and significance of soft power.

In *Powers to Lead* (2008), Nye relates the concept of power to leadership. He argues that an effective leadership involves proper application of hard and soft power (smart power) and in the current context, the latter is gaining prominence as people prefer mutual interaction to being mere followers. He tries to clarify popular, but vague terms applied in leadership discourse like ‘charismatic’ and ‘transformational’ and identifies ‘contextual intelligence’ as a key skill required in a contemporary leadership.

Nye’s latest work is *The Future of Power* (2011), which is a detailed analysis of the concept of power (military, economic and soft), diffusion and transition and the policy of smart power. In the chapter on soft power, Nye studies soft power in the context of three faces of power behaviour, viz., making others’ do what they otherwise would not, agenda-setting and shaping others’ preferences. Then he elaborates on how soft power can be used to get desired outcomes. He also looks at the soft power of China and its implication on American power. He suggests that the relationship need not be a zero-sum game. In the concluding chapter on smart power, he gives a five step formula for a successful American smart power strategy and states that a synthesis between realism and liberalism, ‘liberal realism’ is necessary for implementation of smart power.

Critique of Soft Power

Nye formulates soft power neither as pure theory separated from the exigencies of politics nor crass policy based on stereotypical realpolitik reading of the international

environment. Therefore, it has been a subject of serious deliberation and criticism both in the academic and policy circles over the last decade. A recent book *Soft Power and US Foreign Policy* (2010), edited by Michael Cox and Inderjeet Parmar, tries to bring together different scholars who critically analyze the validity of soft power and in the end chapter Nye responds to them.

Zahran and Ramos give a Gramscian perspective on soft power and detect striking resemblance between soft power and hegemony. However, they point out that Nye ignores certain aspects of Gramscian hegemony impoverishing his own conceptualisation. He does not identify intrinsic coercive mechanism within consent, struggle over ideas and institutions in the international system, distinction between spheres of political and civil society and complex relation of behaviours, resources and strategy. Nye is dubbed as an organic intellectual who prescribes ideas to the globalist historic bloc so that it can retain its hegemony.

Edward Lock finds Nye's formulation ambiguous because it conflates relational and structural forms of power and neither of them gets properly articulated. Nye defines soft power as attraction (function of the agent), but neglects how the attractiveness is determined (function of the structure). He also neglects the role of the subject of power, the entity that needs to be attracted. To resolve the ambiguity Lock turns to the work of Michel Foucault, who conceives of power in relational terms, in which there is mutual dependence between the agent and the subject of power.

Christopher Layne problematises the definition and the causal mechanism of soft power. The definition of soft power has expanded to include even carrot and stick, especially in the realm of policy-making. Besides, bureaucratic decision-making process of a state can never be influenced by individual preferences, especially those of the civil society (relative autonomy). That renders soft power totally impotent. Layne identifies smart power as soft power 2.0. Thus, smart power has further broadened the jurisdiction of soft power, to include all power resources.

Shogo Suzuki writes about the rising soft power of China. The cultivation of soft power is of utmost importance and necessity to a nation state, but it is very difficult to determine the extent to which soft power translates into national goals. Indeed China

is attractive, but its soft power is ridden with complexities. Beijing Consensus leads China to make deals with corrupt and brutal dictators which alienates the liberal democracies. It is doubtful that Confucianism or Socialism with Chinese characteristics holds any appeal to a privatised, globalised and informatised international community. Besides, there are many issues like democracy deficit and environmental pollution with potential to erode China's soft power.

The Chinese Discourse on Soft Power

Whatever the complexities, Chinese soft power has caught the imagination of the academia as well as the Chinese Party-State leadership. Just when the United States got entangled in Iraq and its international popularity reached its lowest ebb, China was looked at as a rising soft power giant. Bates Gill and Huang Yanzhong (2006) give a preliminary analysis of (i) Chinese soft power resources like culture (tradition, reform and opening up and Confucius Institutes), domestic values and policies (path of development or Beijing Consensus), and foreign policy (good neighbourliness, multilateralism, adherence to international norms and co-operation against non-traditional security threats); (ii) effectiveness of soft power measured by opinion poll data and weakened pro-independence movement in Taiwan; and (iii) constraints on soft power like imbalance in soft power resources (lack of human development and rampant corruption), legitimacy concern of diplomacy (lack of political reforms, activities of dissident groups and assistance to corrupt and brutal dictators) and foreign policy incoherence burdened by history and nationalism.

The most popular work on Chinese soft power is Joshua Kurlantzick's (2007) *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power Is Transforming the World*. He dramatically recounts the story of China's soft power penetration into countries which were inaccessible during the Cold War, e.g., since 1997, it has made tremendous headway in South East Asia, which used to perceive China as a threat and a destabilising factor. Applying tools of business and culture, China seeks to replace the American preponderance in foreign affairs of other countries. Indeed the very definition of soft power as enunciated by Nye has to broaden to apply in the Chinese context as it uses aid, investment and multilateral institutions, besides popular and elite culture and public diplomacy to launch its charm offensive.

Kurlantzick has portrayed a rather one-dimensional view of Chinese soft power and not critically considered its limitations. He seems to believe that China has a coherent and invincible strategy to dominate the world through soft power, which is quite apart from the actual reality. Li Mingjiang (2009) edited *Soft Power: China's Emerging Strategy in International Politics* contains many articles which rigorously analyze the various aspects of Chinese soft power like domestic factors, international appeal, strengths and weaknesses. It adopts an interdisciplinary approach including international relations, political economy, social relations, culture, history, and education as well as case studies on South Korea, Australia, Southeast Asia, Africa and Beijing's diplomacy in international climate change negotiations.

Li Mingjiang (2008) in "China debates Soft Power" gives a sceptical review of Chinese soft power strength. He clearly points out that the relationship between soft power and foreign policy goals of China is unclear. Its application is domestically oriented to preserve the legitimacy of the Party-State by invoking nationalism and developmental achievements. As a result, the international ambitions are limited. Li also identifies other defects which hinder China's soft power offensive like the wasteful new Marxist project, arbitrary control of political watchdogs and discouragement of intellectual innovation. Hence, he considers soft power as Beijing's underbelly.

Young Nam Cho and Jong Ho Jeong (2008) in "China's Soft Power: Discussions, Resources, and Prospects" narrate the gradual emergence of soft power in the Chinese foreign policy discourse, both within the academia and the Party-State. In the end, they investigate three soft power resources of China, viz., developmental model, peaceful rise theory and civilisation. Alan Hunter (2009) discusses the theme of soft power in China since Sun Tzu and the pre-Imperial era and then proceeds to the dynamics of peaceful rise and international competition for resources in the contemporary era. He traces Chinese soft power within Chinese religion and traditional culture; Chinese universities and Mandarin as lingua franca; Chinese media, tourism, and sport; Chinese Diaspora, and Chinese cultural/political presence in Southeast Asia and Africa. Finally, he compares Chinese soft power with five other states, viz., the US, Soviet Union/Russia, Europe, Japan and India and discusses the policy implications of the concept.

China's Soft Power Diplomacy

To promote its soft power during the last decade, China has developed ideas, policies and institutions. The Beijing Consensus provides an alternative to the discredited Washington Consensus and favours strong political set-up concentrating on economic growth. China provides economic assistance to developing countries with no strings attached. It is quite popular among the authoritarian states. This term was first coined by Joshua Cooper Ramo (2004) in his work *The Beijing Consensus: Notes on the New Physics of Chinese Power*. Arif Dirlik (2006) in his position paper "Beijing Consensus: Beijing 'Gongshi'. Who Recognizes Whom and to What End?" criticises the concept for ignorance of the exploitation of Chinese labour, but appreciates it for advocating a global economic framework which provides for regional political variations. Scott Kennedy (2010) writes a paper "The Myth of Beijing Consensus", in which he identifies the problems with the concept.

Confucius Institutes are academic centres in foreign countries to train foreigners in Chinese language and culture. They have become an important medium for creating a favourable atmosphere and image for China and influencing the foreign public opinion. Li Hsi Chang, et. al. (2009) study their organisational structure in "Confucius Institutes: Distributed leadership and knowledge sharing in a worldwide network." James F. Paradise (2009) discusses the global impact of these institutes in "China and International Harmony: The Role of Confucius Institutes in Bolstering Beijing's Soft Power".

Gaps in the Literature

In its recent conceptualisation, soft power appears to have broadened its scope to an extent that everything has become soft power and it has become difficult to discern the exact application of the term. Within the Chinese CNP discourse, the relationship between hard power and soft power has not been properly delineated. Does a state's soft power increase with its hard power capabilities or does increase in hard power undercut the impact of soft power? These questions are hardly figured out in the prevalent literature.

In its essence, soft power can be considered as the benevolent aspect of power. It is supposed to have a positive influence on the subject of power. This may not necessarily be true. The application of power fundamentally depends upon the reaction of the subject of power and if this be so, the benevolence of soft power can be decided by those on whom power is being applied. In the present conceptualisation, the subject's reaction to the application of soft power is missing.

Chinese authoritarian political structures do not enjoy general appreciation of the international community and its rising soft power seems to be overly dependent on its hard power capabilities, especially its economic growth over the last three decades. In the contemporary information age, to talk about popularising Confucian values, tight political control and uneven economic growth seems rather an exaggeration. Therefore, it is essential to study the sustainability of Chinese soft power campaign in the long run and its impact on legitimisation of the domestic political structure.

Definition, Rationale and Scope

This research is relevant because soft power is an emerging concept in Chinese foreign policy and power discourses and the Chinese government has invested a lot of resources to study and implement soft power as a strategy for its peaceful development. China seems convinced that soft power is a major component of its rising CNP.

Another aspect is that soft power is a Western concept influenced by the liberal approach and China has borrowed it. It would be interesting to study in what way China has adapted the concept to its non-liberal framework.

The research provides a time-frame 1997-2011. The East Asian Financial Crisis (1997) provided the first opportunity to China to exercise its soft power since Opium War, barring may be the appeal of Maoism among some stray revolutionaries. So, it seems to be the appropriate starting point. In 2011, October 15-18, 17th CPC Central Committee was convened at Beijing to discuss cultural system transformation and promoting socialist cultural development, an apt event as the concluding point.

The research is limited by the inability of the researcher to study Chinese language materials. Another constraint is the limited time which does not permit deep analysis of every source of Chinese soft power. Therefore, all the research questions may not be addressed.

Research Questions, Hypotheses and Methods

The dissertation seeks to address some fundamental questions with regard to the soft power theory and its implication on China's foreign policy. First, it is essential to understand what soft power is, how it originated and can it be applied to Chinese conditions. Second, we need to gauge the significance of soft power within the Chinese discourse and its relationship with hard power. In the relationship between two forms of power, we need to find whether greater soft power depends upon greater hard power, if the application of hard power weakens soft power and whether greater soft power increases the acceptability of hard power. Third, it is important to know to what extent Chinese government emphasises soft power, and if soft power is effective, then why there is worry in China's neighbourhood about its peaceful rise. Fourth, we shall try to analyse if China has been able to sell its image abroad, and how much China's model of political stability and manufacturing hub appeals to the political groups of other countries, especially developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Fifth, we need to find if Beijing Consensus exists, if so, whether it is accepted within the international as a viable alternative to Washington Consensus, and if it undermines American influence abroad. Sixth, we have to explore the dynamics of China-US relations to find out if Chinese soft power is a threat to the US hegemony, whether America seeks to counter rising Chinese soft power and whether China ready to deal with American counter-measures to undercut China's appeal. Seventh, we require examining the cultural sphere, especially the effectiveness of Confucius Institutes in spreading Chinese soft power abroad. Finally, we seek to understand how the domestic authoritarian political structures influence Chinese soft power, whether China has successfully adapted this Western liberal concept within its non-liberal framework and whether its rising soft power legitimise China's domestic political structure.

Although we have a large number of questions to address, the primary focus of the dissertation will be on two issues, viz., the real source of China's soft power and its sustainability. Some preliminary observations on the issues should be made. Firstly, the relevance of Chinese soft power seems to be based on the awe of its hard power capabilities, especially its unprecedented economic growth. Although we can identify many soft power resources of China, in terms of the classification made by Joseph Nye, like ancient culture and philosophy, attractiveness of the development model, and multilateralism and good neighbourliness policy, the real source appears to be its economic development. To an extent, China's rising military might also contributes positively to its soft power. Secondly, the sustainability of Chinese soft power may be severely constrained by its illiberal domestic political structure. There are critical soft power resources that China lacks, such as popular cultural products, global commercial brands, free and transparent mass media, world-renowned personalities (Nobel Peace laureate, Liu Xiaobo is imprisoned and many other Chinese with international reputation are exiled), freedom of expression and most importantly, the rule of law. All of these can be attributed to constraint on individual freedom and suppression of human rights, which are the resultants of China's illiberal political structure.

This research would use both primary (government papers, statements and data) and secondary sources (books, articles, empirical study reports, etc.). It is a deductive research, i.e., it starts with Joseph Nye's theory of soft power and soft power debates in China, and then it tests them in the light of actual impact on policy and outcome. Chinese hard power and illiberal domestic political structure are the independent variables and soft power is the dependent variable. The policies of the government and perception of the international community are the intervening variables.

Organisation of the Dissertation

The second chapter of the dissertation deals elaborately with the theoretical perspective of soft power in China's foreign policy. It has two parts: the first discusses the definition of power, three faces of power, locating soft power within these faces, relation between soft power resources and behaviour, contextualisation of soft power within American foreign policy and international soft power environment;

and the second deals with the civilisational legacy of China's soft power including tributary system, Zheng He's voyages and ancient Chinese political philosophy, and soft power with Chinese characteristics, including comprehensive national power, relation between hard power and soft power, cultural and political aspects of soft power, 'keeping a low profile' strategy debate, and international and domestic aspects of soft power. The following chapter (three) titled China's soft power diplomacy deliberates on the surging popularity of soft power discourse in China, its soft power resources and strategies like multilateralism and good neighbourliness, soft power concepts on peace and harmony, cultural diplomacy and economic diplomacy. The fourth chapter provides a critical assessment on Nye's soft power theory through a comparative analysis with other visualisations of non-coercive power and ontological and normative critique, and evaluation of soft power with Chinese characteristics, mainly the domestic dimension, debates on peaceful rise and Beijing Consensus and limitations of China's 'charm offensive'.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Perspectives

Soft Power Theory

Joseph Nye used the term soft power for the first time in 1990, but the phenomenon is ‘as old as human history’ (Nye 2011: 81). The influence of ancient civilisations like China and India reached far beyond the regions under their military or economic ambit. Confucianism was adopted by the states within China’s periphery, like Korea, Japan and Vietnam, as their official ideology. Hinduism and Buddhism competed with each other for dominance of the religious and cultural space in the South East Asian region. In fact, the latter spread deep into Central and North East Asia. Students from these countries, including China, came to study Buddhist philosophy in Indian universities.

During the Middle Ages, the Pope and the Caliph controlled vast territories and even mighty kings paid allegiance to them due to their spiritual authority over Western Christianity and Islam respectively. In the 18th century, France influenced the European opinion by the popularity of its culture and language among the continental aristocracy and later, that of its revolutionary ideals among the rising middle class. In the 19th century, the British Empire proselytised among the colonised elite the superiority of Anglo-Saxon world-view, its values and social systems. Liberal democrats like Wilson, Roosevelt and de Gaulle; totalitarian dictators like Hitler, Stalin and Mao; as well as post-colonial leaders like Nehru, Nasser and Mandela enjoyed wide appeal among large constituencies in the international community.

Thus, ‘the noted British realist E. H. Carr, in 1939, described international power in three categories: military power, economic power and power over opinion’ (Nye 2004: 8; 2011: 82). This third category of international power (soft power) was theorised by Nye in his seminal work *Bound to Lead* (1990a) and later developed in *The Paradox of American Power* (2002), *Soft Power* (2004) and *The Future of Power* (2011). We

shall begin this chapter with the examination of the theoretical dimensions of soft power as formulated by Nye.

What is power?

To put it simply, power means the ability to get desired outcomes. It can be perceived in two ways: either as a relation between the agent and the victim or as ‘the possession of capabilities or resources that can influence outcomes’ (Nye 2004: 3). The resource-based definition, advocated by structural realism (Waltz 1979; Mearsheimer 2001) as well as power transition theories (Organski 1958; Gilpin 1981; Paul Kennedy 1988; et.al.), is useful for policy-makers. The ingredients of power as ‘large population, territory, natural resources, economic strength, military force and social stability’ make it ‘concrete, measurable and predictable’ and ‘guide to action’ (Nye 2011: 8). In general, countries endowed with greater power resources are more likely to achieve their objectives.

However, this definition suffers from serious problems: first, power can be understood only within the context of its application, which has two constituents, viz., scope (the agents and victims) and domain (the conditions of interaction between agents and victims) (Nye 2011: 6). In other words, which resources produce the desired outcomes depends on the historical circumstances; e.g., in the 18th century, population, territory and agricultural production were critical power resources as they provided a base for military recruitment and taxation. So, France was the greatest continental power in Europe. But it was defeated by a mercantilist maritime power, Britain in 1815 and later by a militarised industrial power, Prussia in 1871.

Second, possession of power resources does not guarantee desired outcomes. ‘Power conversion (resources to outcomes) is a crucial intervening variable’ that requires ‘well-designed strategies and skilful leadership’ (Nye 2011: 8). During the Cold War, one superpower, United States failed to overthrow communism in impoverished Third World countries like Cuba and Vietnam and the other, Soviet Union to preserve communism in its satellite states of Eastern Europe and even within its own territory. This is called ‘the paradox of power’ or ‘the power curse’ (Joshi 2011: 68).¹

¹ The former term used by Baldwin (2002) and the latter by Gallarotti (2010b).

Consequently, Nye favours a relational definition of power, i.e., ‘the ability to influence the behaviour of others to get the outcomes one wants’ (Nye 2004: 2). The process involves domain of power (conditions of interaction), scope of power (the agents and the victims), means of power (coercion, reward or attraction) and outcome of power (the preferred behavioural change in the victim). This is a more sophisticated and comprehensive understanding of power. Resources or capabilities are ‘simply tangible or intangible raw materials or vehicles which underlie power relationships’. Rising China and India may possess large populations, territories, economic and military resources and rich cultures, but power conversion strategies are critical to translate these into favoured effects in the international sphere (Nye 2011: 9-10).

Three Faces of Power

Nye proceeds further to discuss the nuances of behavioural or relational approach to power through the three faces of power debate. The first face of power is based on the classical definition of power given by Robert Dahl (1957), which means to compel others to do what they would otherwise not do (Gallarotti 2010a: 23). So, it would be imperative to know the initial preferences of the victim and only then, the behavioural change produced by the agent’s effort can be measured. The agent may use coercion, payment or persuasion to transform the victim’s existing preferences. China used force to annex Tibet within its territory or to suppress the Falun Gong religious movement, but economic aid and diplomatic pressure are preferred to convince the few states that recognise Taiwan to switch sides. However, what, if the victim already seeks the outcome intended by the agent? Just like, both mainland China and Taiwan want economic co-operation with each other. Then, the first face is inadequate to explain the power relationship.

Bachrach and Baratz (1962) introduced the second face of power, which means the capacity to set the agenda or context, within which the power relations play out. The agent applies power to create norms and institutions in such a way that the victim’s preferences appear unfeasible or illegitimate. Then, there would be no necessity to apply coercion, payment or persuasion to block the latter’s agenda. For instance, the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) regime recognises five nuclear weapon powers, which had conducted atomic explosions prior to 1968 and restricts other states from

acquiring nuclear weapons. Hence, if any state tries to violate this norm, it has to bear ramifications, like the sanctions that have been imposed on Iran and North Korea. Nevertheless, important powers like India, Pakistan and Israel possess nuclear weapons outside the NPT regime. Therefore, although the victim's willing or unwilling acquiescence to the existing agenda awards legitimacy to this type of power, a strong actor may refuse to play by the rules of the game.

The gap left over by the two faces of power is filled by the third face formulated by Steven Lukes (1974) as the ability to shape others' preferences. An agent can apply power more effectively if it can simply mould the victim's perceptions and tastes to suit its own interests. In such a case, the agent need not bother about overt display of power resources or legitimacy. The United States as the hegemonic power has universalised its values and culture through media, multinational brands, world-class universities, development aid and occasional, flexing of the muscle. As a result, most international actors perceive their interests and preferences within the broad framework of American values.

Locating Soft Power within the Power Discourse

We can situate soft power within the distinction between relational and resource-based definitions of power and three faces of power debate. Some policy-makers tend to 'confuse the actions of a state seeking desired outcomes with resources used to produce them' (Nye 2011: 20). Actually, soft power is a behavioural concept, i.e., it is an act of alluring others and not the resources used to create allurements.

In the first face of power, i.e., to compel others to do what they would otherwise not do, an actor may use persuasion (soft power), instead of coercion or payment (hard power). Diplomacy may be used to convince the other party about the desirability of a certain course of action; e.g., India was persuaded by American and British leaders to stall her proposed military strikes on the terrorist training camps in Pakistan after the 13th December 2001 terror attack on the Indian Parliament. That is soft power.

In the second face, an actor may apply soft power to seek legitimacy among other actors to its creation of norms and institutions (agenda-setting). Sometimes, agenda-setting may be based on hard power. The Treaty of Versailles 1919 was a

consequence of the military victory of the allies led by Wilsonian America and the Washington Consensus of the assertive neo-liberal economics of the conservative Reagan and Thatcher administrations. But, at other occasions, the norms created by the dominant powers have been embraced by other actors as desirable and just due to their perceived benignity, like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (abstained by only the Communist bloc, Saudi Arabia and South Africa) and Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (unsigned by only India, Pakistan and Israel). The latter is based on soft power.

The third face is closely related to the soft power theory. Soft power is the strongest element in the framing of others' preferences. For instance, the integration of the Korean peninsula seems improbable in the foreseeable future because South Korea identifies its interests with that of the US due to overwhelming American soft power and North Korea with that of China due to the appeal of the PRC's Leninist political system. Nevertheless, Nye's soft power is not identical with Lukes' third face of power. Nye's approach is more agent-centric, i.e., he prescribes the American state on how to enhance its soft power ignoring the hegemonic aspects of exercising power. Lukes (2007: 97), on the other hand, inquires into the normative aspect of power, whether an agent influences the victim 'by wielding power over them or by contributing to their empowerment' (Nye 2011: 241).

Soft Power Resources and Behaviour

Soft power behaviour is connected mainly with the intangible resources of power. Nye (2011: 84) identifies three basic soft power resources of a country, viz., '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 others see them as legitimate and having moral authority)'. The resources have potential that requires certain conditions (like those in the parentheses) to give desired outcomes.

But there may not always be direct correlation between intangible resources and co-optive behaviour. For instance, intangible resources like jingoistic culture and revolutionary political ideology can translate into motivation of war and those like institutions and norms can be used to threaten an uncompromising actor with economic sanction or use of force. On the other hand, military force can be used to

forge goodwill through relief and peacekeeping operations or through assistance against external threat and aggression. Rapid economic development and affluent living-standard also can make a country attractive to others. Sometimes, co-optive power may produce military or economic resources like allies or aid, while command power may establish soft power resources like hegemonic institutions or norms.

Power conversion (resources to outcomes) is problematic in any form of power, more so in soft power. As power is a relation between the agent and the victim within given conditions, its outcomes are determined by the relative positions of the two actors and the varying conditions. Additionally, in case of soft power, the subjective perception of the victim becomes the pre-dominant factor. As a result, it becomes difficult to measure the soft power capability of an actor and to formulate an effective soft power strategy. Still, Nye attempts to measure soft power through opinion polls, statistical data, visible images and policy behaviour of the victim-states. Moreover, he prescribes a national policy based on judicious combination of hard and soft power (smart power) to the agent-state (specifically, the United States). Thus, soft power is neither pure theory separated from the exigencies of politics nor crass policy based on stereotypical realpolitik reading of the international environment.

Contextualisation of Soft Power Theory within American Foreign Policy Discourse

Nye had theorised soft power within the American foreign policy discourse, but the concept has assumed great significance within the academic and policy discourses of many other countries, especially the People's Republic of China. In this section, we shall analyze the debates within which the idea originated and were concretised, and then, in the next section, examine whether soft power is an American phenomenon only or it can be applied to the foreign policy context of other countries as well.

Declinism

In the 1980s, there existed an array of declinist theories within American power discourse. For instance, Paul Kennedy (1988) had argued that the two Superpowers, United States and Soviet Union, had over-stretched themselves, beyond the sustainability of their productive resources, in order to maintain their global

preponderance in the Cold War. Gradually, other rising powers like Japan, European Economic Community and China would assert themselves due to rapid economic growth, pushing the international order to multi-polarity.

The declinist predictions were based on historical antecedents since 1500 that imbalance between productive material resources and strategic commitments, due to uneven social, technological or organisational growth, had actuated the decline of leading nations like Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, France and the British Empire. They had yielded their former dominance over the international system to a rising power with more efficient economic-military conversion capability.

Kennedy used the statistics since the end of World War II, when the US had replaced the British Empire as the leading power, to argue that although both the Superpowers had increased their military might during the four decades of Cold War, the relative share of the US in the international economic production had declined. (The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had weak economic credentials even at the height of its military-technological achievements.) Thus, the theory of the long cycle of expansion and contraction of Great Powers explained the systemic change in the 1980s.

Nye challenged the declinist theory on two counts. Firstly, the statistical data was based on a distorted base. After the World War II, US domination in power resources was due to the destruction caused by the War in Europe and Asia. Therefore, it was natural that with normalisation and reconstruction, the relative positions of other powers like Japan and EEC would improve vis-à-vis US. This statistical correction was misread by the declinists as American decline. In fact, early 1970s is the point when the overwhelming American control over the world economy and security ended, symbolised by the depegging of US dollar with gold and withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam. Since then, US had maintained a steady status in its relative international power position (Nye 1990b: 153-154).

Secondly, the nature of power itself had transformed over time due to increased interdependence and information revolution. In 1990, the real challenge to the US was a general diffusion of power, rather than the rise of another major power, among which Soviet Union was in economic crisis, Japan lacked military and ideological

proWess, Europe was disunited and China undeveloped. In the changed international environment, it had become preferable to ‘getting others to want what you want’, rather than using carrot or stick to dictate one’s terms upon another unwilling actor. The latter is known as hard or command power and the former soft or co-optive power, which tends to be related to intangible power resources like culture, ideology and institutions (Nye 1990b: 155, 166-167).

The declinists had measured power only in terms of tangible capabilities like resources, population, territory, etc., but America possessed not only military and economic lead over other countries, it also enjoyed unparalleled soft power due to being the centre of the globalisation and informatisation processes. It had created international regimes on security (United Nations Charter), trade (General Agreement on Tariff and Trade), finance (International Monetary Fund), development (World Bank), non-proliferation (Non-Proliferation Treaty), human rights (Universal Declaration of Human Rights), et. al. and entrenched its domination over agenda-setting. Most leading multi-national corporations like Microsoft, Wal-Mart, Coca Cola, McDonald’s and Nike operated from the US, letting it control the popular market brands. Moreover, American political values like democracy, free market, human rights, and American cultural symbols like Harvard, Hollywood, American English and CNN appealed to the international public in a globalised world. Hence, Nye warned against the trend towards ‘loose historical analogies and falsely deterministic political theories’, as they distracted American foreign policy from the real problem, i.e., diffusion of power (Nye 1990b: 171).

Isolationism and Triumphalism

The post Cold War history unfolded itself with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and with the US as the sole Superpower in ‘the unipolar moment’ of international system (Krauthammer 1990/91). Unprecedented power and global reach gave Americans a sense of invincibility and invulnerability throughout the last decade of the 20th century, eventuating two divergent tendencies within US foreign policy discourse, to counter which Nye further elaborated on his theory of soft power.

Isolationism alongwith the Monroe Doctrine had guided the official American foreign policy after the founding of the nation. It advocated an enlightened withdrawal from

the international power struggle among the European Great Powers and jealous protection of national interest against European imperialism within the New World. However, the World War II followed by the Cold War drew America into the thick of struggle against totalitarian ideologies, viz., fascism and communism. It not only defeated the Axis powers (Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan and their allies) but also led the reconstruction of Western Europe and East Asia and the establishment post-War international system. Its actions were justified in the name of protection of American values, enumerated by President Frank Roosevelt as the Four Freedoms, viz., freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear (Kissinger 1994).

The collapse of Soviet communism gave the Western civilisation a sense of 'end of history' and need to withdraw from its global commitments (Fukuyama 1989). There existed no immediate threats and American values and institutions enjoyed credibility and legitimacy. As a result, international security and stability were guaranteed. Therefore, the new isolationists argued that US should avoid over-stretch and concentrate on home issues. The American society especially became callous about international problems and a new wave of domestic consumerism set in, until shaken by the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Some argued even after 9/11 that whatever resentment against the West existed would cease once America stopped poking its nose in other nations' affairs (Nye 2002: x).

Nye (2002) contended the isolationist tendency stating that it reflected the 'Pearl Harbour mentality' afflicting the American society, i.e., it will not prepare for its defence unless attacked. The three-fold processes of globalisation, privatisation and informatisation had transformed the nature of challenges threatening the US and its allies. Instead of ambitions of any nation-state, they needed to fight terrorism, ecological imbalances and epidemic diseases, which required international co-operation and engagement. The 9/11 horrifically demonstrated the necessity to rise up to new challenges. Those who advocated isolation as a remedy to such dangers, failed to recognise the deep hatred the perpetrators of terror harboured for American values like freedom and pluralism. To satisfy them would demand discarding the very ethos of American nation like democracy and human rights and her inherent strengths like capitalism.

The end of Cold War unleashed another tendency resonant with a second historical trend in US foreign policy, viz., Wilsonism. With the rise of American productive capabilities in the late 19th century, it began to demand ‘a slice of the melon’ of imperialism with Open Door Policy in China and colonisation of Philippines and Cuba. President Theodore Roosevelt advocated a proactive foreign policy based on balance of power politics as he felt America as the largest economic power in the world had a responsibility, along with the greatest world power, the British Empire, to maintain stability of the international order. But the strong isolationist heritage deterred such ideas. America was assumed as a beacon on the hill, an ideal state representing the pristine values of human nature, protected from the European power politics by two oceans and by the international hegemonic stability maintained by the British Royal Navy. However, during the World War I, when the Pax Britannica was threatened by the German war machine, the American paradise was no longer secure. President Woodrow Wilson guided a nation, still hesitant to embark on the unprecedented path of European engagement, into the War, not on the principle of balance of power, but as a duty to propagate the high American ideals of equal opportunity, democracy, human rights and free market in a cynical world of hard power. Hence, like isolationism, Wilsonism was also a manifestation of American exceptionalism.² It continued to be the dominant trend in US foreign policy from World War II, until its credibility was eroded by the disaster in Vietnam (Kissinger 1994).

The neo-conservatives, who ascended to office during the Ronald Reagan (1981-89) and George W. Bush (2001-09) administrations, advocated a militant version of Wilsonism. Traditional Wilsonians supported propagation of American values through international institutions and struggle against ‘evil’ through containment, whereas the neocons promoted unilateralism and pre-emptive offensive to avoid international constraints and achieve swift, total victory over ‘evil’. (Nye 2004). The victory in Cold War and unprecedented, unchallenged American hegemony legitimised the neocon position and 9/11 provided an excuse for a new wave of triumphalism to ‘hunt

² American exceptionalism refers to the belief that American nationhood, built upon liberal principles of the Founding Fathers, is a unique ideal requiring emulation by rest of the world.

down monsters'.³ The Afghan War to destroy the 9/11 culprits, Al Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden and their guardian, the Taliban was followed by the Iraq War to eliminate threat posed by the weapons of mass destruction in the hands of a brutal dictator Saddam Hussein (eventually, proven to be a false allegation).

Nye (2002) reasoned that such triumphalism was untenable in a globalised, privatised and informatised world. The triumphalists like Charles Krauthammer celebrated American military power and stressed on its application to root out threats to Pax Americana, threats identified as 'rogue states' or 'Axis of Evil'. They advocated unilateralism and parochialism (which actually undermined Wilsonism), avoiding constraints imposed by international law, institutions and allies, so that American national interest could be secured. But terrorists, drug-peddlers, epidemic diseases and ecological disasters are not agents of any nation-state, which can be subdued with military power. They are non-state, transnational problems that demand co-operation among nation-states, international institutions, non-governmental organisations and civil societies.

Nye (2002: 39; 2004: 4; 2011: xv) compares the power distribution in the international system to a three-dimensional chess game. The top board represents the unipolar military dominance of United States; the middle board is the multipolar economic relations led by US, China, Japan and the European Union; and the bottom consists of transnational issues like terrorism, narcotics, environment, refugees, epidemics, etc., with diffusion of power among various state and non-state actors. In the classical inter-state military dimension, the United States enjoys unprecedented hegemony, with capability to deploy state-of-art nuclear, air, naval and ground forces in any part of the world, and with resources beyond those of all other countries put together. However, in economic relations, America cannot act independently and works in co-ordination with other Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries and after the 2008 recession, also with emerging developing countries (e.g., BRICS: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). In transnational relations, although the US is much more powerful than any other nation-

³ The phrase 'hunt down monsters' was used by the then Secretary of State and later President of the United States, John Quincy Adams in the early 19th century (Kissinger 1994).

state, the diffusion of power in the international system threatens to weaken the ability of nation-states to control the behaviour of private actors including individuals.

Freedom of action, global reach and access to information have made non-state entities (multi-national corporations, peace movements, civil societies, NGOs, etc.) capable of assuming significant roles in international decision-making and in creation of norms and regimes. The International Campaign to Ban Landmines, conceived and networked by an activist in Vermont, with the support of small powers like Canada and Norway and global fame of Princess Diana, was able 'to defeat the strongest bureaucracy in the world's only superpower', viz., the Pentagon (Nye 2011: 103).

However, unscrupulous elements like terrorists and internet hackers also have been empowered to inflict damage and even the most powerful of states is unable to control their activities. The 9/11 terror strikes on the symbols of American economic and military might was planned by Osama Bin Laden, a Saudi exile in the impoverished Afghanistan and executed by some fanatic young Muslims without any state support (only perhaps that of the isolated Taliban). The United States has failed to contain Jihadi fanaticism and on the contrary, by invading two Muslim countries, Afghanistan and Iraq, it has further damaged its image among Muslims.

Therefore, the United States needed to understand two things: first, it requires multilateralism to serve its own interests and not as a benign concession; and second, it cannot solely rely on military power or even a combination of military and economic power (hard power). Soft power is a compulsory element in the foreign policy arsenal of any nation, for only by 'making others' to want what you want', a nation can secure co-operation of other states.

International Soft Power Environment

The Iraq War (2003) symbolised American arrogance of power, its zeal for imposing its values upon unwilling nations and its lack of concern about the opinion of multilateral institutions and of its allies. As a result, American soft power plummeted in the Middle East and Western Europe. The international situation was already bad due to the failure of Washington consensus (neo-liberal economic prescriptions

advocated by the US-dominated institutions, World Bank and IMF) to alleviate financial instability in Latin America and chronic underdevelopment in Africa during the 1990s. Finally, the global economic melt-down (2008) produced through the sub-prime crisis exposed the weakness of American economy burdened by over-consumption. It also indicated that the dependence of the global economy on the US dollar had negative ramifications.

The decline of American soft power has allowed other states to compete seriously with the US for global influence. Some likely contenders to end the American hegemony are the European Union, Japan, the BRICS and the ASEAN. Let us study if these entities have been able to incorporate soft power into their foreign policies and to what extent they have been effective to redefine the international soft power environment.

European Union

Robert Kagan (2003) remarked that ‘Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus’. Since the end of World War II, Europe has reinvented itself into a haven of peace and prosperity, to replace its historical legacy of power politics, war and imperialism. The most alluring aspect of post-World War European experience has been that nations which had fought each other for centuries (like France and Germany) could not only co-operate but also integrate, sacrificing their national sovereignty. Besides, throughout the Cold War, the European Community projected itself as a moderate power, sandwiched between two rival, ideologically surcharged superpowers. It also provided a welfare state model of equitable economic prosperity, an alternative to American entrepreneurial market economy and Soviet bureaucratic socialism. Francois Duchene (1972) referred to EC as a ‘civilian power’ due to its reluctance to assume military responsibilities.

Nevertheless, Europe was closely allied to the United States during the Cold War as the latter had rescued it from Nazi aggression, then funded its post-war reconstruction (Marshall Plan) and contained the threat of communism (which divided Europe into two: liberal democratic West and socialist East). EC has championed nuclear non-proliferation, human rights and environmental protection, alongwith the US and imposed sanctions upon violators. But after the end of Cold War, there has been a

gradual divergence in their approaches to international problems. The European Union (EC became EU after the ratification of the Treaty of Maastricht in 1993) advocates constructive engagement with 'rogue states', use of economic sanctions to extract compliance and working through multilateral organisations like the United Nations. But unprecedented power has impelled America to assume confrontational attitude towards those unwilling to abide by international norms, to use overwhelming force to bring the enemy to its knees and to work through a coalition of the willing if possible and alone if necessary. Thus, EU became identified as a 'normative power', which seeks to shape international norms on the strength of its example (Manners 2002).

The combination of these two identities, viz., civilian power and normative power, coincides with Nye's concept of soft power, 'although the issues of agency and intentionality remain open for interpretation' (Hill 2010: 184). Indeed, Nye (2004: 75-77) considers Europe as the closest competitor to the US in soft power resources. Although no individual state is a match, Nye employs statistical data (like number of Nobel Prizes won, of applications seeking political asylum, expenditure on public diplomacy, etc.) to measure overall European soft power potential, which is roughly equivalent to the US. Moreover, its historical links through colonialism gives Europe economic and cultural leverage over most parts of the world. European languages like English (in the Commonwealth), French (in Francophone countries), Spanish and Portuguese (in Latin America) dominate the global lingsphere and soccer is the most popular game in the world. In fact, most of the dominant ideas in the contemporary world originated in the European continent.

Although anti-Americanism is prevalent within the leftist opinion in Europe and American right have increasingly nurtured anti-Europeanism (rejection of core European values) and Euroskepticism (opposition to European integration process), both the entities form integral parts of the Western civilisation based on shared legacy of Teutonic or Latin heritage, Roman Christianity, Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, two World Wars and Cold War (Huntington 1993; Chamorel 2006). Besides, 'soft power can be shared and used in a co-operative fashion' (Nye 2004: 82). Therefore, European soft power may counter American unilateralism and unrestrained market liberalisation, but actually, it assists and reinforces American soft power. Both have different approaches to similar normative objectives; e.g., the West is worried

over the Iranian nuclear programme. So, America plays the 'bad cop' by threatening sanctions and use of force, while EU-3 (UK, France and Germany) does the 'good cop' by engaging in peaceful negotiations and using sanctions only as the last resort (Nye 2006: 34).

Japan

Just like Europe, Japan also reinvented itself after the World War II under American occupation (1945-52). Previously, a feudal, insular Japan had been transformed into an industrialised colonial power after the Meiji Restoration (1868). However, Japanese militarism ravaged its neighbouring states, especially China and established a negative image of a ruthless and exploitative nation. But after its defeat in World War II, Japan was forced to withdraw from all its annexed territories and adopt a peace constitution. Article 9 of the constitution prohibits declaration of war and maintenance of armed forces by Japan, which deploys only Self-Defence Forces with an annual budget of approximately 1 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product. Although Japan possesses capabilities to develop nuclear weapons, it has renounced nuclear deterrence through three non-nuclear principles (being the only victim of actual use of atomic bombs). (Pharr 1993).

While its peace policy healed the wounds of the World War II atrocities, Japan's remarkable economic recovery and catching up with the United States in both income and technology became a model for other Asian states to emulate ('flying geese pattern'). The model was based on co-operation between workers and management, protection of infant industries, investment into strategic sectors, import of raw materials and technology, innovation, accumulation of trade surplus and domestic savings (Nye 2004: 84). Japan was also admired for providing foreign aid and credit to developing countries. During the 1980s, many American strategists predicted that Japan would emerge as a new superpower (Nye 2011: 164). But the Plaza Accord (1985) resulted in appreciation of Japanese Yen against US Dollar, adversely affecting the export-led economy and finally contributing to Japanese asset price bubble and two decades of stagnation in the economic growth (*The Japan Times*, September 9, 2006).

Nonetheless, Japanese soft power has continued to expand through its popular culture products like video games, Pokémon, comic books (*manga*), cartoons, Hello Kitty trinkets, *Power Rangers*, sushi, karate, Zen Buddhism and so forth. (Allison 2008). Moreover, Japan still holds technological prowess (robots, mobile internet, etc.), global brands (like Toyota, Honda and Sony) and high human development index (life expectancy, etc.). But possession of these power resources has not translated into revision of international soft power environment.

Two decades of stagnation, demographic problems (shrinking and aging population) and secluded culture (opposition to immigration and to cosmopolitan outlook) does not permit Japan to independently pursue a global soft power strategy. Actually, it is quite concerned about the rapid rise of China due to historical reasons and needs American support to maintain balance of power (Nye 2011: 166). Chinese culture and philosophy once dominated Japan and later by adapting to Western norms, Japan was able to emerge as a great power and humiliate China (1895-1945). Hence, high level of distrust and hatred exist between the two neighbours. In a competition for international influence, Japanese soft power is more likely to favour American objectives and curtail Chinese ambitions.

BRICS

In 2001, Goldman Sachs coined the acronym BRIC to indicate emerging markets or prospective ‘engines of growth’ for profitable investment opportunities.⁴ But the term acquired a dimension of its own when Brazil, Russia, India and China (later joined by South Africa) built a joint forum to co-ordinate their strategies to emerge as major powers. Unlike EU or Japan, these countries are likely to follow revisionist foreign policies, which may hamper American soft power. They have worked together to protect the interests of the developing countries during negotiations with the OECD countries on trade (Doha Round), environment (Copenhagen Summit- BASIC) and reform in the Bretton Woods system (increase in voting share of G20). However, beyond multilateral negotiations, each country pursues an independent foreign policy, in some cases, unfriendly to one another.

⁴ Jim O’Neill, a Goldman Sachs economist, coined the acronym in a 2001 paper entitled “Building Better Global Economic BRICs”.

Brazil is the largest Latin American country, which has emerged from stagnation, debt and instability. It is now considered a stable democracy with good economic credentials and ‘a popular culture of carnival and football’. It has resisted American pressure on its relationship with ‘disobedient’ states like Iran and Venezuela and has become a more active participant in international diplomacy, seeking permanent membership of the UN Security Council (alongwith India, Japan and Germany) (Nye 2011: 176-177).

Russia was a traditional major power in 19th century Europe and a presumed superpower, Soviet Union in the Cold War (1945-91) (Armijo 2007: 16). But during the last decade of the 20th century, it lost not only hard power resources (territory, population, armed forces, agricultural and industrial bases) but also soft power (as an alternative ideological pole to global capitalism). Since then, it has recovered mostly on the strength of energy and arms exports and by flexing of muscles to protect its interests (like in 2008, South Ossetia and Abkhazia declared independence from Georgia with Russian military backing). Russia has stood up against the US on many international issues, mostly in conjunction with China; e.g., both vetoed UNSC resolution on Syria in 2012. However, Russia lacks substantial soft power resources and its foreign policy behaviour generally breeds fear, rather than attraction in its neighbours.

India and China are two potential soft power giants. Both are ancient civilisations and after periods of colonial subjugation and socialist experimentation, have emerged as two of the fastest growing major economies of the world. With rise in economic clout, they have become important participants in international decision-making (in UNSC, G20, BASIC, etc.) and development models for other developing countries to emulate. Both have large diasporas that maintain cultural links with their ancestral land and have vibrant popular cultures with worldwide appeal.⁵

India’s cultural assets like Bollywood movies and songs, TV channels, cricket (Indian Premier League), English literature, cuisine, handicrafts, yoga, ayurveda, spirituality

⁵ Actually, Chinese cultural products do not have many consumers abroad, unlike Bollywood and Indian TV channels.

and Information Technology are marketed consumer products used by billions all over the world (Purushothaman 2010). Moreover, India has a vibrant (at times, chaotic), democratic and pluralistic political system (largest in the world), independent judiciary, free media, active civil society and a historical legacy of non-violent struggle against colonialism (under Gandhi and Nehru) and opposition to apartheid and other manifestations of injustice. In the words of C. Raja Mohan, “India could always count itself among the few nations with strong cards in the arena of soft power (Malone 2011).” Nonetheless, India is crippled by certain challenges, viz., chronic poverty, disease and illiteracy; insurgent movements in Kashmir, North-East and Maoist-controlled hinterland; and electoral politics based on corruption, nepotism, caste and communalism.

South Africa is the most modernised nation in the African continent. It had a glorious history of non-violent struggle against apartheid led by Nelson Mandela. It also has played important role in conflict resolution in the continent. Globally, it is known for gold and diamond mines, multi-ethnic culture and sports. But it is impaired by high crime rate, HIV/ AIDS epidemic and corruption. Among the BRICS states, India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) are Third World democracies and except for the demand for greater development rights for the Third World, their objectives seem compatible with the interests of the developed countries (US, EU and Japan). Only Russia (a paternalistic democracy) and China (an authoritarian party-state) are perceived as revisionist powers with capacity to disrupt the international soft power environment.

ASEAN

Association of South-East Asian Nations is a regional organisation founded in 1967 when the threat of communism was at its peak and the South-East Asian states were at a nascent stage of economic development.⁶ After the Cold War, ASEAN has expanded its membership and agenda to become an important entity in international politics. 1997 Financial Crisis was an eye-opener for the ASEAN states, which used to rely too

⁶ During the 1960s, China was sponsoring communist guerrilla activities in South-East Asia and America was fighting a war to contain communist expansion in Vietnam and the rest of Indo-China. The South-East Asia, composed of post-colonial, undeveloped states, was thus destabilised. So, these states formed the ASEAN to ensure stability and development in the region through mutual co-operation.

heavily on America and Japan for their economic stability. So, they have increased the role of other powers within their regional framework, through ASEAN+ 3 (China, Japan and South Korea), East Asia Summit (ASEAN+ 3, Australia, India and New Zealand, Russia and the United States) and ASEAN Regional Forum.

ASEAN advocates certain principles, viz., non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, respect for ideological and cultural diversity, rejection of threat or use of force and decision-making based on informality, consultation and consensus, which run counter to the policy of the Western nations. It has taken a lead in the Asian values debate due to concerns about the disruptive effect of Western culture. Asian values emphasise social responsibilities over individual freedom, integrity of family life and respect for learning. Nonetheless, ASEAN is dependent on external powers, especially the US to maintain stability of the region. It seeks to accommodate China Rise by constructive engagement with its giant neighbour and by soft balancing through other powers.

Assessment

We have examined the American foreign policy debates, within which the theory of soft power emerged and then analysed how soft power affects the foreign policies of other major powers. We found that America is the preponderant military (strategic as well as conventional) power in the post-Cold War international order, with no competitor, and it is also the largest world economy. At the end of World War II, it established international regimes for collective security, trade, finance, development, human rights and non-proliferation, which acquired legitimacy because America had stood in opposition to everything that was viewed as evil in most nations of the world, viz., autocracy, fascism, colonialism and communism. It also became the pioneer in pure and applied sciences, cutting-edge technology, innovation, entrepreneurship, organisation, communication processes and information revolution, all of which were eagerly duplicated by other nations. Consequently, American culture, ideology and institutions percolated throughout the world (Americanisation). Thus, America enjoys historically unprecedented, almost universalised soft power.

Europe and Japan emerged from the ashes of the World War II, with crucial American assistance in the form of development aid and security against communism, as

partners and beneficiaries of American hegemony. The United States was founded on the liberal ethos of the European civilisation, which further developed into the contemporary Western civilisation and Japan borrowed the same Western ideas and institutions to emerge as a modern, developed nation. Hence, the three 'soft power superpowers' have common assets and objectives in a universalised soft power environment (Yasushi and McConnell 2008).

India, Brazil, South Africa and ASEAN are post-colonial, developing entities that have contradictory historical legacies: on one hand, they inherited their political structures and constitutional processes from their colonial masters (the West); on the other, they acquired their independence after hard struggle against the latter. So, although they demand their rightful share in the international power structure, they are considered accommodative and to a limited extent, complementary powers. Actually, only India possesses the soft power resources capable of global influence, but these are also based on liberal principles that do not upset the American applecart.

China, Russia and as a transnational ideology, radical Islam, however, are perceived as antagonistic elements. Radical Islam enjoys appeal in the Middle East and South Asia, but it lacks state support, except may be in Iran, a country under UN sanctions. Russia, on the other hand, was itself an imperial European power, but after the October Revolution (1917), it became a pariah state to capitalist countries. It never had a liberal democratic tradition, which is reflected in its existing paternalistic democratic model. Still, its soft power resources are no match to a civilisational state like China. China is an ultra-nationalistic, authoritarian state with a soft power strategy backed by substantial hard power including a three-decade long economic growth, unprecedented in human history. Indeed, China is redefining the soft power discourse, even within the US.

Soft Power in Traditional and Contemporary Chinese Thought

Civilisational Legacy⁷

China has an ancient tradition of inspiring awe and reverence in its neighbourhood. The ability to govern a vast centralised empire with an efficient administration, use of hydraulic engineering to irrigate vast arable land, sufficiency of food-grains, cultural achievements in aesthetics, ethics, metaphysics and sciences and sophisticated philosophical schools were hallmarks of the Chinese civilisation. The neighbouring kingdoms replicated Chinese civilisational traits within their own territories, empowering themselves with sound administrative and philosophical principles. In return, China enjoyed the status of the Middle Kingdom (*zhongguo* 中国) with its neighbours adhering to a tributary relationship, until the industrialised maritime powers overwhelmed it in mid 19th century.

The Chinese civilisation had flourished under the Han dynasty (202 BC – AD 220), when Confucianism was integrated with Han Imperialism to provide a state ideology, which not only enhanced domestic cohesiveness but also foreign attraction. Trade with India, the Middle East and the Roman Empire through the Silk Road brought wealth as well as persons and ideas to China. Buddhism gradually percolated into the Chinese society; and after the disintegration of the Han Empire, it became a dominant part of the culture. Under the Sui - Tang - Song dynasties (6th century to 13th century), a reunified China reached the zenith of its cultural sophistication and peripheral influence. Neo-Confucianism combined teachings of Imperial Confucianism, Daoism and Sinicised Buddhism, to address the moral needs of an individual and ensure harmony in society. This period brought renaissance in technology, production, navigation, government, art, literature and philosophy, centuries before the Italian Renaissance. (Fairbank and Goldman 2006). When Marco Polo visited China during the reign of Kublai Khan (1260 - 94), he was astounded to witness the opulence of the Yuan (Mongol) dynasty. His memoirs introduced the achievements of the Chinese civilisation to the European audience and inspired a new age of geographical exploration, technological invention and ideological revolution in the West. The Jesuit

⁷ In this section, names of most historical personalities are written in pinyin. Some very famous names like Confucius (Kongzi), Mencius (Menzi), Sun Tzu (Sunzi), etc. are in the most recognisable form, either Latinised or Wade-Giles system. Chinese characters are mentioned only for a few civilisational concepts like *zhongguo*, *tianzi*, *tianxia*, *tianming*, etc.

missionaries, who lived in Beijing during the 17th – 18th century, also became a medium of exchange of ideas between the Occident and the Orient (Creel 1953; Spence 1990; Fairbank and Goldman 2006). Through their letters, great minds in Europe like ‘Leibniz, Voltaire, Quesnay, Oliver Goldsmith, and a host of others’ imbibed Confucian ideas, which informed great events like the French Revolution (Creel 1953: 220). Hence, historically, the Chinese civilisation has enjoyed great soft power, of which we shall discuss three sources, viz., the tributary system, Zheng He’s voyages and ancient Chinese political philosophy.

Tributary System

The Chinese civilisation maintained hierarchical inter-state relations in East Asia, consisting of China, Korea, Japan, Ryukyu Islands and Vietnam, on the normative premise of Imperial Confucianism (Suzuki 2009: 35-36). The Emperor of the Middle Kingdom was considered to be the Son of Heaven (*tianzi* 天子) who ruled over All Under Heaven (*tianxia* 天下) or, so long as he enjoyed the Mandate of Heaven (*tianming* 天命) (Zhang Feng 2009: 21). The empire was organised on Confucian principles, which emphasised hierarchy (social order) and benevolence (welfare state). The neighbouring kingdoms that paid allegiance to the Son of Heaven and adopted Confucian values were considered civilised states (tributaries), whose dynastic autonomy and territorial integrity were respected. Force was used only when a tributary refused to respect the Mandate of Heaven, i.e., either the legitimacy of the reigning emperor or his jurisdiction over All Under Heaven.⁸ The Mongols and other independent tribes and later the European powers, which refused to kowtow the Son of Heaven and partake the gifts of Confucian civilisation, were branded as barbarians.

The smaller states in East Asia were so overwhelmed by the civilisational achievements of China that they eagerly subscribed to its suzerainty. This not only provided legitimacy to the ruling dynasties (through investiture issued by the *tianzi*) but also ensured security against any subversive foreign intervention. In return for ritualistic submission, which involved exchange of emissaries and gifts and

⁸ The neighbouring states sometimes contested China’s *zhongguo* status by claiming the responsibility for maintaining the Confucian order by their own superior example, but never challenging the legitimacy of the order (Suzuki 2009: 44). Japan generally refused to recognise Chinese suzerainty and preferred to remain in isolation (Kissinger 2011: 8).

kowtowing before the Son of Heaven, the tributary states got trade privileges in China, a huge market (Suzuki 2009: 39). Thus, China was clearly an East Asian hegemon, which maintained regional peace, stability and prosperity for two millennia, primarily relying on its soft power and only occasionally applying military muscle.⁹

The barbarians were recognised as the primary threat to China and a dual policy of appeasement and repression was used to control them. Indeed, the Great Wall was constructed for defence against the Mongols and other northern tribes. Nonetheless, the Mongols (1279 – 1368) and Manchus (1644 – 1911) conquered China and assumed the Mandate of Heaven, adhering to the Confucian international order. They ruled like any other Chinese dynasty. However, in the 19th - 20th century, when the European powers and Japan, which had scaled the heights of modernity and technology, established their own territorial space within China, they did not care to emulate the Han culture. The Confucian value system had become out-of-date in an international order based on trade and warfare (both anathema to the Confucian elite). Hence, the relative decline of China's soft power was inevitable (Levenson 1968; Spence 1990; Fairbank and Goldman 2006).

Zheng He's Voyages

During the Ming dynasty (1368 – 1644), seven naval expeditions (1405 – 1433) under Admiral Zheng He were dispatched to destinations in South-East Asia, India, the Strait of Hormuz, the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa. China had reached the peak of its pre-industrial shipbuilding, nautical technology and maritime diplomacy, which the Europeans could not match even centuries later. Fairbank (2006: 137-138) mentions:

“The shipyards near Nanjing from 1403 to 1419 alone built 2000 vessels, including almost a hundred big ‘treasure ships’ 370 to 440 feet in length and 150 to 180 feet abeam... With four to nine masts up to 90 feet high, a dozen water-tight compartments and stern-post rudders, they could have as many as 50 cabins and carry 450 to 500 men. The fleet of the first voyage of 1405 – 1407 set out with an estimated 317 vessels, of which 62 were treasure ships. (The Spanish Armada of 1588 would total 132 vessels.) Zheng He was accompanied by a staff

⁹ China also attempted to militarily conquer its neighbouring states, but they bravely resisted and so, China had to settle for a soft power strategy of awing them into sub-ordination (Mitchell and McGiffert 2007: 9).

of 70 eunuchs, 180 medical personnel, 5 astrologers and 300 military officers, who commanded a force of 26,800 men.”

Fairbank also identifies three significant features of these expeditions: First, they were not exploration voyages, like those of Vasco da Gama or Columbus, as they followed traditional Arab and Chinese trading routes. Second, they were diplomatic, not commercial, piratical or colonial ventures. Lavish gifts were bestowed on the encountered rulers, who were invited to accompany the expedition back to China or send envoys, to pay tribute and kowtow before the Son of Heaven.¹⁰ Third, once the voyages ceased in 1433, they were never followed up. In fact, the records of the voyage were destroyed and overseas navigation severely restricted (Fairbank 2006: 138).

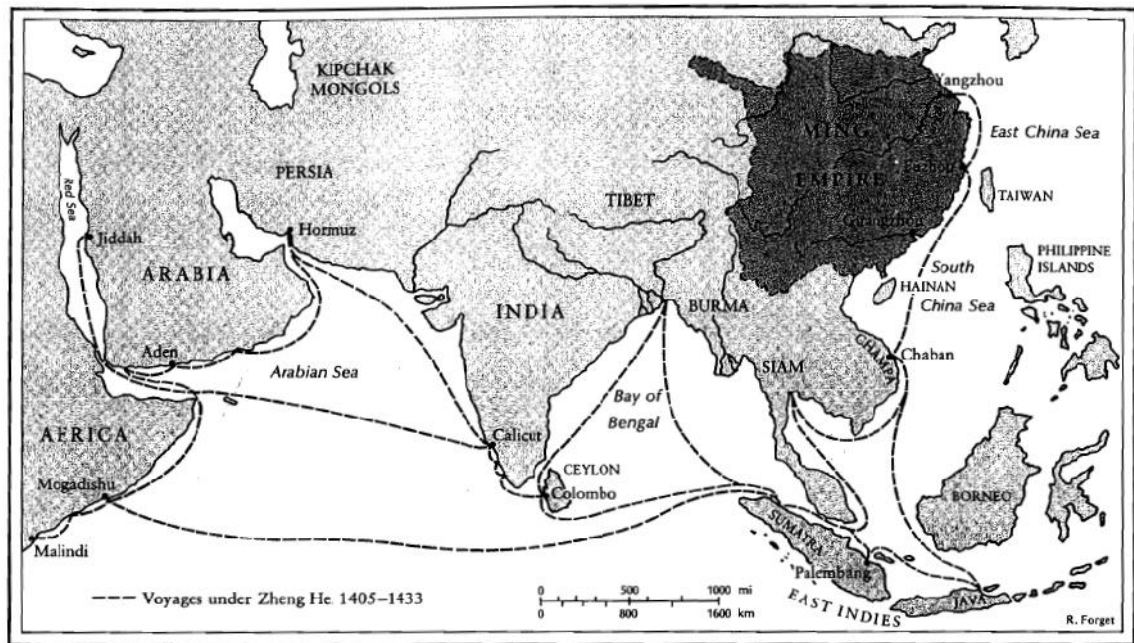


Figure 1: Voyages of Zheng He. (Fairbank and Goldman 2006: 136).

Tormented by Mongol tribesmen and Japanese pirates, obsessed with ‘anti-commercialism and xenophobia’ and restrained by meagre revenues and absence of strategy, Ming China withdrew into isolation, a policy continued by the Qing (Manchu) dynasty until the British gun-boats forced open the country in the Opium War (1839 – 42). Thus, although technologically empowered, China withdrew ‘from

¹⁰The rulers of Sri Lanka and Sumatra were violently overthrown by Zheng He as they refused to acknowledge the jurisdiction of the *tianzi* over All Under Heaven (Mitchell and McGiffert 2007: 9).

the field', just when the West would gradually embark on the path of maritime development to emerge as the masters of the oceans and then, of the continents. In conclusion, Zheng He's expeditions had the 'metaphysical' purpose of expanding 'the limits of All Under Heaven' and we can identify them as 'a kind of early exercise of Chinese soft power' (Kissinger 2011: 9-10).

Ancient Chinese Political Philosophy

The Spring and Autumn Period (722 – 481 BC) and the Warring States Period (403 – 221 BC) were philosophically most vibrant times in Chinese history, when hundred (i.e., numerous) schools of thought emerged and contended amongst themselves for official patronage. The most influential schools were Confucianism (*rujia*), Daoism (*daojia*), Legalism (*fajia*), Mohism (*mojia*) and Militarism (*bingjia*), out of which an eclectic form of Confucianism, taught by Xunzi (312 – 210 BC) and Dong Zhongshu (179 – 104 BC), assumed the status of state orthodoxy during the Han dynasty (Feng 2007: 18; Liu 2006: 86-107; Creel 1953: 159-185).¹¹ Another philosophical system, Buddhism, imported from India, was gradually adopted in its Sinicised version and reached the peak of its influence during the Tang dynasty (AD 618 – 907). But it was unable to recover its past glory after the 845 AD state repression (Fairbank and Goldman 2006: 86). Neo-Confucianism emerged during the Song dynasty (960 – 1279) as a reaction of the scholar-officials to the popularity of the foreign-born Buddhism. Important thinkers like Zhu Xi (1130 – 1200), a commentator on Confucian classics (officially recognised in 1313) and Lu Xiangshan (1139 – 1193), a proponent of meditation and intuition, borrowed ideas from Daoism and Chan Buddhism (one of the variants of Chinese Buddhism, known as Zen Buddhism in Japan and the West) to develop Neo-Confucianism, which remained the official ideology till the demise of the Manchu Empire (Creel 1953: 204 – 213).

Alan Hunter (2009: 378-379) indicates two components in China's traditional soft power thought, viz., morality and stratagem. The former is based on the teachings of Confucius (551 – 479 BC) and Mencius (372 – 289 BC) and the latter on such classics as *The Art of War* (around 5th - 4th century BC) and *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (14th century AD).

¹¹ Confucian masters Xunzi, and Dong Zhongshu, either disputed some original teachings of Confucius and Mencius or introduced ideas from other schools, to develop what is called Imperial Confucianism.

Confucian morality: The teachings of Confucius and Mencius extol a hierarchical political structure with ethical and reciprocal relationship between the superior and the inferior, i.e., the superior treats the inferior with impartiality and generosity and the inferior reciprocates with his loyalty and hard work (Hunter 2009: 379). If the ruler governs his citizens with justice (*yi*) and compassion (*ren*) or soft power, then their loyalty (*zhi*) is guaranteed, the role of violence or hard power is reduced and the citizens can be trained in morality (*li*) (Feng 2007: 19).¹² Thus, a welfare state is established. When extended to international relations, it means that the Middle Kingdom should treat its tributaries and the barbarians with impartiality (justice) and generosity (compassion); in return, the latter would pay allegiance to the Mandate of Heaven (hegemonic inter-state system as it prevailed in East Asia for 2000 years) and adopt the Confucian value system (legitimising the Han hegemony). Hence, soft power (*wen*) prevails over hard power (*wu*).¹³

Chen Jianfeng (2009: 83-102) considers the doctrine of the Mean as the core value of Chinese civilisation.¹⁴ It means a balance between *yin* (feminine principle) and *yang* (masculine principle), in other words, between soft power and hard power. Mencius calls it *wang dao* (the kingly way), which is different from *ba dao* (the bully way) (Feng 2007: 21).¹⁵ The Mean involves knowledge of *xing* or the Nature (international order), of *dao* or Path of Duty (responsible stakeholder), of *jiao* or Instruction (international norms) and of the relationship between each of them. It also means Harmony (*de*) amidst differences (multilateralism). According to Confucius:

“What Heaven has conferred is called the Nature; accordance with this Nature is called the Path of Duty; and the regulation of this Path is called Instruction (Chen 2009: 86).”

¹² Mencius stressed on four cardinal virtues, viz., *ren* (benevolence), *yi* (righteousness), *li* (propriety) and *zhi* (wisdom) (Van Norden 2004: 148).

¹³ *Wen* means written word and by extension, its influence on ideational stream of life (civil order) or soft power and *wu* means violence (military order) or hard power. The Confucians exalted *wen* and disparaged *wu* (Fairbank and Goldman 2006: 69).

¹⁴ *The Doctrine of the Mean* is one of the Four Books of Neo-Confucianism. It is a part of the *Record of Ceremonies and Proper Conduct*, one of the Five Classics attributed to Confucius.

¹⁵ *Yin* and *yang* are two aspects of the essential reality. e.g., day, hot, above, active, masculine, speech, Heaven, etc. are *yang* 阳 and night, cold, below, still, feminine, silence, Earth, etc. are *yin* 阴 .

A nation that acts in accordance with the international order (Nature) is considered a responsible stakeholder (Path of Duty) and that means the nation conforms to and abides by the existing international norms (Instruction). Confucius elaborates on the state of Nature:

“All things are nourished together without their injuring one another. The courses of the seasons, and of the sun and moon, are pursued without any collision among them... It is this that makes Heaven and Earth so great (Chen 2009: 87).”

If a nation acts unilaterally to impose its whims (like the American invasion of Iraq in 2003), it disturbs international peace and stability. Only if all nations co-exist without interference in one another's domestic affairs and act through multilateralism on international issues, Harmony (*de*) will prevail in the international order (Nature).

Stratagem: Sun Tzu, the author of *The Art of War (Bingfa)*, proposes not merely military doctrines (like Clausewitz or Jomini), but an integrated strategy to overcome one's adversaries.¹⁶ The strategy emphasises on the psycho political element, i.e., how to gain a dominant position over the enemy without direct military engagement. The underlying philosophy is that the whole universe is a continuum, an overarching pattern in flux, of which everything is a component. Every component is connected to and influenced by another and so, gradual shifts (flux) in the inter-connected components produce a trend (*shi*). A strategist cannot surmount all his obstacles by raw force. But he can capture the *shi* and harmonise with it. That is the key to victory (Kissinger 2011: 26, 30-31).

War is considered an undesirable enterprise that hampers the entire society and that should be used only as the last resort. Sun Tzu opens *The Art of War* with a warning:

“War is
A grave affair of the state;
It is a place
Of life and death,
A road
To survival and extinction,

¹⁶ *The Art of War* is one of the Seven Military Classics of Ancient China. Another book by the name *The Art of War* was written by Wu Qi.

A matter
To be pondered carefully (Kissinger 2011: 26).”

He recommends a soft power strategy involving *yiruo kegang* (use of gentle means to overcome the hard and strong) (Hunter 2009: 379). The most famous line of *The Art of War* is *bu zhang er sheng* (win without a fight) (Feng 2007: 26). Kissinger (2011: 28) quotes:

“Ultimate excellence lies
Not in winning
Every battle
But in defeating the enemy
Without ever fighting.”

The Romance of the Three Kingdoms by Luo Guanzhong is a historical novel about the fall of the Han dynasty and its aftermath (Three Kingdoms Period 220 – 280). It teaches the ideas of realpolitik that have influenced many generations of East Asian statesmen. The first line of the text goes: “The empire long divided, must unite; long united, must divide. Thus it has ever been” (Kissinger 2011: 6).

Soft Power with Chinese characteristics¹⁷

The civilisational decline, however, ensued in the 19th century and the early 20th century, the period that came to be regarded as the Century of Humiliation (1940 – 1945). Under Mao Zedong’s leadership, there was a virulent campaign against tradition. The Communist Party ascribed all ills that plagued China to the civilisational legacy based on Confucianism. (Kuomintang led by Chiang Kai-shek, on the other hand, slanted towards the Confucian values like respect for authority, filial piety, etc.). Although Mao’s strategy of ‘continuous revolution’ and ‘export of revolution’ appealed to the radical elements worldwide, it repelled almost every country of the world, to the extent that during the 1960s, China was diplomatically isolated and geostrategically encircled by hostile powers.

Only Premier Zhou Enlai remained a sane voice during this turbulent period, with complete command of the administration, but without any personal ambition. During

¹⁷ Glaser and Murphy (2009: 10).

the 1950s, he established warm personal relations with many Third World leaders and enunciated the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence, viz., mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. He played an important role in the high-profile negotiations on French Indo-China at Geneva (1954). He even was able to allay fears about communist expansionism in Asia and instead, he implicated American imperialism as the major threat in the region at the Afro-Asian Bandung Conference (1955). In 1963-64, Zhou Enlai made a tour of African states to gain recognition for the People's Republic of China. However, his most important diplomatic achievement was the rapprochement with the US in the early 1970s, which reversed the course of the Cold War. The Gang of Four faction rightly compared him with the legendary Duke of Zhou during the Anti-Confucian Movement in 1973. (Of course, in revolutionary China, it had a derogatory connotation).¹⁸

In the 3rd Plenum of the 11th CCP Central Committee 1978, Deng Xiaoping reversed the revolutionary agenda and advocated the path of peace and development. His policy of reform and opening up (socialism with Chinese characteristics) improved China's relations with the West and other East Asian (capitalist) countries, but those with Soviet Union and Vietnam (socialist countries) further deteriorated, mainly due to Soviet military deployment on China's borders and Vietnamese hegemony over Indo-China. Gradually, China's international image improved, which bolstered foreign investment and trade, until the Tiananmen Square Incident (1989).

In the post-Tiananmen Square Incident Period, China was confronted with both foreign and domestic crises, viz., sanctions imposed by Western democracies after the People's Liberation Army (PLA) crackdown on peaceful demonstrators on June 4, 1989 and uncertainty about its political stability after the demise of communism in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The genesis of the crises was that the communist states had relied on coercion to maintain their political system, which not only

¹⁸ The Duke of Zhou (1043 BC – 1036 BC), recognised as a sage king by Confucius, consolidated the Zhou dynasty (1046 BC – 256 BC) as the Regent of his nephew, Emperor Cheng, but relinquished his position when the Emperor attained maturity. He suppressed rebellions, codified the Zhou feudal system, established rituals that entrenched hierarchical social relations and built the city of Chengzhou that later became one of the four great ancient capitals of China called Luoyang.

generated domestic legitimacy deficit but also weakened ideological appeal abroad. Moreover, China's neighbours were worried that the civilisational legacy of the tributary system or the Maoist legacy of exporting the revolution might influence the Communist Party of China (CCP) leadership. China's indifference towards multilateral diplomacy also accentuated the threat perception. What China required was a new strategy that could build cohesion at home and reassure other countries, especially neighbours. That is why, soft power assumed such great magnitude within Chinese foreign policy discourse.

In a highly Americanised world, China could either bandwagon with the hegemon, gradually evolving into a liberal democracy and a responsible junior stakeholder in the post-Cold War international order, or challenge the hegemon to preserve the last vestiges of socialism, risking a cataclysmic war. Nonetheless, true to the Confucian tradition of the Mean, China chose to stand on its own without rocking the boat, for which a Sinicised soft power strategy became imperative. Thus, the Sinic civilisational values (which have evolved through 4000 years) together with the experiences of the century of humiliation (1840 – 1945), permanent revolution (1945 – 1976) and peaceful development (1978 onwards), have created a unique culture and economic and political system in China, and within these unique conditions, soft power theory has been debated among academia and political leadership, producing a rich discourse, which can be called 'soft power with Chinese characteristics'.

Two Waves of Intellectual Debate ¹⁹

Soft power theory was first introduced in China through the 1992 Chinese publication of Joseph Nye's *Bound to Lead* (1990). In 1993, President Jiang Zemin's chief advisor at Policy Research Office of the CCP, Wang Huning, published an article in the *Fudan University Journal*, stressing 'if a country has an admirable culture and ideological system, other countries will tend to follow it... it does not have to use its hard power which is expensive and less efficient'. Pang Zhongying (1997: 49-51) of Nankai University published an article in *Strategy and Management* 'that introduced Nye's soft power theory in greater detail'. Another paper advocating strong soft power for China was published in *Outlook Weekly* by an 'America specialist' of

¹⁹ Glaser and Murphy (2009: 11).

Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Shen Jiru (1999: 12-13). He identified soft power deficit as the cause for the collapse of the Soviet Union, which had more strategic weapons and natural resources than the United States. In August 2002, the China Institute of International Studies (CIIS) held a conference on “The Importance and Influence of Soft Power in U.S. Foreign Policy.” In this way, the concept initially developed in the first wave of intellectual debate (1990s) within Chinese academic and policy circles. Although there was no agreement on the exact translation of the term, the theory was accorded due recognition (Cho and Jeong 2008: 456; Glaser and Murphy 2009: 11-13).

The second wave of intellectual debate (mid 2000s) pervaded throughout the society including the political leadership and a consensus view evolved on the criticality of soft power to China. Chinese leaders and scholars discovered that soft power could be utilised to maintain political stability in China and improve its international image and that Chinese civilisation itself was a great store-house of soft power resources. Soft power strategies were inherent in the ancient Chinese political philosophy, which could be adapted to contemporary international relations. Consequently, academic and policy debates ensued on how soft power could enhance China’s CNP, what the components of Chinese soft power were, how could soft power strengthen China’s culture and political system, whether China should seek to extend its international influence and if it had a comprehensive and coherent soft power strategy. The political leadership was also impressed with these debates and pursued soft power as a national policy.

Comprehensive National Power

In 1984, Deng Xiaoping had asked Chinese strategists to assess the future security environment as a part of China’s national defence strategy for the year 2000. The strategists led by Huang Shuofeng (Academy of Military Science) developed the concept of Comprehensive National Power (*zonghe guoli*), using the general premise construed by Deng Xiaoping as “In measuring a country's national power, one must look at it comprehensively and from all sides” (Huang 1992: 7 cited in Pillsbury 2000: 204; Zhang Weihong 2010: 4). (1999) classified CNP [Y_t] into three components [$Y_t = F \{H_t, S_t, K_t\}$], viz.,

- 'hard power (economic power, science and technology power, national defence power and natural resource power), H_t ,
- 'soft power (political power, diplomatic power and cultural and educational power), S_t and
- 'co-ordinating power (political structures, government leadership, organisational decision-making power and management and reform co-ordination capabilities), K_t ' (Cho and Jeong 2008: 457).

The CNP function has improved upon national power equations developed in the West (e.g. by Ray Cline or by William Fuchs), by stressing on comparative national power, relative change in power over time, exponential effect of intangible sources of power and simultaneous qualitative and quantitative analyses of international balance of power. Such a comprehensive approach to strategic calculation can be found in Sun Tzu, who considered everything as relevant and interconnected: 'weather, terrain, diplomacy, the reports of spies and double agents, supplies and logistics, the balance of forces, historic perceptions, the intangibles of surprise and morale' together constitute the strength of a nation (Kissinger 2011: 30).

In the international system, the scope for China to increase its relative hard power has become gradually limited and the major competition lies in the arena of soft power. Some scholars assert that there is an imbalance between China's rapid economic development and military modernisation, and its lagging international influence and domestic institutional and cultural weaknesses. Since soft power cannot grow automatically with the rise of hard power, China has to cultivate ideological and cultural appeal purposefully, to gain recognition as a major power as well as to control mounting domestic social challenges (Li 2008: 296-297, 299). Therefore, soft power has emerged as the most crucial component of China's CNP, the parameter for its aspired superpower status. According to Huang Renwei (2003) of Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, 'if hard power is a constant value, soft power should be a variable or multiplier, which magnifies the CNP or significantly weakens it' (Glaser and Murphy 2009: 20).

Relationship between Hard Power and Soft Power

Li Mingjiang (2009: 1-10) considers China's approach to soft power as theoretically more astute than Nye's original conceptualisation. The former centres on the soft use

of power resources, while the latter seeks to make a clear distinction between hard power and soft power, in terms of both resources and behaviour. Hard power means tangible resources like economy, military and technology, and command behaviour or traditional carrot and stick policy of sanctions, payment, threat and coercion. Soft power, on the other hand, is manifested by intangible resources like culture, ideology and institutions, and co-optive behaviour of attraction, persuasion and agenda-setting.

However, the relationship between hard power and soft power is problematic. According to Nye (2004: 25), 'hard power and soft power sometimes reinforce and sometimes interfere with each other'. A country pursuing soft power may desist from exercising hard power, e.g., China prefers dialogue to threat in relation to the countries with which it has boundary disputes. Others may use hard power excessively or inappropriately and squander its soft power, as the United States did in Vietnam during the 1960s-70s or in Iraq in the last decade. Similarly, the Soviet Union lost its soft power in Europe by invading Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968) and the Maoist China in South East Asia by sponsoring communist insurgencies. A country may feel repulsed or threatened by cultural or ideological influence (soft power) of another country. For instance, Hollywood or the feminist movement creates negative impression upon devout Muslims in the Middle East. Hard power, on the contrary, may 'create myths of invincibility or inevitability that attract others'. During World War II, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria allied with Hitler because he appeared invincible and his dominion over entire Europe inevitable.

Nye (2011: 21) admits that hard power resources may produce soft power behaviour and vice versa, 'depending on the context and how they are used'. Command power can be used to build resources that project soft power, e.g., the British Raj introduced laws, civil and military services, universities, railways, telegraph, etc. in India, which made educated Indians loyal to the Raj. Nations with massive economic resources like China or Japan can invest in public diplomacy and overseas assistance programmes, which enhance their soft power. In addition, military forces used in peacekeeping and humanitarian operations generate goodwill. At the same time, co-optive behaviour can generate hard power resources; for instance, Anglo-Saxon cultural and ideological affinity led the US to the side of the British Empire during the two World Wars. Soft power also plays a crucial role in formation of military alliances and economic

agreements. Therefore, the dichotomy between the two forms of power appears inappropriate.

The dichotomy seems to originate from the Occidental world-view, which tends to see everything in terms of mutually exclusive categories. The Hegelian categories, thesis and anti-thesis, are contradictory and the frictional collision between them produces synthesis, another exclusive category (a new thesis), alongwith another contradiction (a new anti-thesis) and thus idea progresses. Similarly, to resolve the contradiction between hard power and soft power, Nye (2004: 147; 2011: 207-234) has proposed a new concept, smart power (synthesis). Smart power, the judicious combination of hard and soft power to produce intended outcomes, has been accepted as ‘the very heart of President Obama and Secretary Clinton’s policy vision’. But, in the Chinese context, smart power seems a superfluous concept. In Chinese philosophy, *yin* and *yang* are two complementary principles and so, they co-exist within every category. Hence, every instrument of power has both hard and soft potential and can manifest as hard or soft according to the specific context. Thus, the Chinese leaders have long recognised the need for an integrated CNP strategy (1984), while their American counterparts admitted a smart power strategy only in 2009.²⁰

Within the parameters drawn by Joseph Nye, China is unlikely to possess any soft power. Its traditional culture based on Sinocentric hierarchy is threatening, instead of attractive to its neighbours. It is very weak in popular cultural brands unlike Japan and South Korea. Its political system is authoritarian and suppresses freedom of expression and protest. Neither its human rights record nor its human development index can draw applause from the international community. Its track-record on non-proliferation, environmental pollution, climate change and pandemics does not inspire confidence. It has never shown any ability to shape international agenda or resolve any international problem (Zhang Yongjin 2009: 50). What then is the hype all about? According to Joshua Kurlantzick (2007: 6),

²⁰ Hillary Clinton announced adherence to a smart power policy upon entering the office of Secretary of State in early 2009.

“But soft power has changed. In the context of China, both the Chinese government and many nations influenced by China enunciate a broader idea of soft power than did Nye.”

China’s soft power lies in the ‘soft application of China’s newly found power, soft, hard and smart, or any combination of them’. Kurlantzick rightly uses the terms, ‘the tools of culture’ (cultural diplomacy) and ‘the tools of business’ (economic diplomacy) to identify two of the instruments of Chinese soft power (Zhang Yongjin 2009: 50-51). The sources of Chinese soft power like its peaceful rise, development model (Beijing Consensus), good-neighbourliness policy, multilateralism, Confucius Institutes and projection of its civilisational achievements (Beijing Olympics 2008 and Shanghai World Expo 2010) cannot be categorised as intangible or purely co-optive. For China, the context determines the nature of power and its only concern is the achievement of the desired outcomes, for which an integrated strategy is necessary.

Yu Xintian (2008: 117) of the Shanghai Institute of International Studies argues that soft power possesses three unique features, viz., dominance, penetration and invisibility that make it qualitatively different from hard power. Dominance means that soft power controls the development and application of hard power. Penetration means that soft power affects all disciplines, including military strategy, economic development, political process, social system, etc. Invisibility refers to the abstract nature of soft power, rendering it more effective and enduring than hard power. Thus, the Chinese discourse admits the complexities and subtleties in the relationship between hard and soft power.

Core of Soft Power Debate – Culture v/s Politics²¹

In China, two schools of thought have developed, after the second wave of intellectual debate, on what constitutes the core of soft power (Glaser and Murphy 2009: 11-12). The majority opinion indicates cultural power or the power of ideas, values and institutions as the most important ingredient of soft power and that has also been embraced by the CCP. On the other hand, the minority opinion is that without political power or the manipulation of power resources, culture alone cannot enhance a country’s soft power.

²¹ Glaser and Murphy (2009: 11-12).

Scholars like Wang Huning, Yu Xintian, Fang Changping (People's University of China), Hu Jian (Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences) and Li Haijuan (Jiaotong University) uphold the cultural school (constructivism) (Glaser and Murphy 2009: 13-14). They argue that the US soft power is based on its cultural brands like CNN, Hollywood, Coke and McDonald's, and its political ideas like democracy, human rights and free market, while China's weakness lies in the lack of appeal of its cultural products or its Marxist ideology. In order to remove this deficiency, China should develop its own global brands and compete for popularity in the international market as well as propagate its traditional culture and civilisational achievements. In the contemporary international environment, some of the classical Chinese ideals may appeal to NGOs, environmental, labour and peace activists or other civil society movements: *yi ren wei ben* (giving priority to human beings), *he er bu tong* (harmony without suppressing differences), *tian ren he yi* (harmony between nature and humankind), *yi de fu ren* (winning respect through virtue) and *wang dao* (benevolent government) (Li 2008: 292).

The CCP leadership has also accepted culture as the core of its soft power strategy. In the first wave of debate, the Chinese scholars were quick to draw lessons from the events in 1989, which included Tiananmen Square Incident and the fall of Berlin Wall. According to Shen Jiru (1999), the Soviet Union lost the Cold War to US, in spite of its superiority in military and natural resources, due to soft power deficit. Since the Communist Party of Soviet Union relied too much on coercion, it lost both international appeal and domestic support. In the second wave, the focus was on the rise and fall of great powers and a consensus opinion has emerged that soft power is a crucial variable in the rise or fall of a great power. But the CCP has realised that China is quite weak in soft power, especially popular culture and political ideology and so, vulnerable to the peaceful evolution strategy of the West. The Western powers want to gradually sway the public opinion in China through penetration of their cultural products and through them their political ideas, and thereupon, destabilise the Party-State. Hence, the CCP leaders are so eager to develop a 'socialist core value system' or 'socialist spiritual civilisation'. In 2006, the PRC issued a State Cultural Development Programme for the 11th Five Year Plan, which features a 'go global'

strategy that encourages media services and cultural enterprises, the intention being to combine attractiveness with propaganda (Glaser and Murphy 2009: 17).

Yan Xuetong, Xu Jin, Su Changhe (Shanghai International Studies University) and Guo Shuyong (Jiaotong University) are the leading proponents of the political school (neorealism). Yan Xuetong and Xu Jin (2008), professors at the Qinghua University, identify three components of soft power, viz., international attractiveness (national development model and culture), international mobilisation (global influence and strategic relations) and domestic mobilisation (popular and elite support to the government). They consider soft power a quantifiable entity and even calculate that Chinese soft power is one-third of American soft power. To catch up, China should solidify the political basis of soft power through domestic reforms to balance economic development and social welfare, and through strategic alliances with key partners. Su Changhe (2007) asserts that the ability to build international institutions, agenda-setting, mobilisation of coalition and ability to fulfil commitments are the actual parameters to measure soft power. Gao Shuyong (2006, 2007) recommends that China should integrate with the international system and even participate in 'just wars under UN auspices' (Li 2008: 294; Glaser and Murphy 2009: 17-18). It is evident that these scholars support an IR-oriented approach rather than a cultural approach to soft power.

On behalf of constructivism, Yu Xintian (2008: 115-116) criticises the arch neorealist Yan Xuetong, for representing the long-standing negligence and misrepresentation of culture in IR. Yan (2007) argues that while culture is one of the power resources, political action is the actual operational aspect of soft power, but Yu Xintian contends:

- Culture is not limited to the academic study of history, literature and philosophy, but it moulds our outlook to life. In many developing countries, government policies cannot be implemented because of the backward culture of the masses. They want to learn from the Chinese experience, which connects culture with development.
- Politics cannot be separated from culture, since cultural values and ideas shape the political processes.
- Strategies and policies cannot be isolated from values and ideas. In the contemporary international environment, China abides by the

principles of peace and development, which is reflected in its policy of reform and opening up and integration with the international system. However, during the Mao Zedong period, China believed in class struggle and revolution; so, it followed the policy of autarchy, mass movements and purges at home, and isolation and support to revolutionary movements abroad.

- Soft power is not purely based on ancient culture or Confucianism, but is rooted in contemporary global culture, of which Chinese culture is a part. Chinese culture is the sum total and essence of traditional culture, revolutionary experience, market socialism and Western influences. Thus, culture is almost synonymous with ideology.

Bringing in another perspective, Fang Changping (2007) points out that although American soft power has declined due to ‘what America does’ (e.g., Iraq War), but it still holds the most attraction because ‘what America is’ (‘beacon light on the hill-top’ for freedom and innovation) (Glaser and Murphy 2009: 14). So, the cultural school emphasises on the importance of increasing the international attractiveness of China (what China is), while the political school insists on the priority of participation in international political dynamics (what China does).

Taoguang Yanghui v/s Yousuo Zuowei Debate²²

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Deng Xiaoping was circumspect about the political situation, which indicated that the West would try to implement its peaceful evolution strategy against China, already evident with the Tiananmen Square demonstrations, followed by sanctions imposed on China. Nonetheless, the paramount leader was unwilling to enter into confrontation with the West (Cold War II), which would have hampered China’s development that relied on reform and opening up. Hence, he introduced ‘keeping a low profile’ (*taoguang yanghui*) strategy. Another version of the strategy is ‘hide our capacities and bide our time, but also get some things done’ (*taoguang yanghui yousuo zuohui*) (Shirk 2007: 105).²³ The strategy was a part of the cryptic 24-character instruction that Deng left for his successors:

²² Glaser and Murphy (2009: 12).

²³ Although often repeated and discussed extensively, these statements were never published. Therefore, there exists ambiguity as to what exactly was stated, if stated at all.

“Observe carefully; secure our position; cope with affairs calmly; hide our capacities and bide our time; be good at maintaining a low profile; and never claim leadership” (Kissinger 2011: 438).²⁴

From the two versions have emerged two views on China’s global strategy. The ‘keeping a low profile’ school asserts that China should not try to project its power, get entangled in international disputes or form any alliances; while the ‘getting something accomplished’ (*yousuo zuowei*) school advocates a proactive foreign policy, in which China acts as an emerging power and as the leader of the developing countries, especially in Asia (Glaser and Murphy 2009: 12). The latter justifies the Deng Xiaoping slogan as a short-term tactic to overcome the domestic and international instability during the early 1990s and now that China has emerged a major power, it should behave like one. However, the former argues that China is still a developing country and needs to build its CNP, without expending resources on mere exhibition of power. Besides, its authoritarian political structure and nationalistic political culture already fuels the China threat theory and if it projects power abroad, other East Asian countries may be encouraged to balance China through strategic alliances.

An important point of contention between the two schools is about the Chinese development model or Beijing Consensus, which is quite attractive to developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America and which seeks to offer an alternative to the neo-liberal American model or Washington Consensus. Meng Honghua (2007) of the Central Party School and Shi Yinhong (2007) of the People’s University of China advocate ‘keeping a low profile’ strategy. They argue that China’s development is imbalanced and unsuitable for other developing countries to emulate. It is impaired by widening gap between the rich and the poor, regional disparity, ecological imbalance, pollution, corruption and lack of political freedom. Some scholars point out that

²⁴ *Taoguang Yanghui* has been translated as either ‘hide our capacities and bide our time’ or ‘keeping a low profile’ (Chen 2009: 91; Glaser and Murphy 2009: 12; Zhu 2010: 51; Kissinger 2011: 438). This is another version of the 24-character slogan: “Watch the world with a calm mind; stand firmly; confidently deal with the difficulties; keep a low profile; never act as a leader; and do things well” (Chen 2009: 91). Glaser and Murphy (2009: 19) state that there is no evidence that this slogan was uttered by Deng. Only thing close to it can be found in *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, Vol 3, 321, that in September 1989 Central Committee meeting, Deng had said, “In short, my views about the international situation can be summed up in three sentences. First, we should observe the situation coolly. Second, we should hold our ground. Third, we should act calmly. Do not be impatient; it is no good to be impatient. We should be calm, calm and again calm, and quietly immerse ourselves in practical work to accomplish something – something for China.”

China's modernisation, based on the 'cat' theory and 'wading across the river by feeling for stones', is a pragmatic, evolving and educative process and so, it cannot be called a development model (Liqun 2010: 51).²⁵ Even if such model is envisaged, it is not contradictory, but supplementary to the Western development experience. Others say that China's development is rooted in its social conditions and its historical experiences, which makes it unique to China and unexportable to any other country. Some liberal voices criticise the authoritarian, one-party state as incapable of possessing any soft power vis-à-vis the developed countries (Glaser and Murphy 2009: 23).

The 'getting something accomplished' strategy is supported by scholars like Zhang Mingqian (University of International Relations), Fang Changping and Yang Jiemian (Shanghai Institute of International Studies). They hold that China is an alternative model of development to the West and after the 2008 financial crisis, the socialist market economy has proven superior to neoliberalism. Therefore, the development model is a great soft power asset to China. According to Yang Jiemian (2008), China should embark on a pro-active soft power policy, in response to the campaign of the West to push democracy and human rights, by developing values with Chinese characteristics, inserting these values into the international system and increasing the appeal of China model in developing countries in transitional international system. An opposite line of argument is that policy of non-interference (a component of *taoguang yanghui*) has weakened Chinese soft power in the Western liberal democracies because China ignores the human rights and other problems in North Korea, Myanmar, Sudan and Zimbabwe (Glaser and Murphy 2009: 23). Hence, its policies and preferences need to integrate with the expectations of the international community, i.e., China should play a pro-active role as a 'responsible stakeholder' in the international system.²⁶

The political leadership, however, favours the *taoguang yanghui* school. In the August 2006 foreign affairs work conference in Beijing, the top central, provincial,

²⁵ Both the 'cat' theory and 'wading across the river by feeling for stones' are alluded to Deng Xiaoping. The 'cat' theory is that so long, it catches mice; it does not matter if the cat is black or white (pragmatism). The latter expression refers to the evolutionary and educative nature of development experience.

²⁶ The notion that China should be a 'responsible stakeholder' was introduced by Robert Zoellick in 2005.

diplomatic and military leaders reaffirmed the guiding principle of ‘keeping a low profile’ in foreign policy. The promotion of cultural soft power was endorsed as the main strategy to create a favourable environment for domestic development. In other words, since the export of development model breeds threat theory, a soft power strategy should be reactive, geared to allay fear of Chinese expansionism and international cultural exchange is the most suitable medium for that strategy (Glaser and Murphy 2009: 19).

International and Domestic Aspects of Soft Power

Another important element in soft power with Chinese characteristics is that it has both foreign and domestic dimensions. In 2007, the political report to the 17th Party Congress of the CCP stressed ‘the urgency of building China’s cultural soft power sufficiently to meet domestic needs and increase international competitiveness’. The domestic aspect is totally missing in Nye’s conceptualisation. Here again, the civilisational influences are evident: while the West perceives the world of exclusive dualities, domestic and foreign, the Chinese view the dualities as symbiotic co-existence. Nye is concerned about maintenance of American soft power projection in the international system, so that it can retain its lone superpower status. The Chinese worry how soft power can prevent its neighbours from forging an alliance to contain China, at the same time, secure the legitimacy of the Party-State.

The 17th Congress also adopted the scientific development concept (*kexue fazhanguan*) as the further stage of the evolution of socialism with Chinese characteristics to correct the imbalances in the existing development agenda, viz., income inequality, environmental degradation, social unrest, regional disparity and corruption. It seeks to combine economic development, social welfare and democracy with Chinese characteristics, with the end goal to establish a harmonious society. Contrary to the earlier concentration on hard power, the scientific concept tends to emphasise soft power, which is implicit in the concept of harmonious society as culture, economic justice and political participation; and in its international counterpart, harmonious world as peaceful development, good neighbourliness and public diplomacy. Hu Angang (2006) considers harmony as a soft power asset with far superior potential for international influence, than American values like democracy and human rights.

Chapter 3

China's Soft Power Diplomacy

Importance of Soft Power in China's Diplomacy

Soft power essentially refers to co-optive behaviour, located within the three faces of power, viz., persuasion (decision-making), legitimisation (agenda-setting) and socialisation (preference-framing). It involves 'making others want what one wants' (allurement) and excludes the use of 'stick or carrot' (coercion or payment). Intangible resources like culture, ideology and policies and institutions, under favourable conditions, produce such soft power behaviour. The theory of soft power was authored by Joseph Nye within the context of American foreign policy debates on declinism (1980s), and isolationism and triumphalism (1990s – early 2000s). He argues that in the post-Cold War period, the United States remains the preponderant military power (more than equal to all other actors put together), the largest economic power (sharing domination with other players like Europe, Japan and China) and the soft power hegemon (with control over international agenda-setting and mass media, and with globally recognised commercial brands, elite and popular cultural icons and political values). However, the processes of globalisation, privatisation and informatisation that reinforced American hegemony at the end of the 20th century also fostered adverse trends, which are the real challenges to American power, viz.:

- the general diffusion of power from major nation-states and international institutions to 'rogue' states, non-state entities and transnational actors, including terrorists, drug-peddlers and internet-hackers (not the relative decline of America vis-à-vis other nations), and
- global problems like nuclear proliferation, terrorism, ecological imbalances and epidemic diseases, which demand international engagement and co-operation among nation-states, international institutions, non-governmental organisations and civil societies (not withdrawal from international commitments or adventurism to 'hunt down monsters').

In order to face these challenges, what Nye recommends is a smart power policy, combining both American hard power and soft power assets. But America has squandered its legitimacy as the leader of the free world by unilateralism and preemptive war and by poor fiscal position as the largest debtor nation in the world. As a result, other entities have begun to compete with the superpower in the international soft power environment. Nonetheless, the other two soft power giants, EU and Japan, being integral part of the Western civilisation, aspire for a similar world order based on liberal democracy, capitalism, individualism and consumerism, while the erstwhile superpower Russia lacks any alternative worldview. Among the great power aspirants, India remains adaptable to Western norms, even if it overcame poor human development indicators and only China can be said to have the potential as well as the inclination to revise the international system. China is already the second largest economy in the world and a rising military power, and seeks to cultivate its soft power to transform the international power distribution.

The importance of soft power dawned upon the Chinese scholars in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square Incident and the fall of Berlin Wall followed by the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Although the Soviet Union was the second superpower with formidable military strength, vast natural resources and advanced capital industries, it relied overly on coercion to maintain domestic stability and international influence. Even at the height of its dominance, it failed to provide its citizens with a high standard of living, civil and political rights and freedom to pursue their individual and national aspirations. The legitimacy of the Soviet state based on egalitarianism, socio-economic and cultural rights and availability of free public goods eroded, when Western popular culture and political values penetrated into its society. The threat and use of military force frequently used by the Soviet leadership within its sphere of influence weakened its appeal in the neutral countries and more critically, in other socialist countries. The same problem existed in all socialist countries, styled after the Soviet Union, including the People's Republic of China, exemplified by the Tiananmen Square unrest.

The triumph of the American Dream of democracy, equal opportunity and freedom to pursue material happiness over the Marxian Dream of proletarian government, voluntary labour and free public goods worried the CCP leadership, which feared that

the Tiananmen Square unrest reflected the American strategy of peaceful evolution (*heping yanbian*) to transform China into a capitalist democracy.²⁷ At the same time, there was a vibrant debate on whether China should continue the path of reform and opening up or revert back to the planned economy model. In his famous Southern Tour (1992), Deng Xiaoping, who wanted to avoid Cold War II and to ensure comprehensive modernisation of China, supported the former path (*gaige kaifang*). As a result, China developed a heavy foreign investment and export-based manufacturing sector and continued to grow at over 10% GDP rate and accumulated unprecedented foreign currency reserves. But this phenomenon of China Rise aroused suspicion in its neighbourhood and in the West as they feared that China might behave like rising Germany and Japan in the first half of the 20th century to challenge the existing international order leading to catastrophic war. This proposition was called China Threat Theory. Another theory, named China Collapse Theory, proposed the opposite that the contradictions within the socialist market economy, internal discontent within marginalised sections like ethnic minorities, peasantry and migrant labourers, and geostrategic encirclement of China by America and its allies would lead to the disintegration of PRC. Thus, China had many incentives to develop a soft power strategy – to balance its rising hard power, to ensure domestic stability, to improve relations with other countries, to reverse peaceful evolution tendencies, to counter threat and collapse theories, but its poor image in the neighbourhood jettisoned any attempts at diplomatic make over until a timely crisis.

Surging Popularity²⁸

Joshua Kurlantzick (2007: 36) identifies 1997 as the turning point in China's diplomacy, when the East Asian Financial Crisis provided an opportunity to China to improve its image in a region where it was traditionally perceived as a threat and a destabilising factor.²⁹ It successfully absorbed the monetary shocks, maintained a stable *renminbi* RMB (despite loss in the export trade) and also contributed to the

²⁷ The Preamble to the American Constitution contains the following declaration: "All men are created equal and enjoy right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness," while the Communist Manifesto states the Marxian goal: "From each according to his ability and to each according to his want."

²⁸ The phrase is borrowed from Li Mingjiang (2008: 288; 2009: 22).

²⁹ The crisis started in Thailand when its currency collapsed amidst real estate bubble and foreign debts, then spreading to most of South-East Asia, South Korea and Japan. Among major economies, Thailand, Indonesia (where 20 years old Suharto regime fell) and South Korea were the most affected, followed by Philippines, Malaysia and Hong Kong. In most cases, currencies, stock markets and growth rates collapsed, and bankruptcies and unemployment surged.

stabilisation funds. Although its contribution in terms of monetary value was insignificant compared to those of Japan and the US, China's swift response and benign gestures attracted the respect of both policy-makers and the masses, especially in South-East Asia. On the other hand, Japan tinkered with the *yen* for narrow gains and America joined the rescue after lot of hesitation and opposition from certain quarters. This was not lost on East Asian leaders, who henceforth welcomed China's role in the region as a counterweight to Japan and the US (Cho and Jeong 2008: 457; Yong Deng 2009: 67; Wibowo 2009: 211).

After 1997, soft power diplomacy has struck a chord with the CCP bosses, evident from China's diplomatic initiatives, viz., multilateralism, good neighbourliness, economic diplomacy and cultural diplomacy. It can also be perceived from the attempts made by the CCP to develop what was termed as 'socialist spiritual civilisation' by President Jiang Zemin at the 15th National Congress of the CCP, held in 1998 (Glaser and Murphy 2009: 15). In this section, we limit ourselves to assessing the popularity indicators of soft power in China, including official discussions, statements by the CCP leadership and publication data, and in the following section, we shall discuss in details the various aspects of China's soft power diplomacy.

The policy statements on the relevance of soft power to China's cultural development and diplomacy have been issued at the highest level of Party-State hierarchy. Jiang Zemin (2002) in his political report to the 16th Party Congress, which witnessed the peaceful transfer of power to the Fourth Generation Leadership under Hu Jintao, indicated, "In today's world, culture intertwines with economics and politics, demonstrating a more prominent position and role in the competition for comprehensive national power." Under President Hu Jintao, soft power has become a prominent feature of party deliberations that are institutionalised as collective study sessions of the Politburo. Zhang Weihong (2010: 388-389) mentions that out of 44 such sessions, the seventh, ninth, tenth, thirteenth and 38th dealt with themes related to soft power, viz.:

- for the 7th seminar, conducted by Xiong Chengyu of Qinghua University and Zhang Ximing of CASS, 'the current state of world cultural industries and Chinese national strategies for developing cultural industries',

- for the 9th, by Qi Shirong of Capital Normal University and Qiang Chengdan of Nanjing University, ‘the historical development of main world powers since the fifteenth century’,
- for the 10th, by Qin Yaqing of China Foreign Affairs University and Zhang Yuyang of CASS, ‘the world situation and China’s security environment’,
- for the 13th, by Cheng Enfu of Shanghai University of Finance and Economics and Li Chongfu of CASS, ‘prosperity and development of China’s philosophy and social sciences’, and
- for the 38th, by a middle party official and an engineer, ‘world development in network technology and Chinese network culture development and management’.

Hu Jintao used the term ‘soft power’ at the Central Foreign Affairs Leadership Group meeting on January 4, 2006: “The increase in our nation’s international status and influence will have to be demonstrated in hard power such as the economy, science and technology, and defence, as well as in soft power such as culture.” Jia Qinglin, the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) Chairman and member of the CCP Politburo Standing Committee, delivered a speech in March 2007 at the fifth session of CPPCC 10th National Committee in which he elaborated on China’s soft power, and then in a CPPCC National Committee special session on ‘cultural construction as the main approach for national soft power building’ in July 2007, ‘urged Chinese officials to “deeply understand the importance of national soft power with cultural construction as the main task”, to meet domestic demands and enhance China’s competitiveness in the international arena’ (Li 2008: 289). In November 2006, the President again used the term ‘soft power’ in his speech at the joint session of the 8th National Artists Association Conference and the 7th Chinese Authors Association Conference, claiming that the improvement of national soft power is a major practical issue confronting China (Zhang Weihong 2010: 389).

In his political report to the 17th Party Congress of October 2007, General Secretary Hu Jintao (as the head of the CCP) mentioned: “Enhancing cultural soft power (*wenhua ruanshili*) is a basic requirement for realising scientific development and social harmony. It is necessary for satisfying rising demands for spiritual culture and national development strategy” (Wang 2011: 8). He emphasised that cultural soft

power must ‘meet domestic needs and increase international competitiveness’, generating ‘a new round of interest in soft power throughout China’. For instance, local governments and various cultural communities held discussion sessions on the topic, and ‘soft power and culture’ featured in many newspaper headlines (Li 2008: 290). In the 11th Conference of Chinese Diplomatic Envoys, July 2009, Hu outlined the overall goals of soft power strategy, viz.,

‘to make the country more influential politically (*yingxiangli*), more competitive economically (*jingzhengli*), more appealing in its image (*qingheli*), and more inspiring morally (*ganzhaoli*)’ (Wang 2011: 8).

Li (2008: 290-291) substantiates the increasing relevance of soft power in Chinese strategic circles, by the number of papers on the subject that have appeared in Chinese journals and newspapers. He searched the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database, the largest and most comprehensive database on Chinese journals and periodicals, through the liberal arts/ history/ philosophy, politics/ military affairs/ law and education/ comprehensive social sciences sections. He typed all four translations of soft power in Chinese, viz., *ruan shili*, *ruan liliang*, *ruan guoli* and *ruan quanli*, using the ‘or’ function and got the following results:

“Search results on CNKI journals and periodicals section from 1994 to 2007 shows 485 papers featuring the phrase soft power in their titles. The same search for the period 1994 to 2000 shows the term appearing in 11 articles and in 58 from 2001 to 2004. There were 416 such articles from 2005 to 2007 and 104 in 2006. The number rose to 237 in 2007. After expanding the search from titles to full texts, results showed 1211 articles on the topic from 1994 to 2007 in the same three sections of the database. There were moreover 57 related articles from 1994 to 2000; 212 from 2001 to 2004; 942 pieces from 2005 to 2007; 273 papers in 2006; and 518 in 2007. Search results on the CNKI Chinese newspaper section, came up with a total of 509 articles from 2000 to 2008 whose titles included the term soft power.”

Fig. 2 shows the number of journal articles with ‘soft power’ (in three forms of translation, viz., *ruan shili*, *ruan liliang* and *ruan quanli*) in their abstracts. Wang Hongying and Lu Yeh-Chung (2008: 426) searched the China Academic Journals database, which covers more than 4,000 academic and policy journals, for articles since 1994, which showed that the phrase first appeared around 1997, but has taken off since 2001 (although the concept was already introduced in 1992 translation of

Nye's seminal work). They state that in China soft power 'peppers academic and policy discussions about world politics, Chinese foreign policy, domestic politics, and even corporate governance'.

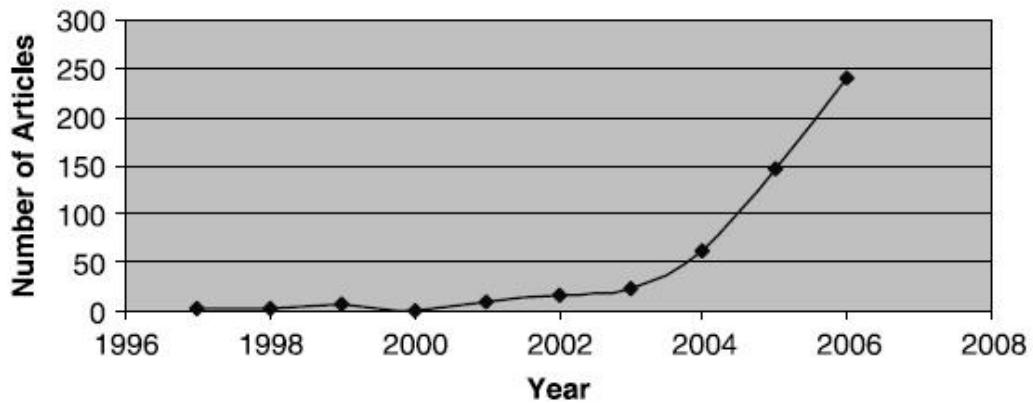


Fig. 2: Journal articles with 'soft power' (three forms) in the abstract (Wang and Lu 2008: 426).

However, Figure 1 and Li's data indicate that the take-off actually started since 2004, the landmark year when the Beijing Consensus was conceptualised and the first Confucius Institute opened. Another landmark year was 2007 when the 17th CCP National Congress inducted soft power as one of the pillars of China's foreign policy and after which a stream of literature, both international and Chinese, was published. The first book on Chinese soft power to attain international acclaim was *Charm Offensive* by Joshua Kurlantzick (2007). Actually, 'in print and other media, in academic discussions and policy briefings, in published books and articles, and all over the virtual space of Internet', there is a hype about China rise and 'the latest hype about China rise is about China's soft power' (Zhang Yongjin 2009: 45). The hype acquired a spiral character with the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2010 Shanghai World Expo.

The 6th Plenary Session of 17th Central Committee of the CCP, held in Beijing from October 15 to 18, 2011, adopted the 'Decision of the CCP Central Committee on Major Issues Pertaining to Deepening Reform of the Cultural System and Promoting the Great Development and Flourishing of Socialist Culture', which declared:

- 'culture as a major source of national cohesion and creativity, a major factor in the competition of comprehensive national strength (CNP),

and a backbone of the country's economic and social development',
and

- 'spiritual and cultural contentment as a cordial aspiration for the Chinese people'.

Hence, the Central Committee Plenum reaffirmed commitment of the CCP to 'stick to the path of socialist cultural development with Chinese characteristics' (Qiushi website 2012).

Assessment

We have seen that 1997 onward China has given priority to soft power, both as a national development strategy and as an instrument of foreign policy. Although this chapter primarily deals with 'soft power in China's foreign policy' or 'China's soft power diplomacy', we must remember that the Chinese scholars and leaders have modified soft power theory according to the Chinese world-view, which emphasises on symbiotic co-existence of opposite categories. As a result, it is very difficult to separate various facets of China's overall policy into dichotomies of hard power and soft power, culture and politics, passivity and assertion, reactive and proactive, ad hoc and comprehensive, or domestic and international. Therefore, the discussions in the following section would not always be limited to the watertight compartment of foreign policy or diplomacy, but would also relate soft power to national development strategy, including its political, economic, social and cultural components (*siweiti*).

China's Soft Power Resources and 'Charm Offensive' Strategies³⁰

In his 2004 book *Soft Power*, Joseph Nye noticed a few instances of China's soft power, viz., Gao Xingjian's Nobel Prize for Literature, the successes of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* at the box-office and Yao Ming at National Basketball Association, 2008 Beijing Olympics, manned space flight, and 2.4 million expatriate population. But, according to him, 'the real promise for China still lies in the future'. Then, he cited the limitations – resistance to intellectual freedom, corruption, conflict over Taiwan, authoritarianism, and the threat theory – which made 'China's worth

³⁰ Joshua Kurlantzick 2007

less than even that of former Soviet Union' (Nye 2004: 88-89; Zhang Yongjin 2009: 50).

However, in late 2005, in an op-ed piece in the Wall Street Journal, Nye warned that China's future had arrived (Zhang Yongjin 2009: 51). What changed Nye's mind was the exclusion of America from the First East Asia Summit and a BBC poll that showed half of the respondents in 22 countries considered China's influence as positive, compared to only 38% who said that for America. He lists the indicators of China's soft power in three categories, viz.,

1. *Culture*: China's primary soft power resources are its ancient culture and emerging popular culture, including Gao Xingjian, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, Yao Ming, 2008 Olympics, 110,000 foreign students, 17 million tourists, 26 Confucius Institutes, and 24-hour China Radio International service in English. But it lacks cultural industries like Hollywood, world-class universities and international NGOs.
2. *Political values*: In the post-Mao era, due to China's 'tripling of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) over three decades', its authoritarian government with market economy or Beijing Consensus has emerged as an alternative to Washington Consensus or democracy with market economy, in Asia, Africa and Latin America, reinforced by China's aid programme and access to its market. However, authoritarianism, corruption, inequality, lack of democracy, human rights and rule of law undercuts its soft power in the West.
3. *Diplomacy*: China abandoned its antipathy to multilateral arrangements and insensitivity to neighbours; thereupon, joined World Trade Organization, contributed troops to United Nations Peace Keeping Operations, hosted six-party talks on nuclear non-proliferation in North Korea, settled territorial disputes with neighbours and joined regional organisations. Although its hard power postures against Taiwan weakens its soft power, these policies of multilateralism and good neighbourliness, alongwith the theory of China's peaceful rise (*zhongguo heping jueqi*) have reduced the disquietude in East Asia and prevented a containment policy against China (Nye 2005).

Most scholars (Gill and Huang 2006, Cho and Jeong 2008, Alan Hunter 2009, et. al.) have preferred to discuss China's soft power resources following Nye's categorisation, but this approach fails to explain how China has been able to convert its soft power resources into productive strategies. In terms of soft power resources, China is

apparently weaker than US, Europe, Japan and even India, due to its controlled popular culture and media, authoritarian government and suppression of ethnic minorities; still, there is hype about China's soft power and its competition with the United States to allure countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and even Europe. Therefore, it is essential to study the 'Charm Offensive' strategies launched by China to provide an alternative to the American influence that declined after the initial post-Cold War euphoria. Joshua Kurlantzick (2007) provides a better insight into conversion of soft power resources to political outcomes by China, including examples of how its strategy has endeared individuals, ethnic organisations, corporate houses, political parties, towns and nations to China. In this section, we shall try to discuss the cultivation of soft power resources by China and their conversion into strategies to fulfil its national objectives.

New Security Concept and Theories of Contribution and Opportunity

Deng Xiaoping considered economic development as the core objective of China's national strategy, for which peaceful international order, unhindered trade and investment, and co-operation with the developed countries were imperative. So, he advocated *taoguang yanghui* (keeping a low profile) and *budangtou* (not taking the lead), i.e., 'China should not seek leadership (of the Third World), hegemony, spheres of influence, alliances or interference (in the internal affairs of other countries), even if it acquires the capability' (Chen 2009: 91; Zhang Weihong 2010: 390). Nonetheless, the very fact that China was undergoing comprehensive modernisation, precipitated by unprecedented economic growth, at the same time, avoiding any international role, especially participation in multilateral agencies (following Deng's instructions), generated fear and suspicion in the neighbourhood. Hence, the Third Generation Leadership under Jiang Zemin envisaged a new role for China in the international system: 'to gear with the world' (*yu shijie jiegui*) (Zhang Weihong 2010: 390).

Multiple strategies were devised to secure recognition for China as 'a responsible great power' (*fuzeren de daguo*), at the heart of which was the New Security Concept (*xin anquan guandian*) that rejects the Cold War mentality of hegemony, imperialism, spheres of influence, threat and use of force and arms race, and upholds trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation. Zhu Mingquan (2005) indicates four basic postulates of the concept, with interesting parallels to the soft power theory:

- The New Security Concept has a comprehensive perspective on security, i.e., it encompasses not only military security but also political, social, economic, cultural and environmental security.
- In the same breath, threats categorised into traditional (military ambitions of another nation) and non-traditional (transnational problems like terrorism, ecological disasters, epidemics, etc. or domestic problems like civil war, insurgency, poverty, economic stagnation, etc.) are both included.
- In a globalised, privatised and informatised world, threats are not limited to a single country nor can be effectively addressed by it; so, multilateralism or international co-operation among nation-states, international institutions, non-governmental organisations and civil societies is necessary.
- Every country should adhere to international norms, regimes and institutions and behave as a responsible power because revisionism is out-of-date in a multipolar and interdependent international system.

A corollary to the above negates the zero-sum game approach to international politics. International power distribution is considered a positive-sum game, basically, to allay the fear that China rise is a threat to the existing great powers.

Two other theories specifically designed to counter China Threat Theory and China Collapse Theory also follow a similar logic. The China Contribution Theory states that the rise of China promises a prosperous Asia and a prosperous world because as a manufacturing hub, China provides interests and profits to foreign investors and companies in China as well as cheap goods to the foreign markets. It also balances the international labour distribution; so that a dwindling, but highly-skilled population in developed countries can move into the tertiary sector of the economy, while the huge low-skilled, low-waged Chinese working class dominates the secondary sector. Besides, the Chinese experience of lifting hundreds of millions out of poverty serves as a model for the underdeveloped parts of the world and contributes to global poverty reduction. Similarly, the China Opportunity Theory emphasises that the peaceful development of China actually augurs well for the international community because China is a large market for foreign trade and investment (Cho and Jeong 2008: 459; Yong Deng 2009: 66).

Multilateralism and Good Neighbourliness

The policy implications of the new paradigm were multilateralism and good neighbourliness. Traditionally, China had eschewed regional multilateral institutions because they were categorised as alliances and China simply avoided getting entangled into a position where it needed to assume leadership or interfere in the affairs of other countries. But avoidance of open diplomacy by a rising power carries a dangerous connotation in the Wilsonian diplomatic parlance, a reminder of the pre-WWI system of secret alliances and of the defiance of the League of Nations by the Axis Powers. So, China reversed its position by initiating dialogue in two sub-regions of its neighbourhood, viz., South-East Asia and Central Asia. Moreover, the foreign relations solely oriented towards great powers (*daguo*) during the 1980s were adjusted to improve ties with other developing countries, especially in the neighbourhood, because the advanced countries had imposed sanctions on China after the Tiananmen Square Incident.

During the Cold War, the South-East Asian countries were antagonistic to China because the revolutionary ideology stemming from the People's Republic was a threat to their regime stability and even the socialist Vietnam became an enemy due to the Sino-Soviet split. But after the Cold War, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was formed in 1994 primarily to commit big powers like the US, Japan and China to the stability of the region and balance them against one another. The situation turned favourable towards China in 1997, when China's benign gestures endeared it to the ASEAN leaders and public. There was a realisation that Washington's arrogance due to the unipolar world order made it ignore the woes of its Cold War allies. Out of this realisation, the ASEAN + 3 mechanism was born. It linked North-East and South-East Asia together, while excluding the biggest player in the region, the United States. In 2000, the Chiang Mai Initiative was launched to avoid repetition of the 1997 currency crisis. In 2002, the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea was signed by ASEAN and the PRC based on the principles of joint exploration of natural resources and peaceful resolution of the disputes (Simon 2008: 205-208). They also created the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area. In 2003, China (alongwith India) became the one of first non-ASEAN members to sign the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Co-operation (TAC), which stipulates:

- mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and national identity of all nations,
- the right of every state to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion or coercion,
- non-interference in the internal affairs of one another,
- settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful manner,
- renunciation of the threat or use of force, and
- effective cooperation among themselves (ASEAN website 2011).

The height of China's multilateral ambitions was the East Asia Summit (2005), which it sought to make an exclusive club of East Asian countries under its leadership. Three conditions were imposed upon prospective members, viz., adherence to the TAC, dialogue partner status and 'substantial' relations with ASEAN. However, some members anticipating Chinese dominance balanced the equation by ensuring membership of India, Australia and New Zealand. The American hesitation to sign the TAC, which could undermine its war-time mobility in the region, had provided an excuse to China to forestall its membership (Simon 2008: 209-210). However, it became difficult to keep the US at bay for very long (America signed TAC in 2009) due to pressure from its East Asian allies; so, China pushed for Russian membership to balance America in 2011 Summit.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, China's policy towards Central Asia has been 'to replace the host with the guest' (Kondapalli 2009). Russia considers Central Asia as its sphere of influence, but its economic weakness allowed China to emerge as an important player in the region. Nevertheless, there exists convergence of interests, viz., resistance to American hegemony in Europe and Far East, maintenance of authoritarianism at home and suppression of Islamic terrorism in the border regions. Additionally, China has accepted concessional boundary settlements with Russia and the bordering Central Asian Republics, reducing apprehensions about Chinese intentions in the region (Gill and Huang 2006: 23). In 1996, Shanghai Five (China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) mechanism was created for dialogue on security interests. It evolved into the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in 2001. The SCO supported the American War on Terror and America established

military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. However, after the Iraq War (2003) and the Colour Revolutions in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004) and Kyrgyzstan (2005), the SCO has emerged as a strong opponent of American unilateralism and export of democracy.³¹

The same year China and Russia signed the Treaty of Good Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation. The principles of good neighbourliness are same as the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence expounded by Premier Zhou Enlai. In line with good neighbourliness policy, China has resolved almost all its territorial disputes, made considerable advancement in border talks with India and accepted mutual dialogue processes in South China Sea. Likewise, China's trade with all its neighbours, although incomparable to that with developed countries, has substantially improved.

During the 1970s and 80s, the PRC was inactive in the United Nations, but that changed with active Chinese participation in UNPKO. Since 1989, China has sent more than 10,000 peacekeepers on 22 peacekeeping missions (Crisis Group Asia Report 2009: 1). At present, the PRC serves in 12 missions with 1,930 personnel, the highest contribution by a UNSC permanent member. (UN website 2012). China enjoys considerable support at the UN General Assembly, as seen by its election to UN Human Rights Council with 167 votes in 2009.

³¹ The Colour Revolutions refer to political change brought about by mass demonstrations, supported by Western media and organisations, mostly in countries ruled by semi-democratic or authoritarian regimes allied to a non-Western big power, e.g., Russia. Rose, Orange and Tulip Revolutions occurred in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan respectively, when pro-Russian regimes were replaced by pro-Western leaders, except in Kyrgyzstan (where the established foreign relations are continued).

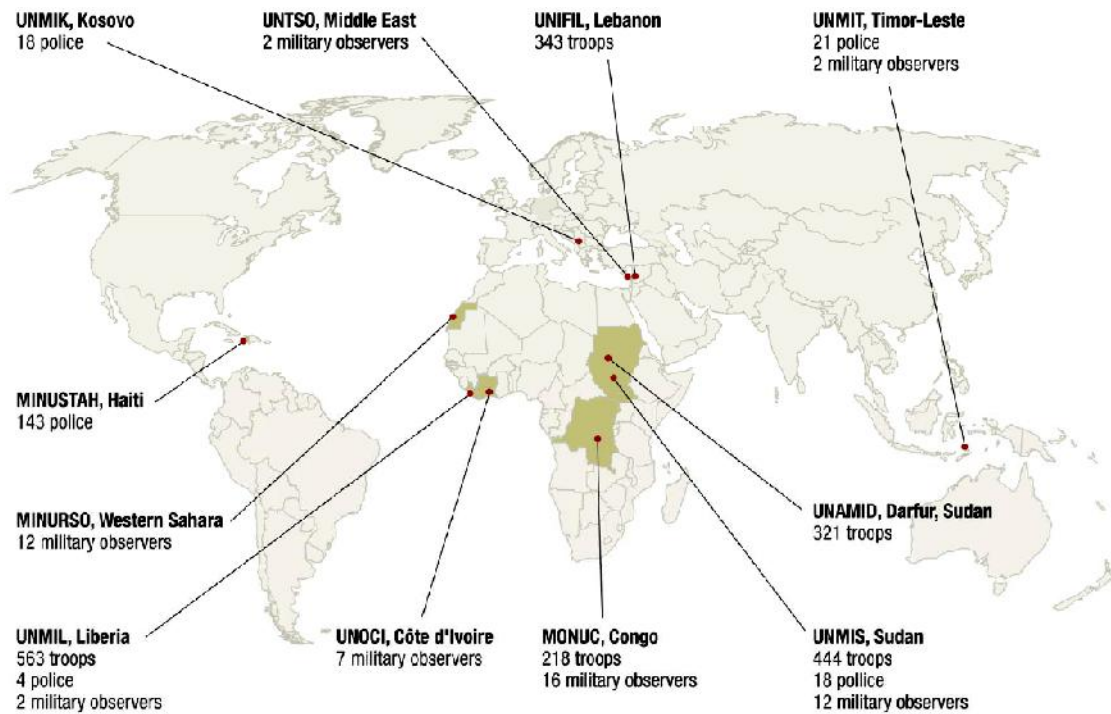


Fig. 3: Chinese contributions to UN Peacekeeping Missions (Crisis Group Asia Report 2009: 35).

Perhaps, the most important multilateral moment for China was its entry into the World Trade Organization (formerly General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), sponsored by the United States on December 11, 2001, after 15 years of negotiations. Another important achievement was the constructive role it has played, since 2003 when North Korea withdrew from the NPT, in the six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear programme. Thus, the People's Republic of China has used multilateralism and good neighbourliness to get recognised as a status quoist power (responsible stakeholder) that seeks to participate in the globalisation process for peace and development.

Peace and Harmony

Although soft power strategies were employed by the Third Generation leadership, they were mostly ad hoc and reactive, to counteract the negative propaganda against China Rise. Actually, there was too much reliance on hard power, sometimes impeding the above strategies. The Mischief Reef Incidents (1994, 1999) and the Third Taiwan Straits Crisis (1995-96) were dangerous military postures against American allies, viz., Philippines and Taiwan, by China. Similarly, the 1999 'inadvertent' bombing of Chinese Embassy in Belgrade by the United States inflamed

nationalistic sentiments in China and 2001 detention American EP3 aircraft alongwith the crew for 11 days by China after its collision with a Chinese fighter (the pilot went missing and the fighter was destroyed) created an international crisis.³² So, there was strong debate among Chinese scholars on the exact nature of China Rise and the policies required to ensure that China receives its 'due' from the international system, without upsetting international peace and stability.

After the Fourth Generation assumed the CCP leadership in 2002, a confidant of President Hu Jintao and the chairman of China Reform Forum, Zheng Bijian (who had returned from an American tour) advanced a concept called 'the Development Path of China's Peaceful Rise' (*zhongguo heping jueqi de fazhan daolu*) to the CCP Central Committee, which entrusted him the task to develop a comprehensive theory on China Rise and its implications on international relations (Glaser and Medeiros 2007: 294). Thereafter, at Boao Forum in November 2003, Zheng Bijian delivered a lecture entitled "A New Path for China's Peaceful Rise and the Future of Asia". He claimed that although China had achieved unprecedented economic growth since reform and opening up and would soon establish a well-off (*xiaokang*) society, it was still a developing country due to incomprehensive, unequal and partial nature of development. He explained the problem using two mathematical propositions, viz.,

- Multiplied by 1.3 billion, any socio-economic problem, no matter how negligible it seems, becomes a big problem.
- Divided by 1.3 billion, material resources, no matter how abundant, remain at extremely low per capita (Zheng 2005: 14).

China's population is 1.3 billion (predicted to peak at 1.5 billion by 2030) and it was an extremely poor country in 1978, the starting point of its development agenda; so, China Rise should be seen within this context. At least, for another three generations,

³² Mischief Reef is a part of the disputed Spratly Islands claimed by many littorals of South China Sea. In 1994 and 1999, when the Philippines Navy was withdrawn during monsoons, China quickly constructed structures over the Reef amidst protests by Philippines. But the conflict did not escalate. In 1995-96, China conducted military mobilisation in Fujian and tested missiles in the Taiwan Straits, when Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui visited the United States on a private visit, leading to American display of military might near the Straits. There were heavy losses to Taiwanese economy, but Lee Teng-hui got re-elected in 1996 with an enhanced mandate, irking the mainland leadership. Both the Belgrade bombing and the Hainan Incident are shrouded in mystery. It cannot be confirmed if the actions by America were accidental or deliberate in the former case or how the two aircrafts collided in the latter.

China has to persevere with the development agenda to become a moderately developed country by 2050. Secondly, China grabbed the historical trend towards technological revolution and economic globalisation in 1978 through reform and opening up, which was reiterated after the 1997 East Asian Financial Crisis, when the debate between pro and anti globalisation forces had re-emerged. Hence, although China has a national development strategy (socialism with Chinese characteristics), it is geared to the global economic system. Thirdly, unlike the historical rising powers that sought the path of war and territorial expansion, China needed a peaceful international environment for its development agenda and only through development, world peace could be preserved. Fourthly, the rest of the world, especially Asia, benefits from China's development; just as China had benefited from the experiences of Japan and the Four Asian Tigers (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan). ASEAN-China Free Trade Area exemplifies that spirit of co-operation. Thus, peaceful rise correctly corresponds to China's development strategy and China's peaceful rise is a component of Asia's peaceful rise, not its antithesis (Zheng 2005: 16-19; Cho and Jeong 2008: 468).

Initially, peaceful rise (*heping jueqi* 和平崛起) was warmly received at the highest echelons of the Party and used by Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao in their speeches, but it was gradually dropped, in favour of Peaceful Development (*heping fazhan* 和平发展), derived from one of Deng Xiaoping's phrases, although the theoretical ingredients remained the same.³³ Joshua Cooper Ramo (2007: 9-11) explains that the ideogram 崛 (*jue*) actually resembles an earthquake, which made the critics assert that actually China had ulterior motives and the term 'peaceful' was just a façade. In December 2005, the State Council issued a white paper entitled "China's Peaceful Development Road", which contains similar principles as expounded by Zheng Bijian, who continues to prefer the former term. Scholars like Wang Jisi (Beijing University) and Liu Jianfei (Central Party School) admit that there is no difference between the two terms (Glaser and Medeiros 2007: 302).

An interesting feature of the paper "China's Peaceful Development Road" is that it includes the concept of harmonious world (*hexie shijie*), which is a Confucian

³³ Deng Xiaoping has used *heping yu fazhan* (peace and development).

construct, totally repugnant to Mao's Theory of Contradictions. In September 2005, Hu Jintao had introduced the concept at the summit celebrating the 60th anniversary of the United Nations. Harmony (*he* 和) is the most aspired state in the ancient classics, when there is no contradiction between 'inner dispositions and external movements', the state of 'effortless action' or *wuwei*. The term also qualifies the relations between mortals and Heaven (*tian*), i.e., harmony means virtuous governance that endears the ruler to everyone in the world and thus, earns their fealty (Slingerland 2005: 243). That is the Way (*dao*), the changeless ideal which pleases the changeless Heaven. In the words of Confucius,

"In the practice of the rites, harmony is regarded as the most valuable thing, and in the ways of the ancient kings, this is regarded as the most beautiful thing. It is adopted in all matters, both small and great... (Sheng Ding 2008: 196)."

"One who rules through the power of virtue is analogous to the Pole Star: it simply remains in its place and receives the homage of the myriad lesser stars (Slingerland 2005: 8)."

A commentary to the latter passage (*Analecets* 2.1) says that just like Heaven brings harmony to the natural world, the human ruler should 'bring the world to order silently, inevitably and unselfconsciously through power of his perfected moral virtue' (Slingerland 2005: 8). Daniel Bell (2008) also explains that 'Confucians defended the ideal of *tianxia*, a harmonious political order without state boundaries and governed by a virtuous sage, without any coercive power. Moreover, this harmonious order can and should be attained by means of benevolence and positive example, once again without any coercive power' (Sheng Ding 2008: 196).

Mao Zedong (1937), in his essay "On Contradictions", criticises the Confucian metaphysics that considers the Heaven and the Way as changeless. By implication, he rejects any possibility of universal virtue or harmonious governance. He considers contradiction as permeating all processes involving both objective things and subjective thought, from beginning to end. Moreover, the struggle between the opposites in the contradiction is also deemed ceaseless. Therefore, Mao Zedong believed in continuous revolution and export of revolution.

It is an irony that the head of the Communist Party, someone in the political and ideological lineage of Mao Zedong, Hu Jintao, inaugurated harmonious world at a UN summit. The harmonious world attempts to bring coherence to the earlier ad hoc soft power strategies and envisions a world driven by soft power. President Hu made a four-point proposal at the summit:

- Multilateralism should be upheld to promote common security under the UN auspices, based on the New Security Concept of trust, mutual benefit, equality and co-operation; peaceful settlement of international disputes; and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries.
- Mutually beneficial co-operation should be supported for common prosperity, based open, fair and non-discriminatory trading system; energy security; and greater responsibility on developed countries for universal, co-ordinated and balanced development.
- There must be civilisational co-existence and mutual accommodation, with every country having the right to choose its own social system and model of development; and with dialogue and exchange in the spirit of equality and openness.
- UN needs rational and necessary reform to improve efficacy and meet new threats and challenges, in a step-by-step manner with full consultations and consensus, prioritising the development agenda and the inclusion of developing countries in the UN Security Council (Xinhua 2005).

Similar themes are included in the 2005 white paper and 2007 political report to the 17th Party Congress. The scientific development concept alongwith harmonious society and harmonious world are now part of the constitutional ideological commitments of the People's Republic of China at par with Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory and Three Represents, but actually much more consequential given its contemporaneousness.

Cultural Diplomacy

China is an ancient civilisation with more than four millennia of recorded history and it has made important contributions to humanity like the four great inventions (paper, printing, gunpowder and mariner's compass) and 'hundred schools of thought' (Confucianism, Daoism, Legalism, Mohism, etc.). China's claim of Middle Kingdom

status was recognised by many of its neighbours including Korea, Japan and Vietnam and Zheng He's voyages extended the status to the Horn of Africa. This civilisational legacy has created abundant reserve of soft power for contemporary use (Gill and Huang 2006: 18). Besides, music, dance, cuisine, embroidery, acupuncture, herbal medicine, martial arts, and *fengshui* are important assets of China's traditional culture.

Another important source of cultural soft power is Buddhism, an imported Indian religion, enriched by Chinese conditions (Hunter 2009: 384). Chinese variations like Pure Land Buddhism and Chan (Zen) Buddhism were exported to Korea, Japan and Vietnam, and have contributed to the New Age Movement in the West. During the revolutionary period, Buddhism, alongwith many other traditional cultural products, were neglected and even mutilated, but have been gradually revived since 1978. The World Buddhist Forum organised in 2006 was the first major religious event organised in post-revolution China, with the theme: 'A harmonious world begins in the mind'. It has been followed by two other forums in 2009 and 2012. These meetings have the agenda to enhance Chinese soft power within the Buddhist communities, get recognition for the Chinese-appointed 11th Panchen Lama and isolate the spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetans, the 14th Dalai Lama (BBC website 2006; China Daily website 2012; Xinhua website 2012a).

However, China is quite backward in contemporary popular cultural brands due to many reasons; for instance, weak domestic institutions, except perhaps the CCP and the PLA; poor standard of education and research compared to the international standard; problematic national image as a ultranationalist and belligerent entity; and declining social cohesion and national identity after the end of ideology. China has few global brands and runs deficit on cultural trade, in spite being the factory of the world (Li 2009: 29). The CCP leadership is determined to address the loopholes and transform China into a cultural superpower. Several improvements have been noted over the last decade in the fields of education, media, tourism, sports, image projection and relationship with the diaspora.

Education

Learning has been greatly honoured in Chinese civilisation, which produced great masters like Confucius, Mozi and Laozi in the ancient times. The tradition was

strengthened with the introduction of the Imperial Examination System (605 AD – 1905 AD) that recruited the best scholars in the country for administrative services. But first half of the 20th century was a period of war and revolution, and then the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) caused disruption of the socialist education system. Since 1978, reforms have been carried out to make China a world-class educational destination with emphasis on science and technology. To encourage competitive selection for students the National Higher Education Entrance Examination (*gaokao*) was re-introduced in 1977. To improve technological research in China, Deng Xiaoping launched 863 Program (1986). The 211 Project (1991) and the 985 Project (1998) were launched to improve the standard of the top universities (Xiaohe Cheng 2009: 110-112). In 2009, the original nine universities selected for 985 Project were clubbed into C9 League, on lines of the Ivy League in the US (Xinhua website 2009). The numbers of university graduates and of the students studying abroad have steadily risen through the three decades of reform. In the summer of 2012, a record 6.8 million Chinese students, most of them born in 1990, will graduate from college; the figure was 3.8 million in 2003 and the total for the first decade of reform, 1979-89 was 3.8 million. The number of students studying abroad has likewise increased: 350,000 in 2011 and likely 430,000 in 2012; from 117,300 in 2003 and total 80,000 between 1978 and 1989 (Xiaohe Cheng 2009: 109-110; New York Times website 2006; Want China Times 2012).

Besides improving the standards of its higher education, China has made itself an attractive destination for foreign students, especially from the Third World, who cannot afford to pay exorbitant fees in the West. The post 9/11 visa restrictions in America have turned many Muslim students, like those of Indonesia to China. Besides, cultural affinity also attracts many East Asian students like South Koreans to China. In 2011, there were 292,611 foreign students from 194 countries and regions studying in 660 universities, institutes and other academic organisations of China; compared to 77,715 in 2003 (a SARS-infected year), 13,000 in 1992 and 3,800 in 1988. China aims to host 500,000 international students by 2020 (Xiaohe Cheng 2009: 113; Ministry of Education website 2006; TSL Education website 2012). To reach this number, ‘the Ministry of Education advertises Chinese universities abroad, creating new scholarship programs for students from the developing world, loosening visa policies for foreign students, and increasing spending to lure elite foreign scholars

from the West to teach in China, thereby upgrading China’s university system’. It specially encourages Chinese-born scholars (*haigui pai* or ‘sea turtles’) in the West to return and contribute to their motherland through programmes like *rencai qiang guo* (Strengthening the Country Through Human Talent) (Kurlantzick 2007: 69).

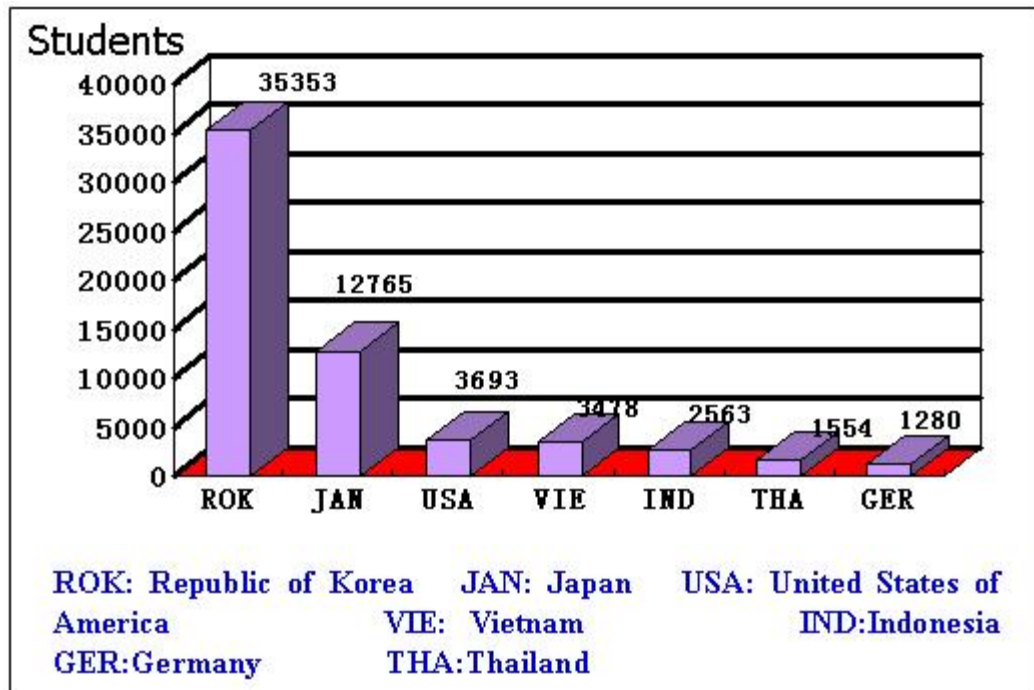


Fig. 4: Number of foreign students in China by country (Ministry of Education website 2006).

Moreover, China launched the aggressive strategy of ‘going global’ (*zou chu qu*) in an attempt to promote Chinese language and culture overseas in a systematic way. In 1990, the government introduced the Chinese Proficiency Test (HSK) for foreigners, expatriate Chinese and ethnic minorities, and the ‘Evaluation Method for Teachers’ Qualification in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language’ (TCFL) to recruit qualified teachers. Besides, China also provides Chinese language teachers, finances primary schools and sponsors the higher education of bright students from the poorer Asian countries (like Cambodia) in Chinese schools (Kurlantzick 2007: 68-69).

Confucius Institute

The most ambitious plan to spread Chinese language and culture was started by China in 2004. It decided to set up 500 Confucius Institutes all over the world by 2010, on the lines of *Alliance Française* sponsored by France, British Council by the UK, *Goethe-Institut* by Germany, *Società Dante Alighieri* by Italy, *Instituto Cervantes* by

Spain, *Instituto Camões* by Portugal, and the Japan Foundation by Japan. (Xiaohe Cheng 2009: 114). Confucius Institute (CI) is an initiative of the Office of Chinese Language Council International (Hanban), a non-governmental and non-profit organisation established in 1987 and headed by a State Councillor, at present, Liu Yandong. The first institute was established on November 21, 2004 in Seoul, South Korea, after a pilot project in July 2004 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

A typical Confucius Institute is created through a contract between Hanban and a foreign university, based on equal funding and then Hanban appoints a Chinese partner university to the CI.³⁴ The Hanban provides initial funding, books and teaching materials, and even sends one or two instructors. The foreign university needs to provide accommodation, infrastructure and administrative support. But the CI is expected to become self-financing by charging fees and business partnerships. It provides the following services: ‘teaching Chinese, training teachers of Chinese, administering the HSK international Chinese language qualification and other examinations, teaching Chinese culture courses, holding film shows and similar activities, acting as consultants for individuals interested in China, such as business people, and maintaining a reference library’ (Starr 2009: 71). The Confucius Classrooms are units that teach Chinese at the secondary school level and whose activities are co-ordinated by the local CI. By May 2012, there were 358 Confucius Institutes and 500 Confucius Classrooms in 96 countries and regions around the world with an annual budget of US\$ 164 million (Yang and Hsiao 2012). In 2010, there were 360,000 registered students and 4000 teachers at CI (Hartig 2011).

Falk Hartig (2011) argues that cultural institutes are an instrument of cultural diplomacy and used by a nation for political purposes; e.g., the *Alliance Française* were established in 1883 to spread France’s cultural influence after the humiliating defeat in the 1871 Franco-Prussian War. Similarly, the Confucius Institutes have significant political ramifications, viz., endorsement of one China policy and rejection of discourses that harm China’s international image by the foreign academia. French Sinologist and philosopher François Jullien states that the institutes teach cultural stereotypes and ignores the heterogeneity of Chinese culture (Hartig 2011). For

³⁴ Some CI are wholly operated by *Hanban* and some wholly local centres licensed by *Hanban*. But most are joint ventures. (Starr 2009: 70).

instance, they teach Mandarin Chinese (officially called *Putonghua* or common language, instead of traditional *Hanyu* due to ethnic connotation) and consider other tongues like Cantonese as mere dialects. In China, there is a serious attempt at homogenisation in order to assimilate ethnic minorities by imposing a monolithic Han identity and this policy has been internationalised through the CI affecting the non-Mandarin speaking Chinese diaspora. Besides, the CI uses simplified characters and pinyin system of Romanisation, officially recognised in People's Republic of China. Although KMT had also imposed Mandarin on Taiwan, Taiwan used classical characters and *zhuyin fuhao* system of Romanisation. Again, the syllabus and teaching materials also ascribe to the mainland version of Taiwan's identity. Thus, with the popularity of CI, Taiwan gets increasingly marginalised.

Moreover, co-operation between foreign and Chinese universities produces a sympathetic attitude towards China's national interests and even if Hanban may not explicitly pressurise, the Confucius Institutes would normally avoid controversial issues like Taiwan, Tibet, Tiananmen, Falun Gong (religious sect persecuted in China since 1999), Liu Xiaobo (human rights activist detained and then imprisoned in China since 2008, who won the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize), etc. (Ding and Saunders 2006: 25-26; Starr 2009: 67-68). There are also allegations of unfriendly behaviour towards the host nation, viz., corporate espionage, subversion of public opinion, communist indoctrination, censorship and interference with academic freedom. In general, the universities, which host the CI, are satisfied with the partnership and deny any interference by Hanban in the working of CI. Some of them even think that they can influence China and cultivate among Chinese an open-minded attitude towards the outside world (Hartig 2011). So, two perspectives have taken root in the thinking of foreign scholars on the role of Confucius Institutes. On May 27, 2012, the US State Department issued a notice to universities hosting CI that any Chinese 'academics at university-based institutes who are teaching at the elementary and secondary school levels (Confucius Classrooms) are violating the terms of their visas and must leave at the end of the current school term' and that the institutes must obtain American academic accreditation (Xinhua website 2012b). Thus, an uncertainty remains as to the success of CI to enhance Chinese soft power in the world.

Media

The media diplomacy in mainland China originated in the caves of Yanan as a propaganda machinery of the Communist Party with the English language broadcasts of China Radio International. The contemporary media is regulated by the Central Propaganda Department of the Party, along with the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT) for electronic media and General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP) for print media. The leading media organisations are Xinhua New Agency, People's Daily, CCTV (China Central Television), China National Radio and China Radio International. Since reform and opening up, there has been a plethora of private actors that publish or broadcast independent news, but within the limits set by the CCP. Sensitive issues like Tibet, Uyghurs, Falun Gong, Tiananmen, religion, democracy, etc. are censored by the regulatory agencies. Even internet is strictly controlled through what is called 'the Great Firewall of China'. The Reporters Without Borders ranks China 174 out of 179 in its Press Freedom Barometer 2012 (Reporters Without Borders website 2012).

However, under the charm strategy, China wants its media to compete with the West, symbolised by renaming of its Propaganda Department as Publicity Department (Kurlantzick 2007: 62). While Voice of America cut its Chinese broadcasts to 14 hours daily, the China Radio International runs 24 hours English service (Nye 2005). The CCTV, which reaches more than 95% of the Chinese population and monopolises the market, has twenty-two 24 hour channels, including six international channels. In 1994, a Mandarin channel for the Chinese diaspora and Chinese speaking foreigners, CCTV-4 was launched, followed by CCTV-9, the first English international channel in September 2000. The former has about 15 million and the latter has nearly 50 million subscribers worldwide (2006 figures). In 2004, CCTV started its first Spanish and French channel, CCTV-E & F, with more than 2 million viewers in the world in 2006 (Deng and Zhang 2009: 151-152). It started to run separately in 2008, followed by CCTV-Arabic and CCTV-Russian in 2009. There are plans to launch a Portuguese channel (Zhang Xiaoling 2011: 61).

In 2010, CCTV International (CCTV-9) changed its name to CCTV News. It consists of news, featured and language programmes. It 'not only provides extensive coverage on China, Asia, and other developing nations, but also aims to present its own version

of issues and events happening in these countries, thereby providing a Chinese perspective as an alternative to the dominant Western voice in the global arena’ (Zhang Xiaoling 2011: 61). ‘CCTV has made headway into the United States, and has become its largest overseas market with over 10 million viewers for CCTV-9 and CCTV-E & F’. There are more than 6 million ethnic Chinese in the United States but the TV market is fragmented and dominated by Taiwan and Hong Kong immigrants (2006 figures). CCTV wants to wrest the market from them by ‘providing low cost or no cost news programmes and TV series’ (Deng and Zhang 2009:152).

Tourism

The positive cultural interaction between China and the rest of the world is reinforced by growing international tourism to China and Chinese tourism to overseas destinations (Hunter 2009: 386). In 2010, the inbound tourists to China were 55.7 million (3rd in the world) with expenses of US\$ 45.8 billion (4th) (UNSCAP website 2011). Out of them, the largest numbers were South Koreans and Japanese, followed by Russia and the US. The tourists in 2006 were 22.2 million. In 2005, the expenses by tourists amounted to almost US\$ 29.3 billion, quite a growth from US\$ 8.7 billion in 1995 and US\$ 263 million in 1978 (CNTO website 2011). According to the Chinese Outbound Tourist Research Institute (website 2011), the outbound tourists have increased to about 63 million in 2011.

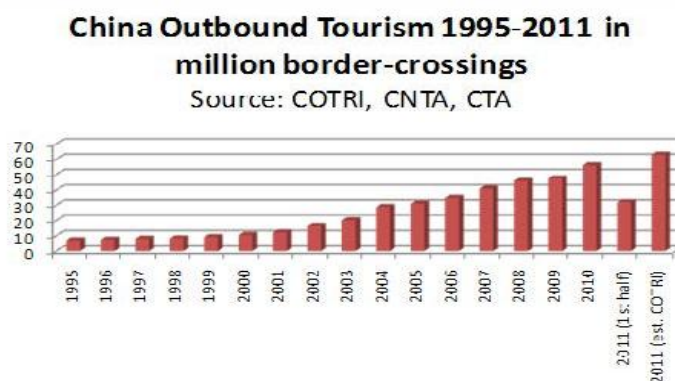


Fig. 5: Outbound Chinese tourists (COTRI website 2011).

Olympics and World Expo

Two mega events portrayed the picture of a rejuvenated China: Beijing Summer Olympics 2008 and Shanghai World Expo 2010. Although the Olympic torch relay,

based on the theme ‘Journey of Harmony’, was disrupted by pro-Tibet protestors, against the human rights abuse by China against Tibetans, other minorities and democracy and human rights activists, China recovered from the public relations disaster by the grandeur at the opening ceremony, which focused on China’s civilisational achievements. China also emerged a great sporting power by winning the most gold medals (51), well ahead of America (36). While the motto of the Olympics was ‘One World, One Dream’, inviting the world to share the civilisation of the Middle Kingdom, that of the World Expo was ‘Better City, Better Life’, emphasising China’s contemporary achievement of economic modernisation. It was the largest and the most expensive World Expo of all times with total 246 countries and organisations participating, over 73 million visitors, US\$ 1.87 billion organising expenses (besides, US\$ 3.08 billion preparation and construction costs) and US\$ 2.03 billion revenue (World Expo 2010 website).³⁵

Economic Diplomacy

Nye had excluded economic levers like trade, investment and aid from soft power resources. But he admits that ‘successful economic performance such as that of China can produce both hard power of sanctions and restricted market access and the soft power of attraction and emulation of success’ (Nye 2011: 22). According to Kurlantzick (2007: 6),

“For the Chinese, soft power means anything outside of the military and security realm, including not only popular culture and public diplomacy but also more coercive economic and diplomatic levers like aid and investment and participation in multilateral organisations—Nye’s carrots and sticks. Indeed, Beijing offers the charm of a lion, not of a mouse: it can threaten other nations with these sticks if they do not help China achieve its goals, but it can offer sizable carrots if they do.”

So, economic diplomacy forms an integral part of China’s soft power strategy. It basically consists of two components, viz., foreign aid and investment, and development model (Beijing Consensus).

³⁵ The figures are calculated by converting the *yuan renminbi* values given in various websites into US\$ at the 2010 approximate exchange rate.

Foreign Aid and Investment

China has acquired vast economic capabilities in the last 34 years, which includes GDP (US\$ 7.74 trillion, ranked 2nd in mid-2012), GDP growth rate (9.5%, ranked 7th in 2011), international trade (US\$ 3.56 trillion, ranked 2nd in 2011), foreign direct investment – FDI within the country (US\$ 776 billion, ranked 7th in 2010) and foreign exchange reserve (US\$ 3.2 trillion, ranked 1st in 2011). Of course, as Zheng Bijian had mentioned, the advantages tend to get divided among 1.3 billion people, reducing the per capita income to US\$ 5184, ranked 95th (2011), and weakening the qualitative social indicators like the Human Development Index- HDI (0.687, ranked 101st in 2011) and Gini Coefficient of income inequality (48, ranked 27th in 2009) (CIA World Factbook website 2012; Human Development Report 2011). But this dichotomy has been used to its advantage by China, as it claims to be a developing country that requires concession in international obligations; at the same time, it utilises its economic capabilities to gain international influence.

As China grows, it wants to assure its neighbours that it will contribute to the development of the region through ‘win-win’ partnerships, although the assurance is grounded more on future possibilities, pledges by Chinese leaders and hype by media, than on current status (Kurlantzick 2007: 87). At present, the opportunity exceeds the contribution. That does not negate the fact that China has actually made substantial contributions to the economic development of some parts of the world like South-East Asia (after the 1997 Crisis), Central Asia and Africa. Indeed, it follows a strategic approach to trade, investment and assistance abroad called ‘go global’ campaign, i.e., Chinese companies invest not merely for profit, but on clear instructions and subsidisation by the government, mostly for natural resources (Kurlantzick 2007: 88). Similarly, whatever economic assistance China’s government provides is also tied to trade relations, labour migration and even tourism. Thomas Lum (2009) identifies the following features of China’s investment or assistance policy, which garners appreciation for China, often disproportionate to the actual assistance:

- China’s economic assistance has unofficially a broad definition to include low-interest loans and public investments as well as grants, subsidies and debt cancellation. But its official aid as ODA (Overseas Development Assistance, which consists of development grants, poverty reduction programmes, humanitarian assistance and food aid),

and as military or security assistance is considerably low.³⁶ However, it publicises its economic activities as aid, making announcements at summit meetings and hyping the ‘special’ relationship between China and the recipient nation.

- China’s assistance is provided for infrastructure (cultural centres, embassies, roads, railways, ports, etc.) and natural resource (oil, natural gas, coal, iron, etc.) development projects and for ventures involving its state-owned enterprises. Often, these projects are critical for the ruling elite in the recipient country because they provide tangible and short-term benefits that endear the public.
- China often helps those countries or sectors that are neglected by the OECD countries and multilateral agencies due to ideological considerations or lack of feasibility. Its aid come quickly and easily (less bureaucratic hassles), with no strings attached (no consideration for the social or environmental consequences in the country), and with flexible, long-term repayment procedures (with provision of payment in kind).
- These assistance agreements are based on the principle of mutual benefit in three sectors, viz., political, economic and socio-cultural. The first involves adherence to one China policy (undermining Taiwan’s independence movement) and support in the international bodies like UN (so, agencies like UNHRC fail to condemn any human rights violation by China or its friends) and WTO (China has thwarted any further attempts towards infringement of economic sovereignty). The second ensures that China has access to raw materials to feed its economic development and also markets for their finished products. The agreements also permit Chinese companies to procure materials and skilled workers from China, an additional impetus for China’s growth. The third strengthens the relationship through social services like medical, educational and technological assistance by China, and cultural exchanges, in form of dance troupes, art exhibitions, sports events, language programmes, etc. Chinese youth volunteers visit poor countries in Africa and offer very useful service.

Thus, there is no clear demarcation between investment (FDI) and aid (ODA) in the Chinese context, even other factors like trade (import of natural resources and export of technology); migration (Chinese workers); and tourism (cultural parties) are intertwined. Besides, a win-win arrangement is created to facilitate a long-term partnership and convergence of interests, establishing permanent ‘soft power bases’ in diverse regions of the world. Fig. 6 indicates the assistance offered by China to three

³⁶ According to *China Statistical Yearbook 2003-06*, annual Chinese aid amounted to only US\$ 970 million, compared to American aid of US\$ 24 billion (financial year 2008).

important regions of the world, Africa, Latin America and South-East Asia, and Fig. 7 displays the three components of the overall assistance by China, concessional loans, government sponsored investment, and grants, debt cancellations and in-kind aid. Both the figures are based on the amounts ‘announced or pledged rather than actual economic assistance’.

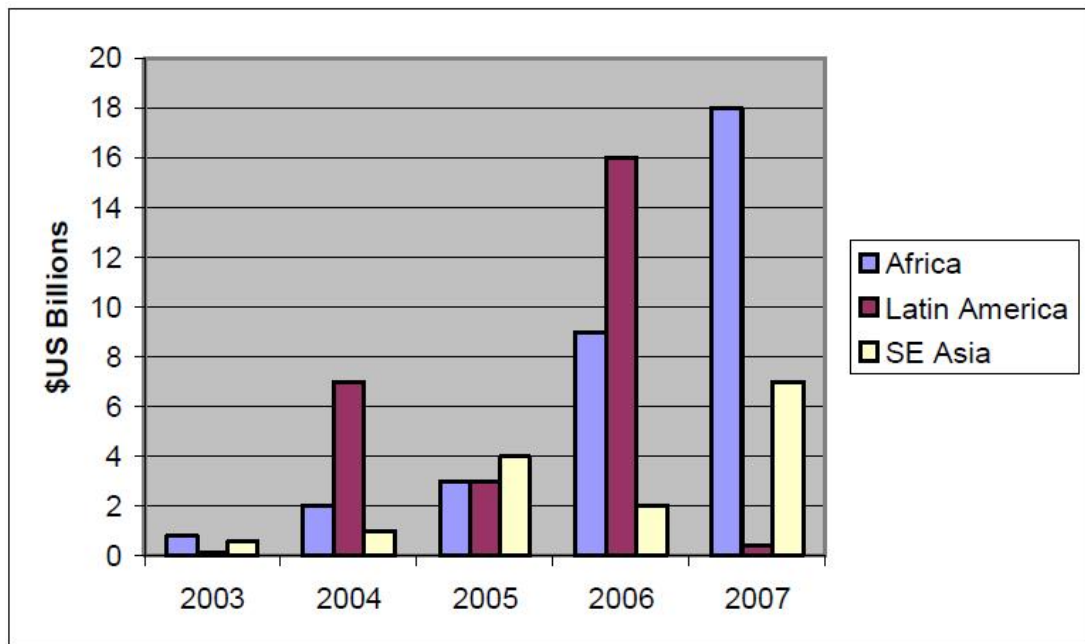


Fig. 6: China's economic assistance in three important regions of the globe (NYU Wagner School 2008 in Lum 2009: 5).

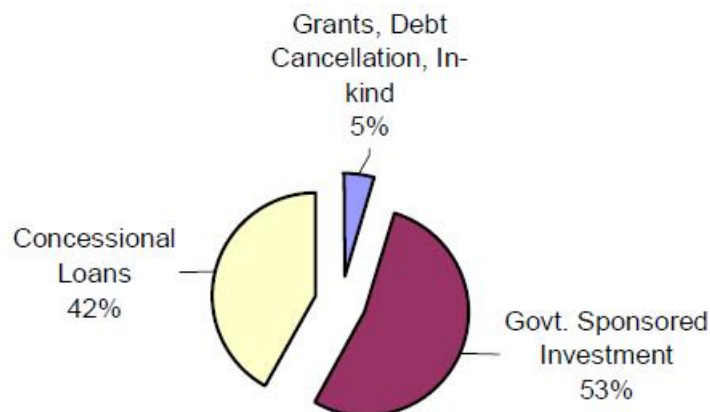


Fig. 7: Break up of China's economic assistance into three sources, 2002-07 (NYU Wagner School 2008 in Lum 2009: 5).

Fig. 8 shows that most concessional loans and grants were committed to Africa, which is the poorest continent in the world, while government sponsored investment

is prominent in Latin America, the American backyard, where China competes with Taiwan for recognition. South-East Asia enjoys a special kind of relationship with China and exceeds the other two regions in trade and private investment. The economic aid to S-E Asia is primarily directed towards the poorer states, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar.

(U.S. dollars in millions)

	Africa	Latin America	Southeast Asia
Govt.-sponsored investment	8,042	24,389	7,429
Concessional loan	22,379	1,950	7,114
Grant	1,851	421	231
Debt cancellation	850	0	60
In-kind aid	21	1	0

Source: NYU Wagner School, 2008.

Fig. 8: China's reported economic assistance by sources and regions, 2002-07 (Lum 2009: 6).

Beijing Consensus

At the end of the Cold War, Francis Fukuyama (1989; 1992) proclaimed 'the end of history', i.e., the ideological evolution of mankind had culminated into a universalised liberal democratic world order, the ultimate development of human political organisation. That did not exclude existence of undemocratic regimes in some parts of the world or localised struggles against authoritarianism, even temporary reversals. But with the defeat of Soviet communism, the last alternative universalised ideology of the 20th century (royal despotism and fascism had been vanquished in WWI and WWII respectively), the history of ideological evolution had come to a permanent halt. This thesis was backed up by empirical evidence in the form of the third democratic wave (late 1970s to early 1990s) when the authoritarian regimes all over the world (only exception was the Middle East) were mostly replaced by democratic government, while a few survived by introducing socio-economic reforms. Many countries in important regions like South Europe (Portugal, Spain, Greece and Turkey), Latin America (all authoritarian governments except Cuba), East Asia (Philippines, South Korea and Taiwan), East Europe (former Soviet republics, former Yugoslav republics and Warsaw Pact countries), South Asia (Pakistan, Nepal and

Bangladesh) and Africa (South Africa, Ghana, etc.) transformed into democracies.³⁷ On the other hand, the People's Republic of China introduced reform and opening up, although it suppressed the pro-democracy movement at the Tiananmen Square. The world-wide democratic transformation was attributed to the superiority of the Western model of development based on political democracy and economic liberalism to any authoritarian, semi-authoritarian or social democratic alternative.

The term Washington Consensus, coined by the economist John Williamson (1989) to indicate the policy recommendations made by the Bretton Wood institutions and the US Treasury Department for economic recovery of Latin America in the 1980s, has come to be representative of the neo-liberal Western development model. The model can be summarised in ten points, articulated by Williamson (1989).³⁸

- Fiscal discipline.
- Reordering public expenditure priorities away from non-merit subsidies and toward public goods (e.g. health and education).
- Tax reform that combines broad tax base with moderate marginal rates.
- Liberalised interest rates.
- A competitive exchange rate.
- Trade liberalisation.
- Liberalisation of inward foreign direct investment.
- Privatisation.
- Deregulation to ease barriers of firms for entry and exit of sectors.
- Strong protection of property rights (S. Kennedy 2010: 463).

In the 1990s, the Bretton Woods agencies provided assistance to the developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, on the condition that they implement structural adjustments based on neo-liberal economics and introduce Western standards of democratic governance. The neo-liberal economic restructuring involved 'shock therapy' reforms, which caused hyperinflation, unemployment, steep income inequalities and debt defaulting in East Europe and Latin America, and 'trickle down' approach to poverty alleviation, which worsened the impoverishment in sub-Saharan Africa. The Washington Consensus, after the East Asian Crisis (1997), the Russian

³⁷ Samuel P. Huntington, (1991), *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press.

³⁸ Many of these recommendations were qualified by Williamson in his later works. He has tried to dissociate his term from the neo-liberal economic policies in subsequent debates, including a famous one with Joseph Stiglitz (2002), who criticised Washington Consensus in his *Globalization and Its Discontents*. In the debate, Williamson noted that he agreed with many of the recommendations given by Stiglitz, but was upset at the misrepresentation of his ideas in the book.

Crisis (1998) and the Argentine Crisis (1999-2002), was severely criticised and many of its policies were abandoned. Similarly, the third wave of democracy also receded, with many countries reverting back to authoritarian and semi-authoritarian governments, especially in Africa, where neo-liberalism only aggravated poverty and instability. Many middle-income countries in East Asia and Latin America instituted state regulation of the market, leading to speedy recovery and high growth rates in 2000s.

During the period of worldwide political and economic transformation, the People's Republic of China had initiated its own policy of reform and opening up, based on Chinese conditions, without any reference to the Bretton Woods institutions. Deng Xiaoping had advocated strategies like 'it does not matter whether a cat is white or black, as long as it catches mice' and 'wading across the river by feeling for the stones', i.e., pragmatism and gradualism (Liqun 2010: 51). He started with agricultural reforms: Household Responsibility System was established abolishing the people's communes and peasants were permitted to sell their produce in the open market, after the government had procured a fixed quota at a fixed price. In the state-owned enterprises, managerial responsibility system was introduced and Special Economic Zones (SEZs) were established at Shenzhen and Zhuhai, to invite FDI. Massive economic growth through the first decade of reform and opening up was followed by inflation and political instability, which were crushed through the instruments of political authoritarianism (at Tiananmen, 1989). But after Deng's Southern Tour (1992), the reform agenda received a new boost and through foreign investment (mostly from East Asian countries, especially by overseas Chinese), cheap and abundant labour, high savings, and 'slightly' devalued *renminbi*, China transformed into the 'manufacturing hub' or 'factory of the world', enjoying huge trade surplus. The state-owned enterprises (most large industries) and informal connections (*guanxi*) among local party officials and entrepreneurs were the important factors, facilitating the unprecedented economic growth. Such a mixed economic model has been referred to as 'socialism with Chinese characteristics', 'socialist market economy', 'market authoritarianism', 'market Leninism' and more recently, 'market Confucianism'.

China was able to develop unhindered by external economic crisis and in 1997-98 played important role in stabilising the East Asian economy. However, Deng's strategy of 'let some get rich first' led to many contradictions within the society: between the rich and the poor, industry and agriculture, the coastal areas and the hinterland, and man and environment. Therefore, a new paradigm was adopted to ensure balanced and sustainable economic development, with concentration on the rural sector, environmental protection and Western Development Project, and was called the scientific development concept with the end goal of establishing a harmonious society. The American Crisis (2008) had serious ramifications on the global economy, including on China, which has developed very close relationship with the American economy as the largest creditor (China is reported to possess about US\$ 1.73 trillion in US Treasury bonds) and supplier of cheap manufactured goods (China's trade surplus with the US amounted to US\$ 295 billion in 2011) (US Census Bureau website 2012; Wall Street Journal website 2012). But China, which had emerged an Asian power in 1997-98, played the role of a global power in 2008-2009, pumping capital into American and European markets to reverse the effect of recession. Therefore, many reputed economists and foreign policy strategists, like C. Fred Bergsten, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Niall Ferguson, Robert Zoellick and Justin Yifu Lin, have advocated the formation of G2 (America and China) to resolve global problems through mutual consultations.³⁹

China's development model actually is the first ideological challenge to the Western liberal democracy in the 21st century. While America was distracted by the War on Terror and the Iraq War, China has quietly pursued the path of continued economic growth, to the admiration of the entire world. By the time America perceived the decline of its power in 2008-09 and adopted the smart power doctrine, China's model of development had already attracted leaders in the developing world, not only African dictators but also democratic leaders like Manmohan Singh and Lula da Silva, and even American columnists like Robert Kaplan and Thomas Friedman (Gill and Huang 2006: 20). In 2004, Joshua Cooper Ramo, a Goldman Sachs advisor and Qinghua University professor, coined the term Beijing Consensus to describe the Chinese model of development, conceived as an alternative to Washington Consensus.

³⁹ Bergsten, who is the director of Peterson Institute of International Economics, in 2005, first proposed the concept of G2. (Bergsten 2009).

Ramo (2004) challenges much of the conventional wisdom about China, which considers China either as a potential threat to the liberal international order, or as a nation ridden with internal contradictions that would lead to its collapse, or even as a land of opportunity for foreign companies providing cheap labour for production of goods and vast market for their consumption. He makes some important observations:

- The impact of China Rise is not future prospect, but a reality that is ‘reshaping the international order by introducing a new physics of development and power’. The attempt to understand China in terms of number of ‘aircraft carriers’ or ‘per capita GDP’ is futile because ‘China is in the process of building the greatest asymmetrical superpower the world has ever seen, a nation that relies less on traditional tools of power projection than any in history and leads instead by the electric power of its example and the bluff impact of size’.
- China’s new physics is based on three premises, viz., ‘innovation-based development, economic success measured not by per capita GDP growth but by its sustainability and level of equality, and self-determination for China and for other countries vis-à-vis the United States’ (summarised by S. Kennedy 2010: 468). These premises define the idea of Beijing Consensus, and clearly distinguish it from the stereotypical prescriptions of the Washington Consensus.
- It takes clear position with regards to opposition to the Washington Consensus that enforces prescriptive, uniform and abrupt remedies to development problems in the Third World. China embraces globalisation on its own terms and does not tolerate interference in its domestic affairs. It extends the same principle to other countries and establishes political, economic and cultural relations with ‘no strings attached’.
- China gives primacy to soft power over hard power, i.e., it wants to increase its international influence through example, rather than coercion, because it cannot match the military capabilities of the United States. Even in economic power, in terms of per capita GDP, China cannot catch up with the developed countries for two or three or even more decades. Therefore, it relies on the development of asymmetric capabilities to balance against the United States.
- The dualism of engagement and containment has become antiquated in relation to China, due to the sheer speed change of occurring in the country. The change is so unpredictable that any generalisation about threat or opportunity is bound to fail. It is like the Heisenberg’s Principle of Uncertainty, that it is impossible to discern simultaneously and with high accuracy both the position and the momentum of an

electron. So also, China's future trajectory is uncertain, but what is important is that 'the new physics of development and power' has changed international relations forever. Although other countries may not be able to replicate the China model, they are sure to have seen beyond the 'end of history' or liberal democratic universalism and regained confidence to be able to chart out their national destiny.

Thus, we have seen, in this chapter, the critical importance of soft power in China's foreign policy discourse and then how China has utilised its soft power resources through charm strategies, cultural diplomacy and economic diplomacy. In the next chapter, we shall examine the critical aspects of China's soft power – evaluation of Nye's soft power theory, domestic and international dimensions of China's soft power, debates on peaceful rise and Beijing Consensus and limitations of China's soft power.

Chapter 4

Critical Assessment

Evaluation of Nye's Soft Power Theory

Nye's soft power theory has been one of the most influential ideas in the first decade of the 21st century. It originated at the historical juncture between the end of Cold War and the beginning of the information revolution when the microchip became more significant than geopolitics as the determinant of power in all its manifestations.⁴⁰ But soft power was taken for granted during the 1990s by the United States due to its unchallenged hegemony. In fact, America gradually weakened the Cold War era public diplomacy initiatives, e.g., the State Department budget, including that of Agency for International Development (USAID), and educational and cultural programmes, was slashed. The United States Information Agency (USIA), which ran the Voice of America, which played a major role in moulding pro-Western public opinion in East Europe, and American Centers, which provided library facilities in major Third World countries, was terminated in 1999. The US failed to ratify important international agreements like Comprehensive Test Ban Treat (CTBT), Kyoto Protocol (on global warming) and the Statute of Rome (establishing the International Criminal Court), and even refused to pay its dues to the United Nations. On the other hand, although Europe's commitment to multilateralism and non-coercive diplomacy and Japan's rising popular culture strengthened their soft power, they never threatened the American leadership of the international order.

Soft power assumed prominence in foreign policy discourse, only with the sharp decline of American popularity after the Iraq War (2003), even in Europe and Japan, and the rise of an 'asymmetrical power', China, which lagged far behind the US in conventional military power or per capita economic indicators, but which combined its charm strategies with its alternative model of development, to allure many

⁴⁰ This is not mere rhetoric but practical reality, with Revolution in Military Affairs (military power), Silicon Valley (economic power) and cyber culture (soft power).

countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The importance placed by the Chinese leaders on soft power catalysed a surge in research on the subject and soon drew the Western scholarship including Nye into a new Sino-centric soft power debate. Nonetheless, there are still foundational questions that need to be addressed to clarify the epistemological, ontological and normative dimensions of soft power theory. Only then we can proceed to discuss the critical aspects of soft power with Chinese characteristics.

Comparative Visualisations of Non-coercive Power

Gallarotti (2010a: 20-32) compares soft power with other visualisations of non-coercive power, viz., Weberian charismatic authority, Gramscian hegemony, Lukes' third face of power and Foucaultian power (sometimes, called the fourth face of power). Let us analyse each concept and compare it with Nye's soft power theory:

Charismatic Authority: Max Weber delineated three types of authority or legitimised power, viz., charismatic, traditional and rational-legal. Charismatic authority relies on the extraordinary qualities and exceptional (often considered supernatural) achievements of the leader, because of which he gathers followers who accept his absolute command and control. Soft power also produces a similar effect on the victim state, i.e., the culture, ideology and institutions of the agent state, and/or its policy-actions attract other states, which may then accept its leadership in the international order. However, there are two differences:

- Soft power need not be generated by 'extraordinary' attributes or actions, but it simply requires culture, ideology and institutions which satisfy the mundane aspirations of other nations.
- Soft power does not endow a state with absolute authority, but with deliberative support on its proposals or at best, international socialisation of its norms (Weber 1978; Gallarotti 2010a: 21).

Hegemony: Antonio Gramsci was intrigued by the social reality in democratic countries that without using coercion, the elite is able to garner obedience of the poor masses and perpetuate the exploitative capitalist system. He got his answer in his reading of Machiavelli's *The Prince*, which identifies two forms of rule – by force and by consent (Zahran and Ramos 2010: 21). Gramsci concluded that 'effective

control over society could never be accomplished by brute force alone', but it required an ideational element, a rule based on the combination of coercion and consent of the public called hegemony (Gramsci 1988; Gallarotti 2010a: 26). Hegemony means the capacity to unify a society founded on class contradictions, i.e., the ruling classes control the productive forces and exploit them through the voluntary labour of the impoverished masses, but accommodate the subsistent interests of the masses and unite with them under a universal ideology, which they promote through cultural institutions like schools, work units, churches, the press and so on (Gramsci 1988; Zahran and Ramos 2010: 21). Similarly, in international relations (neo-Gramscism), a historic bloc of the dominant classes maintains a hierarchical world order, grounded on norms and institutions portrayed as the legitimate representation of the collective interests, but actually serving the interests and preferences of the bloc (Gallarotti 2010a: 26-27). The organic intellectuals play a crucial role in the negotiations on interests and preferences within the bloc, and the development and sustenance of norms and institutions that hold together the common identity.

For the neo-Gramscians, Joseph Nye is an organic intellectual who through his works provides policy-prescriptions to the globalist historic bloc (that emerged in 1970s after the collapse of the Bretton Woods historic bloc), so that the hegemony can be sustained against the tensions within the bloc (created by the neoconservative party due to its coercive tactics undermining the consensual nature of hegemony). When viewed within this context, there are interesting parallels between hegemony and soft power. Neo-Gramscians consider the ideational factors (soft power) as crucial to the hegemonic project. They perceive universalisation of liberal values, which are multilateralism, economic interdependence, peaceful settlement of disputes, promotion of democracy and human rights, etc., as an important pillar of the global capitalist order.

Besides, the neo-Gramscians criticise the declinist theories because the declinists failed to see the 'reformulation of global capitalist order', which Nye refers to as the 'processes of globalisation, privatisation and informatisation'. During the economic crises of 1970s, the Bretton Woods system of industrialised national economies grounded on a fixed American dollar, cheap fuel prices and supply of raw materials from the Third World collapsed, and was replaced by a transnational capitalist order,

evidenced by the neo-liberal economic policies of 1980s and early 1990s (Zahran and Ramos 2010: 27-28). However, the post-Cold War abandonment of public diplomacy and multilateralism by the American establishment due to arrogance of power, and the unilateralism and pre-emptive warfare of the neoconservatives after 9/11 weakened American soft power, the ideational component of the transnational capitalism (Nye 2004). Neo-Gramscians consider this as factional politics within the globalist historic bloc among the neoliberals, neo-isolationists and neoconservatives (Zahran and Ramos 2010: 27-28).

However, beyond the superficial resemblance between soft power and hegemony as constructs of non-coercive power, there are significant distinctions between the two conceptualisations. First, Gramscian hegemony is another manifestation of control – by co-optive indoctrination. Although all the states may accept a set of universal norms and institutions, there is strong contradiction between the objective interests of the dominant states and the weak states, and the latter only accept universalism under false consciousness, manipulated by the former (Gallarotti 2010a: 27). So, Gramsci advocates a ‘war of positions’, a civil society struggle to develop a mass coalition for revolution, as opposed to ‘war of movement’, a self-destructive violent revolt against the state (Zahran and Ramos 2010: 22). Soft power disregards any such conflict of interests because it is not a product of false consciousness, but an enlightened appreciation of the genuine attractiveness of the culture, ideology and policies of another country. There is a convergence of the objective interests of different states in the exercise of soft power. Thus, soft power can be seen as a sub-set of neoliberal logic that describes international relations as a positive-sum game, in which absolute gains by all nations are assured on adoption of universal norms and institutions through non-coercive means (Gallarotti 2010a: 27-28).

Second, neo-Gramscians view class as the unit of analysis in international relations; so, the transnational capitalist class constitutes the historic bloc, although the dominant states have much greater representation in the bloc and most poor states none at all. Nye considers state as the unit of analysis; so, soft power is a component of national power. In the former world-view, hegemonic stability serves the interests of the globalist elite of all important countries, at the expense of the impoverished masses as well as the nationalist elite in the developing countries; while in the latter,

there is a competition and co-operation among nations for soft power, with co-operation contributing to the stability of international order and to absolute gains by all the parties.

Third, according to Zahran and Ramos (2010: 25), Nye adheres to the Weberian concept of state as a political society, which restricts the state to its administrative, legal and coercive functions. On the other hand, Gramsci accepts the extended definition of state as a conjunction of political society and civil society. Hegemony appears in the civil space through consent of the public; while the state apparatus, with its monopoly over legitimate coercion, occupies the political space. This is a methodological distinction and actually, all power is concentrated in the bourgeois state apparatus, which applies it directly in the political space and indirectly in the civil space. Nye fails to identify the peculiarities of each space and so, conceives of hard power and soft power as mutually exclusive categories. For Gramsci, coercion is intrinsic to consent, lying dormant when hegemonic stability prevails, but emerging during civil unrest.

Finally, Nye gives a monolithic picture of soft power resources, ignoring the ideational struggle over ideas and institutions in the international system; while Gramsci considers hegemony as a pursuit to acquire consent, a struggle among different interests in society (Zahran and Ramos 2010: 24). In international relations, there are many contested norms, e.g., the 'universal' principles of human rights are contested by the Islamic countries, which see the principles as representation of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Humanitarian intervention challenges the principle of sovereignty and non-interference, and environmental regulations the principles of free-market. Nye ignores these Gramscian insights in favour of universality of ideas and institutions.

Third Face of Power: In his book, *The Future of Power* (2011), Nye located soft power within the three faces of power debate. Robert Dahl (1957) gave a behavioural definition of power – 'A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do' – also known as the first face of power. Soft power can be located within this face as the ability of A to persuade B to change his existing preferences, without using 'stick or carrot'. The second face of power is

defined by Bachrach and Baratz (1962): ‘to the extent that a person or group, consciously or unconsciously, creates or reinforces barriers to the public airing of policy conflicts, that person or group has power’. Nye identifies soft power within this face as when the mentioned barriers are deemed as legitimate or acceptable by the victim of power. Nevertheless, soft power more closely resembles the third face of power, which Steven Lukes (1974; 2007: 90) defines as ‘the power to shape, influence or determine others’ beliefs and desires, thereby securing their compliance’ or as Nye (2011) simply puts it – preference-framing.

However, Lukes (2007) rejects any congruence between soft power and the third face of power. Soft power is a positivist concept that merely prescribes how an agent can exercise power without resorting to coercion, threat, sanction or payment; the third face, on the other hand, is a normative concept and admits a Gramscian struggle for hegemony within the civil society. Lukes distinguishes power based on degrees of freedom or voluntarism, which ‘both the agent-centered strategic view of Nye or the subject-centered structural view of Foucault lack’, i.e., power can be differentiated on whether an agent influences a subject ‘by wielding power over them or by contributing to their empowerment’ (Lukes 2007: 91). So, Lukes considers that if a person, out of his own will, adheres to Wahabism, which restricts individual freedom, then his decision must be based on false consciousness, rather than actual convergence of interests. But for Nye, both Wahabism and democracy wield soft power, with no reference to false consciousness, if they are accepted by the subjects of power.

Fourth Face of Power: Peter Digeser (1992: 990) used the term ‘fourth face of power’ to refer to Michel Foucault’s insights on power (also called productive power by Barnett and Duvall, 2005), which have the following features:

- Power is not wielded by individuals, classes, institutions or nations; in fact, power is not wielded at all. In other words, power is not wielded by an agent over a subject; but power actually produces both the agent and the subject.
- Power is omnipresent, not in the sense that it controls every social relation, but that every social relation is a product of power.

- Power is not negative, exclusionary, repressive, prohibitive or secretive, but power is productive. It produces reality. Power and knowledge produce, preserve and sustain each other (Foucault 1977; Gaventa 2003).

Gallarotti (2010a: 28) suggests that soft power is closer to Foucaultian productive power, than either Lukes' third face or Gramscian hegemony. Edward Locke (2010: 41) enumerates two similarities between soft power and productive power. First, in both conceptions, power is effective because its effects are elusive and not because they are ethical. Nye (2007) believes that soft power should be applied, not due to ethical superiority to hard power, but its effectiveness; similarly, Foucault considers the effectiveness of power as directly 'proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms' (Foucault 1978). Second, neither form of power provides the subject, simply with 'incentives and disincentives', allowing him to make a choice freely; but both actually determine the very choice of the subject. Soft power shapes the preferences of the subject, while productive power produces the subject.

However, although Nye (2010: 215) appreciates the comparison of soft power with Foucaultian vision, he clarifies that his concept is based on dictionary usage and accessible to policy-makers, and therefore, may not be theoretically so astute. Nye (2011: 242) reasons that Foucaultian philosophical astuteness is purchased at the cost of conceptual clarity. Soft power is an objective, quantifiable concept, measured through opinion polls, statistical data (number of foreign students, tourists, movie-screenings, etc.), visual images (fashion, billboards, etc.) and policy implications (support in international institutions, partnership agreements, etc.). But productive power is all-pervasive, it is beyond subjectivity and objectivity, and cannot be isolated for measurement. Moreover, soft power can be wielded by the agent and resisted by the subject. It is strategic, i.e., soft power can be planned, implemented, directed, detected, resisted and countered. But the fourth face of power is structural, i.e., it is embedded in the existence of social relations. There is no agent, strategy or resistance, and all are subjects created by power itself.

Critical Aspects of Soft Power Theory

By comparative analysis, we have clarified the epistemological, ontological and normative dimensions of soft power theory. This needs to be followed by more specific arguments aimed at the theory by its critics and Nye's responses to them.

Ontological Critique: David Baldwin (2002) argues that power resources do not always culminate into power behaviour. He calls the phenomenon as 'paradox of power'. So, Nye is mistaken to conclude that intangible resources lead to co-optive behaviour. Nye (2011: 243) admits that he should have clarified the point that there is an imperfect relationship between intangibility of resources and soft power behaviour. On the other hand, Niall Ferguson (2003) describes soft power as 'non-traditional forces such as cultural and commercial goods' and then dismisses them on the ground that 'it's, well, soft'. Nye (2010: 218) attributes this view to the confusion between resources and behaviour. "Whether the possession of power resources actually produces favourable outcomes depends upon the context of a relationship between agent and subject of power (Nye 2010: 218)."

Mattern (2007: 100) posits that soft power is ironically rooted in hard power and that there is an ontological contradiction in Nye's comprehension of attraction. First, out of the three types of attraction – 'natural, socially constructed through persuasive argument or constructed through verbal fighting and representational force', the last one is based on socio-linguistic coercion. The representational force is a form of narrative that warns the audience of unimaginable damage if it does not submit to the narrator's line, with no viable alternative course; e.g., the American propaganda after the 9/11 attacks (Mattern 2007: 110). Since it is a form of coercion, attraction may rest upon coercion and then the distinction between soft and hard power evaporates (Mattern 2007: 116). Second, according to Nye, soft power is based on natural attraction of universalistic American values like democracy; at the same time, he advocates public diplomacy to cultivate soft power in other countries. Mattern (2007: 103) claims that it is a contradiction because it is ontologically impossible for attraction to be simultaneously 'natural' and 'socially constructible through public diplomacy'.

Nye (2007: 168) responds that to consider representational force as coercion is ‘overly broad use of the term’, even if it be true, all attraction is not based upon it and not everybody can be swayed by it; e.g., there is resistance to the War on Terror in Europe and even in America. As far as ontological contradiction is concerned, Nye (2007: 163) explains that in the short-term, democracy may appear naturally attractive, but it was not before the late 18th century nor it is among the Islamic radicals, who want to construct an alternative ideology that can be seen as natural part of Islam. Such construction happens partly through persuasive argument and partly representational force.

Zahran and Ramos (2010: 25) identify ambiguity in the ‘complex relation between behaviours, resources and strategies’ in soft power theory. Edward Lock (2010: 34) attributes this ambiguity to ‘conflation of relational and structural forms of power’. Nye’s presentation of soft power is simplistic and practical, based on dictionary definitions of such terms as power, tangibility, etc., quantifying soft power through opinion polls and statistical data, and providing straight-forward policy-recommendations to the agent-state (United States). In order to achieve further simplicity and practicality, Nye makes clear distinction between hard and soft power, but in the process, fails to make distinctions between behaviours, resources and strategies. The problem lies with the insistence of Nye to maintain an agent-centred definition of soft power, and in the end, he makes the same mistake he ascribes to the structural realists, i.e., ‘vehicle fallacy’ or considering power as a measurable (tangible) resource that can be possessed by an actor (Lock 2010: 36). Lock (2010: 37-38) suggests that Nye has erred by ignoring the role of the subject of power in his theory, because the effectiveness of soft power actually depends on the subject’s perception. Any relational analysis of power should focus on both the agent and the victim of power as well as on the communication between them. Nye (2010: 215) admits that there are limitations in his work due to his desire to address both theorists (who prefer a rigorous analysis of variables) and policy-makers (who like resource-based prescriptions). His agent-centred definition was due to the fact that the theory was contextualised within American foreign policy debates and he wanted to make clear recommendations to the government.

Christopher Layne (2010) makes very critical observations on Nye's soft power theory, labelling his essay as "The unbearable lightness of soft power". He says that although soft power has had lot of influence on American foreign policy debates, the theory has not been properly tested and then he enumerates his objections (Layne 2010: 53-). First, Nye's claim that soft power is attraction or seduction is grounded on the dubious analogy between the behaviour of individuals and states. Since foreign policy decision-making is mediated by the bureaucratic institutions based on national interest, there is little evidence to suggest that attraction of another nation can influence this process. Second, the causal mechanism through which soft power operates is fuzzy, i.e., it is very difficult to trace the relationship between soft power and policy outcomes. For instance, Nye's argument that after the WWII, American soft power fostered democracy and free markets in West Europe, and overthrew communism in East Europe is less convincing than to give the credit to the Marshall Plan for the former, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the weakness of the Soviet system for the latter. Third, there is a congruence of soft power with liberal institutionalism, democratic peace theory and social constructivism. Nye's is simply a borrowed idea. Fourth, Nye's definitions of soft power have been 'maddeningly' inconsistent; to extent that soft power has come to include everything, including military power.

Nye (2010: 218-220) counters these arguments. He states that soft power can influence the policy directly or through the two-step process – soft power influences the public opinion of the victim state and then public opinion influences the government. In the first case, foreign ideas can directly influence the political leadership, e.g., Mikhail Gorbachev embraced American-inspired ideas like glasnost and perestroika. In the second case, the leaders listen to the public to ensure the stability of their government, e.g., many Western leaders could not support American invasion of Iraq due to adverse public opinion. In addition to specific goals, soft power tends to have impact on the milieu goals to transform the culture and ideology of other countries to have a favourable international environment. Nye rejects the claim that soft power is a borrowed idea from liberal IR theories. He argues that the idea of soft power is close to classical realism as both E.H. Carr and Hans J. Morgenthau included such a concept in their analysis of national power. Finally, on the criticism that 'soft power now seems to mean everything', Nye explains that

Layne has confused resources with behaviour. What Nye wants to assert is that ‘many different types of resources (including military) can contribute to soft power, not that the term soft power can mean any type of behaviour.

Normative critique: Lukes (2007: 95) argues that although Nye does well to distinguish between the mechanism used to change one’s preferences and that used to shape one’s preferences; he fails to distinguish between different mechanisms for shaping the preferences. There must be differentiation between the causal processes that limit or undermine one’s rational judgement and independent decision-making, and those that ‘require, facilitate and expand’ these faculties. Nye (2010: 217) responds to Lukes, in the following words:

“As Lukes argues, there are rational and non-rational modes by which the third face of power operates, and empowering and disempowering ways by which agents influence subjects’ formulation of their preferences and self-interest. Within the rubric of soft power, one can still distinguish indoctrination from free choice.”

On the other hand, Janice Bially Mattern (2007: 117) mentions a conventional understanding of soft power that it is an alternative to the ‘raw power politics’ and has been embraced by ‘ethically-minded scholars and policy-makers’, but Nye (2011: 254) argues that international relations cannot be solely based on soft power. Among the three dimensions of ethical judgement, viz., intentions, means and consequences, soft power can be used with bad intentions and produce evil consequences. But as soft power depends on the judgement of the victim, it provides him a degree of freedom to choose; thereby, making the means of power relatively benign. For instance,

“If I want to steal your money, I can threaten you with a gun, I can lure you into a fraudulent get-rich-quick scheme, or I can persuade you with a false claim that I am a guru who will save the world. I can then abscond with your money (Nye 2008: 43).”

Although in the first two instances, the means involved are threat and inducement respectively and in the third one, soft power, the intentions and consequences remain the same, theft. Still, the mind can change, but the dead cannot be revived.

Zahran and Ramos (2010: 24, 27), from a neo-Gramscian perspective, make two contentions. First, the soft power theory is meant to protect the hegemonic project,

which has suffered due to the adventurism of the neo-con party within the globalist historic bloc. Indeed, Joseph Nye is the current North American chairman of the Trilateral Commission, the organisation founded in 1973 to represent the new global capitalist class in North America, Western Europe and Japan. Second, Nye lacks cultural or ideological neutrality because he believes that American culture and political ideals are universal. So, soft power theory is an Americanised understanding of non-coercive power.

To the first contention, Nye (2010: 217) comments: "... I have regarded neo-Gramscian analysis and the idea of a globalist historic bloc emerging in 1970s and dominating discourse as interesting but too procrustean." To the second contention, which Richard Ned Lebow (2007: 120) also makes, Nye (2007: 163-164) protests because the soft power theory was meant to warn the policy-makers that they cannot take the universality of American values for granted and American popularity can be eroded by policies insensitive to others' perceptions. He also admits that American opponents like Islamic fanatics also have soft power that can harm American interests.

Evaluation of Soft Power with Chinese Characteristics

In the last section, we did a broad survey of the critical aspects of Nye's soft power theory, and in this section, we shall examine China's soft power discourse in the light of the critical development of the theory. Since China lacks the soft power resources enumerated by Nye (discussed in the last chapter), it becomes imperative to redefine soft power to explain China's ability to influence so many countries in the world. China's soft power strategies make two important divergences from Nye's formulation, viz., the symbiosis of hard power and soft power, almost making the dichotomy irrelevant (discussed in the second chapter), and introduction of the domestic or nation-building dimension of soft power. Besides, the unique circumstances of China rise lead to two important debates – what role a rising China will play in the international system, especially in context of its neighbourhood, and whether China's development model is sustainable at home and exportable abroad. Moreover, there are also serious limitations on China's soft power, e.g., its illiberal political system that curtails the development of popular culture and that makes it unattractive to developed countries with substantial civic liberties. We need to

deliberate on all these features to develop a comprehensive understanding about China's soft power.

Domestic Dimension

Meng Honghua asserts that Nye's soft power theory needs to be enriched with Chinese practice (Glaser and Murphy 2009: 20). Nye conceptualised soft power as an instrument of foreign policy, but the Chinese conditions have turned soft power into a holistic construct, involving both international and domestic dimensions. The Communist Party leadership relates soft power to two of its national goals, viz., building a harmonious world (international relations) and a harmonious society (domestic policy). President Hu Jintao has referred to this policy as 'two grand contexts' (*liang ge daju*).

It is necessary to understand the core reason why CCP encourages soft power strategies, both abroad and at home. China has consistently maintained rapid pace of economic development for more than three decades and emerged as the manufacturing hub of the world. Being a huge continental power with the biggest working population as well as the largest armed forces in the world, its CNP has risen substantially. Moreover, strong nationalistic sentiment has prevailed in the country after the Maoist revolution in 1949, and it has borne grievances against the Western powers and Japan for their role in subjugation of China or 'cutting the melon'. So, a rising China is essentially perceived a revisionist power, seeking to redress its grievances through military and economic intimidation. China has learned well from history that whenever there is a rising power wanting to establish a new world order, it comes into class with the existing great powers. So, soft power strategy is critical to assure other countries that China is not a revisionist power and wants to be a responsible great power (stakeholder) in the international system. It may be a transitional policy to give cushion to China at a decisive moment. The 16th CCP National Congress has referred to the first 20 years of the 21st century as 'an important period of strategic opportunity' when China can establish a 'well-off (*xiaokang*) society', after which it may resort to a more assertive foreign policy (Li 2009a: 39).

The distinct characteristic of China has been application of the soft power policy in the other dimension of domestic politics. China is the one of the last remaining states ruled by a communist party. Marxism-Leninism as a state ideology got discredited in 1989-91 with the fall of the Berlin Wall, followed by overthrow of long-established communist regimes in East Europe and finally, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the 'homeland of communism'. Only five communist parties still rule in China, Cuba, Laos, North Korea and Vietnam, out of which only China is a major power. Indeed, the CCP had to change the *raison d'être* of the one-party state from revolution to development. However, the development agenda, which initially sought to ignore the rise of contradictions (Deng Xiaoping had said, "Let some people get rich first"), has led to lot of social unrest, with the number of protests rising every year. Serious problems like income inequality, regional disparity, corruption, environmental degradation, depletion of agricultural land, strenuous working conditions in private enterprises, etc. have sparked off a major debate on the sustainability of the development process. Therefore, the fourth generation leadership has sought to introduce soft power into the economic hard power through the scientific development concept.

Vivienne Shue (2004: 31-34) argues that in the Chinese civilisation, the legitimacy of the political authority (the logic of legitimation) relied on three components, viz., truth, benevolence and glory; all three are aspects of soft power. In the imperial era, they were represented by the Confucian moral cosmology (with the emperor as the son of Heaven, assisted by learned bureaucrats and taking pleasure in rituals, learning and high culture), grain management system, and the tributary system respectively. After the 1949 revolution, the logic of legitimation was transferred to Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought, iron rice bowl and people's communes, and revolutionary nationalism that ended the century of humiliation. But since 1978, there has been lot of flux in the Chinese society and the logic of legitimation has weakened, forcing the CCP to use hard power to suppress popular movements like Tiananmen Square movement (1989) and the Falun Gong movement (1999). The logic of legitimation now coincides with 'modern scientific rationalism and pragmatic empiricism' (truth), peace and development (benevolence) and China rise (glory).

Many Chinese scholars have supported the domestic aspect of the soft power strategy. Shi Yinhong argues that China has to become an inspiration to its own people in order to inspire the world, but economic growth is not enough and China needs to provide basic rights to the people. Pang Zhongying and Hu Angang have appreciated the role of the scientific development concept and harmonious society undertaking in enhancing China's soft power. Other scholars have advocated the necessity of political reforms, with Chen Yugang (Fudan University) urging good governance and crackdown on corruption, Qian Chengdu (Beijing University) institution-building and rule of law and Fang Changping role of NGOs in cultural diffusion and exchange. Yu Xintian has stated that China should learn from the international media and NGOs to improve the domestic standard. Thus, a consensus has developed among intellectuals and party leadership in China on the crucial role of soft power in domestic reform. (Glaser and Murphy 2009: 20-21).

Debates on Two Important Aspects of China's Rise – Peaceful Rise and Beijing Consensus

Peaceful Rise: In the last chapter, we discussed the charm strategies of peace (*heping*) and harmony (*he*), which China has evolved in the course of its development marathon, top reassure other countries that China would not disrupt the international system, but only seek its rightful place within the existing international norms and institutions. Glaser and Medeiros (2007: 302-306) elaborately discuss about the different debates on the original theory of China's rise by the Chinese strategist, Zheng Bijian – peaceful rise.

First, some scholars like Shi Yinhong and Zhang Wenmu state that the term peaceful may strengthen the pro-independence forces in Taiwan and the right wing in Japan because if China abandons the threat of force, the former might assert their claims without risk of retaliation. However, Zheng Bijian contends this proposition by stating that disputes on Taiwan and Diaoyu Islands (called Senkaku Islands in Japan) are internal affairs of China, which can legitimately use military power to settle them. In fact, in 2005, China passed the Anti-Secession Law that asserts China's right to use non-peaceful means to check any declaration of independence by Taiwan.

Second, structural realists like Pan Wei (Beijing University), Chu Shulong (Qinghua University) and Yan Xuetong argue that peaceful rise is an impossibility because international politics is zero-sum game and relative gains by a rising power would eventually lead dominant powers to oppose it. But exactly that fear has made peaceful rise a necessity. China has repeatedly proposed a positive-sum or win-win strategy in a multipolar and interdependent international environment.

Third, the term rise (*jueqi*), as stated earlier, has been subject to much criticism because it denotes disruption of the existing order. Those familiar with *hanzi* (Chinese characters) would easily recognise the ideogram 崛 and carry an opposite impression. China's nationalistic public opinion has often turned xenophobic and such expression could fuel domestic anticipation for a more aggressive foreign policy, undermining much of the soft power recently generated. Actually, the term peaceful is meant for the consumption of foreigners, while rise is meant to satisfy the Chinese hardliners, but the entire policy may prove counter-productive. So, the CCP excludes the expression in public statements.

Fourth, scholars belonging to the 'keeping a low profile' school believe that it is premature to claim China's peaceful rise because China is still a developing country and there are many contradictions in its development agenda. Since the CCP has envisaged that China would become a moderately developed country by 2050, it is too early to talk about peaceful rise. Mere slogans cannot create favourable conditions on the ground and China should ensure sustainable economic development and fair distribution of economic benefits. That is the true purport of *taoguang yanghui, yousuo zuowei*. But this line of argument totally ignores the fear and suspicion generated by China's introversion in the early 1990s, as already explained.

Fifth, some PLA strategists are concerned that too much emphasis on peaceful rise and soft power would undermine the project of China's military modernisation. Indeed, Donald Rumsfeld retorted, "Since no nation threatens China, one must wonder: Why this growing investment? Why these continuing large and expanding arms purchases? (Ramo 2007: 10)." But American neo-cons view hard power and soft power as antithetical and so push for military adventurism, which has caused

significant loss to American interests abroad. It would be wise if China avoids such pitfalls and notices the harmony between hard power and soft power, which is the very basis of soft power with Chinese characteristics.

Beijing Consensus: Although the Beijing Consensus has assumed much significance in Chinese and international foreign policy debate, the concept has not been officially accepted by the PRC. There are serious concerns not only that an alternative development model would be perceived as an ideological threat by the United States but also that China's development model has too many contradictions and may not be sustainable in the long run. Ramo (2004) has been deliberately provocative by positioning his thesis as a challenge to Washington Consensus, but there are serious drawbacks in his ideas.

According to Scott Kennedy (2010: 469-473), there are certain myths in Ramo's Beijing Consensus. First, Ramo believes that China's development is based on innovation, but actually China lingers behind the developed countries, even with its increasing numbers of engineers, scientists and entrepreneurs, and patents, copyrights and trademarks. China's enterprises are just manufacturing units of products designed in the West and Japan and its promotion of 'indigenous innovation' (*zizhu chuangxin*) has failed to improve standards. However, to be fair, by innovation, Ramo did not specifically mean science and technology (although he mentions copper wires and optical fibres). What Ramo meant was that China does not seek to restrict itself to a uniform formula of development, typical of the recommendations made by Bretton Woods institutions, or to any ideological compartment like Stalinism or Maoism, but seeks to learn from its own experience and adapt its path according to its own genius. But Kennedy further argues that there is no homogeneous national development strategy, instead the CCP leadership tries to balance social forces, unleashed after 1978, in a reactive manner.

Second, contrary to the claim made by Ramo, China's development is neither sustainable nor equitable, and the environmental and sociological concerns have been sacrificed at the altar of GDP growth rate. But Ramo (2004: 23) mentions that China has given up its indifference to the method of development, signified by the quotation that 'it does not matter whether a cat is white or black, as long as it catches mice', and

now, it wants 'a green cat, a transparent cat' meaning development which is sustainable and equitable (or free of corruption). In the words of Hu Angang, China needs to proceed from black GDP to green GDP. The adoption of the scientific development concept by the 17th CCP National Congress provides the necessary evidence of that change. Kennedy states that these measures have no impact on the ground and a rather visions for the uncertain future.

Third, Ramo considers China's development model to be unique, but it is an uncritical generalisation. Although China has not adhered to all aspects of Washington Consensus, many of the latter's prescriptions like 'fiscal discipline, maintaining a competitive exchange rate (in fact, too competitive), and liberalising trade and foreign direct investment' are cornerstones of the growth model. Meanwhile, substantial progress has been made in diverting funds from non-merit subsidies towards public goods, expanding the tax base, easing barriers to market entry and strengthening property rights (the property law was adopted in 2007). A substantial portion of loss-making state enterprises have also been privatised since the late 1990s (Kennedy 2010: 270).

In fact, Huang Yasheng (2011), after careful analysis of GDP and personal income statistics across different regions and sectors, concludes that China has a heterogeneous development structure and the sectors and regions that enjoy high growth rate are those which have successfully implemented the neo-liberal policies. He goes on to show that the highest growth of personal income was during the 1980s, when agricultural plots were privatised and some form of political reforms was initiated. During the 1990s, the economy bifurcated into two segments – the special economic zones (SEZs) witnessed unprecedented growth, but the state sector performed poorly. People's incomes reduced despite the high GDP growth. These problems have pushed the CCP to adopt policies like 'people first' in the 2000s.

Arif Dirlik (2006), although dismissive of the economic dimensions of Beijing Consensus, admires the concept as the rallying point for the anti-imperialistic forces who oppose neoliberal globalisation process. He attributes the ability of China to maintain its uniqueness despite reform and opening up to its revolutionary and socialist legacy.

Limitations

In spite of all the euphoria surrounding China's soft power rise, there are certain serious problems and China may not be able to build its soft power indefinitely (Kurlantzick 2007: 230). Shogo Suzuki (2009; 2010: 204-210) raises some very relevant points with regards to China's soft power.

- According to Robert Cox, 'theory is always for someone and for some purpose'. Since the CCP regime wants to project its achievements, especially the enhancement of international standing, to a highly nationalistic domestic audience, it has become obsessed with soft power that can improve its influence without confrontation with the United States.
- The Chinese scholars need to maintain close relationship with the political leadership and respond to the latter's political requirements. So, they have carried China's soft power discourse on a hyperbole.
- The American scholars reflect the fears and aspirations of the American political spectrum, much of which perceives China as a potential threat. Since China cannot match the US militarily, they have leaped into the soft power discourse.
- There is exaggeration about China's soft power. Although China has adopted multilateralism and good neighbourliness, its foreign policy suffers from legitimacy deficit due to its close relationship with corrupt and brutal dictators (Bill and Huang 2006: 28). It is also quite strange that scholars believe that a hierarchical, paternalistic ideology like Confucianism would appeal to China's neighbours, or that an authoritarian regime which brutalises its minorities (e.g., Tibetans) can impress the cosmopolitan Europe or even democratic Third World countries.
- To portray China's autocratic development model as an alternative to democracy and human rights is a reminiscent of the Cold War paranoia that the Soviet ideology would 'bury' the free world.⁴¹ There is considerable anti-China sentiment in African countries because of their 'ruthless quest for natural resources and exploitation of local workers'.
- There are numerous complexities within China's soft power discourse. Many Chinese scholars are concerned about the negative effects of the development agenda like pollution, corruption and exploitation.

⁴¹ In 1956, Nikita Khrushchev had said, "We will bury you," to the Western diplomats in Moscow.

Moreover, China suffers from 'cultural deficit' in comparison with the Western countries, and even Japan and South Korea. While products with 'Made in China' labels appear to be everywhere, China accounts for less than 6 percent of the world cultural-industry market, compared to the US share of 42.6 percent, Europe's 33.9 percent, and Japan's 10 percent (Huang and Ding 2006: 31). The problem is lack of freedom of expression within China and lack of freedom of exchange of ideas between China and rest of the world (Huang Ding 2006: 31). The persecution of Nobel laureates like Gao Xingjian (exiled in France) and Liu Xiaobo (imprisoned) produces very negative impression about China. Besides, China's public diplomacy lacks credibility, especially in the Western countries due to its illiberal political structure and its opaqueness (Hooghe 2010).

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Summary

Discourse means a formal, systematic organisation of thought on a subject, often rooted in concrete contexts, involving both generalisations and specificities, and enriched through academic debates between diverse ideas and experiences on the subject. The dynamism of a context shapes new ideas and experiences, catalysing more debates that enrich the discourse with more sophisticated generalisations and more interpretive specificities. The objective of this research work is to analyse the contribution of the borrowed concept of soft power to the foreign policy discourse of China.

It is interesting to note that soft power originated within the foreign policy discourse of the United States. From a neo-Gramscian perspective, soft power is a hegemonic project, advocated by an organic intellectual, Joseph Nye, within two contexts. In the first, he refuted the failure of the declinists to read the transformation of the global capitalist system in the 1970s, and in the second, he counters the neoconservative party within the globalist historic bloc, who undermined American hegemony by unilateralism and use of hard military power. The American soft power, in the form of universalised consumer culture, liberal norms and institutions, is the most important feature of the hegemonic project, domination by consent.

On the other hand, the structural realists consider soft power a neo-liberal construct based on institutionalism, democratic peace theory and social constructivism. Due to his liberal inclinations, Nye exaggerates the influence of ideas, norms and institutions in shaping behaviour of states. In reality, soft power is rooted in hard power of a state, i.e., other states adopt the culture, ideology and institutions, only of a strong hard power nation. For example, nations emulate the United States, Europe, Japan and

China due to their hard power achievements, and ignore weak nations like Bhutan or Costa Rica, although they perform well on the Happiness Index.

Nye claims that soft power is closer to classical realist discourse, as both E.H. Carr and Hans J. Morgenthau had accepted an ideational variable in their definition of national power. In the changed international environment, due to the processes of globalisation, privatisation and informatisation, soft power has acquired lot of significance, as use of force or sanctions could have destabilising effect. Soft power cannot, of course, be monopolised by the US as claimed by the neo-Gramscians, but can be wielded by any state provided it has developed its intangible resources like culture, ideology and institutions. Nye is highly critical of structural realists because they use the Occam's razor (to use a minimum number of variables to explain a natural or social phenomenon) to strip International Relations theory of many important attributes to concentrate too much on tangible power resources. Soft power tries to reintroduce a very critical variable in the study of national power.

No other country has embraced the soft power theory, more eagerly than China, which seems the most unlikely of nations to possess the liberal values enumerated by Joseph Nye. To be fair to Nye, he admits that even the forces opposed to the US like the Islamic fanatics possess soft power. China, with its ancient civilizational legacy, immense human resources and newly acquired material wealth, has applied soft power strategies to secure a place in the international order as 'a responsible stakeholder'. But there are numerous contradictions in China's 'charm offensive'.

The official idea behind China's soft power strategy is to counter the China threat theory, ensure a balance between its hard power and soft power and increase its CNP. China avoids to be seen as a competitor to the West, even in the field of soft power. However, the debate on Beijing Consensus has emerged as the most important aspect of China's soft power discourse. Although China has not officially embraced the concept, its policies in the aid and investment policies in the developing countries, especially in Africa reflect its alternative development model based on state capitalism, loans to be repaid in natural resources, and no interference in the domestic politics of the nation. Arif Dirlik believes that the Beijing Consensus has emerged as rallying point for the opposition to neo-liberal globalisation process. This is precisely

the situation the Chinese leadership wants to avoid. Indeed, China's economic deals with dictators implicated in human rights abuses by the international community undercuts China's soft power.

Hypothesis-testing

In the last three chapters, we analysed in details China's soft power resources and strategies using a theoretical, diplomatic and critical perspectives respectively. A few things have to be noted. China is an ancient civilisation (more than 4000 years old) which maintained an international system in East Asia called tributary system, until the 18th century, when European imperialism took over most of its neighbourhood and finally, China itself was victimised from 1840 to 1945. This civilisational heritage provides it with lot of soft power resources in the form of religious and historical sites that attract tourists, a large expatriate population in the neighbourhood, cultural-linguistic similarities with most of its neighbours, and sophisticated philosophical teachings that still inspire many all over the world. Besides, it has a highly resourceful and hard-working population, which has ensured unprecedented speed of economic development in over three decades, lifting millions out of poverty. This economic 'miracle' has been admired all over the world, especially in developing countries.

We can observe that China's soft power diplomacy has been quite closely connected to its economic performance. In 1997, it was China's financial prudence that earned it a good reputation. The entire charm strategy has been, as aid and investment policy, and the development model connected to its economic growth, and as cultural diplomacy financed by its economic resources. Indeed, the project to set-up Confucius Institutes and other cultural initiatives has been financed by the government. Therefore, we can conclude, as Kurlantzick, that in China's context, soft power has changed – China has vast indigenous soft power resources, but it needed the strength of its economic growth to project these resources in the world. But we must also qualify that military activism (the other, core aspect of hard power) has had inverse relation with soft power. Therefore, the relevance of China's soft power is based on the awe of its unprecedented economic growth, directly as its development model and indirectly as the sponsor of its cultural diplomacy, but the other aspect of hard power, military power has negative implications on China's soft power.

Now, the question arises as to why China has needed to be so dependent on state-sponsored soft power strategy, although it is endowed with such rich cultural heritage and human resources. The answer is directly linked to China's domestic political structure. There is lack of freedom of expression within the country, which fatally constrains the emergence of innovative cultural products and lack of exchange of ideas with the rest of the world, which prevents China's general public to tune with the world. Moreover, the suppression of political rights, persecution of ethnic minorities, especially Tibetans and Uyghurs, display of ultra-nationalistic sentiments and support to dictators abroad prevents China from really becoming another 'soft power superpower'. Hence, we can conclude that although China has carried a successful charm strategy, its sustainability is severely constrained by its illiberal domestic political structure.

Future Trends

Although at present, China seems restricted by its domestic political structures and over-dependence on economic growth, it is not necessary that such condition will prevail in the long run. The fourth generation leadership can be credited with the introduction of a new development paradigm to ensure sustainable and equitable economic development. This year the fifth generation leadership under Xi Jinping would gradually take over the party-state. In order to establish a well-off society by 2020, it may be necessary to introduce some political rights, to allow more credibility and accountability in the system. As the population of the middle class increases, there may be serious pressure on the party-state to allow more dissenting voices. However, there are no indications that the 18th CCP National Congress would make any major changes. May be China would have to wait for the sixth generation to introduce any substantial political reforms.

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