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Legitimacy and International Influence

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China's Approach to Soft Power

THERE IS MUCH attention in the West (including Japan) on China's military build-up, its maritime activities in the South and East China Seas, and its extensive economic assistance programmes. But there has not yet been much attention given to China's exercise of soft power. The West recognises that in international politics soft power can often be important and useful: it is seen as an inexpensive and low-risk route to influencing others.¹ For Joseph Nye, soft power is when 'one country gets other countries to *want* what it wants'.² It is about attracting other states to your side by getting them to want the outcomes you want, because they admire your values, culture or foreign policy.

China's interest in soft power dates back to as early as 1993.³ However, it was not until 2007 that soft power was identified as an important feature of national policy, in a political report to the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CCP).⁴ Then, as China's economy continued to grow apace and the country began to play a greater role in the world economy – most notably by helping to mitigate the impact of the 2008 global financial crisis through the introduction of a 4 trillion RMB economic stimulus package (equivalent to 14 per cent of China's GDP in 2008) to stabilise domestic markets – it began to articulate its own theoretical basis for soft power, based on a combination of modern Marxist and ancient Confucian thought.

These 'Chinese values' are seen as being in competition with the 'American values' of democracy, human rights and freedom of speech, which are spread around the world through the exercise of US soft power. In developing its own soft power, China wants to undermine the appeal of these American values, which threaten the legitimacy of the CCP. While Beijing says that it is important to allow diverse concepts to operate harmoniously in the world, its theory of soft power entails strong opposition to US-led globalisation. China's aim is to strengthen its voice and influence in the world, and, above all, to encourage a sense of pride in the country – a sense of nationalism⁵ – within Chinese living in China and overseas, in order to strengthen the regime's control.

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1. Christopher Hill and Sarah Beadle, *The Art of Attraction: Soft Power and the UK's Role in the World* (London: British Academy, 2013), p. 13.
 2. Joseph Nye, 'Soft Power', *Foreign Policy* (No. 80, Autumn 1990), pp. 153–71.
 3. Wang Huning, 'Culture as National Soft Power: Soft Power', *Journal of Fudan University* (March 1993).
 4. Hu Jintao, 'Hold High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Strive for New Victories in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All', Report to the 17th Party Congress, 15 October 2007, <<http://www.china.org.cn/english/congress/229611.htm#7>>, accessed 1 March 2016.
 5. James Lilley points out that nationalism in China has been shaped by historical hardships, starting with the Opium Wars, followed by the Boxer Rebellion and then Japanese military aggression. As a result, according to Lilley, China has acquired a strong sense of victimhood and humiliation, and a 'deep hatred and distrust of foreigners'. James R Lilley with Jeffrey Lilley, *China Hands: Nine*

So far China's soft-power activities have not been particularly successful, not least because of inconsistencies between China's messages and its actions, and because of the nature of Beijing's involvement in soft-power activities. Soft power is mainly associated with the ways in which a government draws attention to the positive aspects of a society; but in China's case, the government's strategy and tactics are strongly associated with shaping Chinese society rather than publicising its achievements.

This paper investigates how China defines soft power, thinks about its significance and uses it as a foreign-policy tool. It also assesses the extent to which China has succeeded in exploiting soft power.

This paper is based predominantly on desk-based research using open-source literature. The evidence base was built on analysis of published academic writing (including on the generic nature of soft power), credible news reports, policy documents and speeches by political figures. It uses a wide range of written sources in English, Mandarin and Japanese. Unfortunately, there was neither the time, resources nor access to interview Chinese officials and political figures. However, the findings of the desk-based research were explored with a small number of Chinese foreign-policy experts based in London.

Power

The notion of power is much debated in international relations, but a standard idea is that power is the ability to steer the behaviour of others in a desired direction.⁶ Various scholars, chief among them Nye, have identified three key ways to wield power: sticks, carrots and persuasion.

Sticks: Threats and Punishments

Parties can seek to change the behaviour of a target entity by threatening punishments and actually inflicting damage. For example, in 2010 China applied a *de facto* rare-earth-metals embargo on Japan after a Chinese fishing boat captain was arrested and detained for trying to ram his boat into Japanese Coast Guard ships in waters off the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, administered by Japan.⁷ Eventually, Japan released the captain and let him return to China, but left the charges pending. As in this instance, punishments may not be directly related to the central matter in dispute.

Carrots: Promises and Rewards

In contrast, countries can seek to alter the behaviour of others by offering promises of good things in the future and even providing benefits to signal that yet more might be forthcoming. For

Decades of Adventure, Espionage, and Diplomacy in Asia [Japanese Edition] (Tokyo: Soshisha, 2006), pp. 2–3.

6. Hill and Beadle, *The Art of Attraction*, p. 6.

7. International Crisis Group, 'Dangerous Waters: China–Japan Relations on the Rocks', *Asia Report* No. 245, 8 April 2013, pp. 20–21.

example, China provides economic assistance to many developing countries without attaching conditions relating to democracy or budget transparency, which many recipient governments appear to appreciate. China hopes that recipient governments will align their future decisions with China's interests in order to assure continued access to such aid. A noted case of Chinese aid was the construction of the new headquarters for the African Union in Addis Ababa, which was completed in January 2012. China funded the entire cost (around \$200 million) of the project.

Persuasion

Persuasion occurs when one party moves the position of another in a desired direction by pointing out the likely or possible consequences of different behavioural options. Persuasion is more likely to be effective when the party seeking to move the behaviour of the other is trusted and recognised as informed and intelligent. For example, through the provision of evidence, non-governmental bodies concerned with the protection of the environment seek to change the behaviour of governments and people, making them aware of the need to reduce fossil-fuel use in order to slow the rate of environmental damage and climate change.

The Western Conception of Soft Power

Soft power, summarised by Christopher Hill and Sarah Beadle as 'the ability to influence the behaviour of others and obtain desired outcomes through attraction and co-option',⁸ is closely associated with the ability to persuade because it is linked to authority, respect and credibility.

The concept of soft power was first articulated by Joseph Nye.⁹ He claims that it has three dimensions. The first is culture, with a national culture generating fascination and admiration from other societies. The second is political values, with power being seen to derive from a country's persistent and coherent pursuit of its values, both at home and overseas. The third element of soft power is the skill and intelligence of the national diplomatic effort. Nye stresses that a government's influence could be increased if the target entity admires important aspects of its country.

In this sense, it can be seen that the US has various soft-power resources. In terms of culture, it has Hollywood, music stars, artists and identifiably 'American' sports like basketball and American football. In terms of political values it promotes democracy, human rights and freedom of speech including through its renowned universities (with many foreign students) and its world-class think tanks. In terms of its national diplomatic effort, the US is careful to emphasise its natural-disaster relief work and the number of refugees it accepts.

8. Hill and Beadle, *The Art of Attraction*, p. 3.

9. See Joseph Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1990); Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2004); Joseph Nye, *The Powers to Lead: Soft, Hard and Smart* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Joseph Nye, *The Future of Power* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2011); Joseph Nye, 'The Limits of Chinese Soft Power', *Project Syndicate*, 10 July 2015.

The availability of soft power does not prevent governments from using hard power in the form of military and economic resources, including economic aid. However, soft power appears to be a low-cost and low-risk policy, which explains why it is a topic of real attention for many governments.

When governments hold national cultural events (especially overseas) or offer language classes to foreigners, they are seeking to stimulate appreciation of their own culture and thus build soft power. Similarly, public-diplomacy activities attempt to stress the legitimacy and consistency of a country's foreign policy, and so create a positive image of the government concerned as a responsible and important actor in world affairs. According to Nye, the resources that contribute to the cultural dimension of soft power include many elements that may not be closely directed by the government but which stem from wider forces within society. These include literature, art, film, television, music, sport and scholarship. As such, a country's novelists, musicians, athletes, entertainers and even academics can contribute to a government's soft power when they attain a major and positive international reputation.

Politically, countries trying to build soft power are also likely to stress the alignment of their activities with multinational mechanisms including the UN, respect for international law and treaties, and measures to promote international peace and stability. Humanitarian actions – like showing a readiness to take in refugees – can also enhance a country's international reputation and thus influence. On the other hand, dictatorship and unilateralism in the international sphere tend to erode a country's capacity to build soft power.

China's Definition of Soft Power

China's interest in soft power started developing as early as 1993, when Wang Huning, a current member of the CCP Political Bureau and the concurrent Head of the Central Policy Research Office, introduced Nye's theory to China.¹⁰ This was at a time when China needed to counteract 'China Threat' theory, which had gained traction overseas after China introduced its 1992 Territorial Sea Law formally claiming much of the East and South China seas and many of their islands.¹¹ China was initially concerned about the infiltration of 'American values', but over the next two decades it began to develop a more comprehensive conception of Chinese values, based on a mixture of modern Marxist values – so-called 'socialist core values' – and traditional Confucian values.¹²

However, it was not until the 16th Party Congress in November 2002 that the issue of culture, so important in soft power, was addressed in a political report, when President Jiang Zemin

10. Wang Huning, 'Culture as National Soft Power'.

11. See Denny Roy, 'The "China Threat" Issue: Major Arguments', *Asian Survey* (Vol. 36, No. 8, August 1996), pp. 758–71.

12. See also: Chin-Hao Huang, 'China's Soft Power in East Asia: A Quest for Status and Influence?', NBR Special Report No. 42, National Bureau of Asian Research, January 2013, <https://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/451/docs/Huang_FINAL_China_Soft_Power_and_Status.pdf>, accessed 11 March 2016.

appealed for cultural development and reform. The government then began to attach increased importance to the concept, and China's soft-power policy was incorporated and adopted in broad, rather vague terms in the Political Report of the 17th National Congress of the CCP in 2007.¹³ The report outlined the importance of both the socialist value system and of the promotion of Chinese culture, including the need to encourage cultural creativity among the Chinese people. The report explicitly made reference to soft power, marking the first time this term had been used in an official document since the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

More detail about China's soft-power policy was provided by Liu Yunshan, head of the Publicity Department of the CCP Central Committee, in an article released shortly after the 17th National Congress of the CCP. He emphasised that China's soft-power policy should be based on two elements: the core values of socialism; and the values of traditional Chinese culture, especially Confucianism. While the values central to Confucianism are relatively uncontested – loving others, devotion to parents and older siblings, harmony in thought and conduct – there is still much debate on the precise meaning and content of the core values of socialism.

That soft power had become an established element of China's foreign policy was recognised in the Political Report of the 18th National Congress of the CCP in 2012. At this Congress, retiring president Hu Jintao gave some content to the idea:¹⁴

socialist core values include prosperity [fuqiang], democracy [minzhu], civilisation [wenming], harmony [hexie] as important for nation-building; freedom [ziyou], equality [pingdeng], justice [gongzheng], rule of law [fazhi] as important for the construction of an ideal society; and patriotism [aiguo], respect for work [jingye], faith [chengxin], friendship [youshan] as moral standards for nationals.¹⁵

Hu's successor, President Xi Jinping, has attached great importance to China's soft power, especially strengthening its 'discursive power' and 'communication capacity'. This was made clear by his visit to the *People's Daily*, *Xinhua News Agency* and China Central Television (CCTV) head offices in Beijing in February 2016, where Xi called upon CCTV America to 'objectively, truly and comprehensively introduce China's social and economic development to the world audience.'¹⁶ Since 2014 the views of some Chinese researchers on soft power have been published on the Internet, revealing a readiness to question some of the claimed foundations

13. Hu Jintao, 'Hold High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Strive for New Victories in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All'.

14. *Xinhua*, 'Full text of Hu Jintao's report at 18th Party Congress', 17 November 2012.

15. It should be noted that the Chinese conceptions of 'freedom' and 'democracy' are different to the West's. One Chinese scholar, speaking off the record, said that in terms of the Chinese concept of 'freedom', China's objective was to establish a socialist system which would bring about real, sufficient freedom to all. This is in opposition to the abstract sense of 'freedom' in Western liberal thought. As for 'democracy', the scholar said that in China it refers to 'the human fundamental' (民本主义): Chinese people should enjoy wider participation in the local-level decision-making process – without threatening the legitimacy of the CCP at the central level – in exchange for the CCP providing them with a better livelihood and prosperity.

16. *China Central Television (CCTV) America*, 'Chinese President Xi Jinping Visits with CCTV America via Video Call', 19 February 2016.

of Western soft power. Zhan Dexiong, of the Xinhua International Issues Research Centre, criticises the Western democratic system of 'one person, one vote', citing the political turmoil after the general election in Thailand in early 2014, concluding that Western-style democracy did not make everyone happy. Zhan Dexiong also argues that the West, out of prejudice, has regarded India's multi-party democracy as better than 'dictatorial' China, while ignoring the fact that those political parties which claim to represent the 'have-nots' have neither produced prosperity nor caught up with China economically.¹⁷

Insofar as international competition for soft power can be seen in part as a competition among ideas, in trying to strengthen the foundations of its own position China needs to weaken the foundations of Western soft power. Thus it emphasises global harmony rather than the allegedly universal values such as democracy, human rights or freedom of speech. For Zhan Dexiong, China's Marxism and Confucianism stand in opposition to American values. Wu Yifeng, professor at China People's University, argues that the major Western powers lost confidence in capitalism after the global financial crisis and the systemic crisis of capitalism.¹⁸ He argued for more attention and research to be focused on Marxism. A piece by Liu Jia posted on the Chinese Social Sciences Net in June 2014 directly addresses soft power rather than just socialist values;¹⁹ it was likely endorsed by Chinese authorities. According to Liu Jia, China recognises that its communist values have limited appeal in the contemporary world. As such, Liu Jia argues that China's main source of soft power is its culture, although its political values and foreign policy are also seen as important; hence why China usually refers to its soft power as 'cultural soft power.'

Chinese traditional culture is based on Confucianism. It has spread to Japan, the Korean Peninsula and parts of Southeast Asia to create a Confucianism culture sphere; a Chinese message stressing Confucianism is thus likely to be welcomed in many countries on China's periphery.

The other element of China's soft power is Chinese Marxism. China projects the image that its version of Marxism has generated sustained economic growth and has raised living standards, becoming the second-largest economy in the world, playing an important role in mitigating the impact of the 2008 financial crisis, delivering a successful Olympic Games in 2008 and putting on the Shanghai Exposition in 2010. Moreover, China projects the image that its extensive foreign-aid programmes are not just a 'carrot' element of hard power, but are also a demonstration

17. Zhan Dexiong, '西方的民主主义制度是放之四海而皆准的' ['Is Western Democracy Applicable Everywhere?'], qstheory.net, 8 May 2014, <www.qstheory.cn/hqwg/2014/201409/t20140508_347276.htm>, accessed 14 March 2016.

18. Wu Yifeng, '西方学者“重新发现”了马克思的哪些理论?' ['Which of Marx's Theories Have Western Scholars "Rediscovered"?'], qstheory.net, 8 May 2014, <www.qstheory.cn/hqwg/2014/201409/201405/t20140508_347273.htm>, accessed 14 March 2016.

19. Liu Jia, '中国视角下软实力理论的重构-基于对软实力理论西方话语权的反思', ['Reconstruction of Soft Power Theory from a Chinese Perspective: An Analysis Based on Reconsideration of the Discursive Power of Western Soft Power Theory'], China Social Science Net, 13 June 2014, <http://www.cssn.cn/zxz/wztj_zxz/201406/t20140612_1208606.shtml>, accessed 14 March 2016.

that, thanks to its version of Marxism, the Chinese economy has become so successful that it can afford large-scale generosity.²⁰

Chinese state media reported that the link between Marxism and Confucianism, which some might consider rather tenuous, was the ‘hottest topic’ in the study of humanities in 2014. In February of that year, President Xi reportedly told the Politburo that culture should act as a ‘wellspring’ to nourish the party’s values.²¹

According to Liu Jia, Chinese Marxism is not concerned just with the economy, but also with broader cultural achievements. A former Chinese diplomat, Wu Jianmin, asserts that the strength of Chinese culture is not only its constancy – not least with regard to morality and the importance of education – but also its dynamism and capacity to learn and improve, especially under the Communist Party.²² Liu Jia argues that Nye’s promotion of US political values is an effort to justify US policy and actions, including the 2003 Iraq War. In contrast, he says, the goal of China’s soft power is to realise a politically and culturally diverse but ‘harmonious world’, in which countries with different political systems live together in peace and mutual understanding, without confrontation.

Thus a pattern can be discerned: while Chinese traditional culture is consistently recognised as a key component of Chinese soft power, there is disagreement among both commentators and even leading political figures over the relative meaning, weight and potential of core socialist values.

China’s View of the Significance of Soft Power

International Standing

Chinese soft power is concerned with influencing the hearts and minds of foreign peoples and also with its image among their leaders, who are the main focus for soft power. At the same time, China’s foreign policy has become more ambitious, shifting from being reactive – ‘keeping a low profile while accumulating power’ (韬光养晦) – to proactive – ‘hardworking and promising’ (奋发有为). Beijing wants to minimise the impression that China constitutes a threat to others and thus seeks to convey a peaceful image. How this is to be achieved remains a matter of some debate and is analysed later in this paper. Yet despite the importance of the outward-looking

20. China has recently pledged \$50 billion to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, \$41 billion to the New Development Bank, \$40 billion to the Silk Road Economic Belt and \$25 billion to the Maritime Silk Road. Beijing has also pledged to invest \$1.25 trillion worldwide. This scale of investment is unprecedented: even during the Cold War, the US and the Soviet Union did not spend anywhere near as China does today. See David Shambaugh, ‘China’s Soft Power Push: The Search for Respect’, *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2015). One Chinese scholar suggests that since China generally regards anything other than military power as a soft-power resource, economic assistance and foreign aid naturally constitute an important part of China’s soft power.

21. *The Economist*, ‘Confucius Says, Xi Does’, 25 July 2015.

22. Wu Jianming, ‘文化软实力与民族复兴’ [‘Cultural Soft Power and the Rejuvenation of the Chinese People’], *Renmin.net*, 27 November 2009.

aspect of soft power, the Chinese government is also concerned about how soft power can be used to influence its own people.

Domestic Stability

As China's rapid economic development has continued, economic inequality has widened between its rich coastal cities and the poor rural interior. There is a risk that anger and frustration among the poor might turn to hostility towards the authority and legitimacy of China's rulers. In this context, Beijing wants to use the elements of Chinese soft power to promote national pride and the confidence of the whole population. Beijing also wants to promote socialist thought and to unite the Chinese people in commitment to the CCP and the People's Liberation Army.

According to the Chinese academic Zhang Guozuo, 'The US sees soft power as an important way of implementing hegemony and power politics. But China sees the improvement of cultural soft power as an important way of strengthening comprehensive national power and international influence'. He also argues that, 'internally, soft power can strengthen socialist core values, improve China's excellent traditional culture, cultivate noble thought and morality, and strengthen all-Party, all-military, and all-people's unity'.²³ This suggests that China intends to encourage domestic stability through its soft-power strategy and to head off any possibility of multiparty democracy.

Chinese Identity

More positively, soft power is also seen as a technique to realise 'the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation' (to use President Xi's slogan) and to emphasise that China has overcome more than a century of humiliation. This is a message for all Chinese people, including those living outside China, and it encourages them to take pride in their national identity.

This paper has so far outlined how China conceives of soft power in its own context and has identified what it considers to be the audience for its soft-power messages: the wider world; the Chinese diaspora; and the people of China themselves. Attention can now turn to how China puts its soft-power policy into operation.

Exploiting Soft Power

Confucius Institutes

The Confucius Institutes form a worldwide, state-run network of organisations with the purpose of promoting Chinese language and culture through educational and other activities. According

23. Zhang Guozuo, '中国软实力的特色与力量' ['Characteristics and Strength of China's Soft Power'], qstheory.net, 16 March 2015, <http://www.qstheory.cn/politics/2015-03/16/c_1114648345.htm>, accessed 14 March 2016.

to *The Economist*, there are now thousands of institutes in more than 100 countries around the world, with plans for more:²⁴

By the end of 2013, China had established 440 institutes and 646 classrooms serving 850,000 registered students. They are scattered across more than 100 countries, with America hosting more than 40% of the combined total. There are plans for another 60 institutes and 350 classrooms to be opened worldwide by the end of 2015.

Many of the institutes are located on the sites of universities. They belong formally to the Chinese Ministry of Education and have a governing body, the Hanban. The latter's website refers to the role of the institutes in facilitating the learning of the Mandarin language and supporting multicultural societies and global harmony. More specifically, the Hanban appears to:²⁵

- Design policy for the international promotion of Chinese language and development programmes
- Provide assistance for setting education programmes at various different levels and in a range of education facilities
- Specify international proficiency standards for Mandarin and to develop and distribute Mandarin instructional material.

The Confucius Institutes are presented as equivalent to the British Council, the Goethe Institute and the Alliance Française, and are an important means of promoting contemporary China and its historic culture – the leading tool in China's soft-power toolbox. The Hanban itself is guided by senior representatives from a range of relevant ministries (including the economics and foreign ministries) who form the Leading Committee of National External Chinese Education.²⁶

According to *The Economist*, through the Hanban, the Chinese government provides the institutes with instructors and sponsors cultural events run by them. Expenditure is said to have grown significantly: in 2013 it was \$278 million, more than six times as much as in 2006. China's funding for Confucius Institutes amounts to \$100,000–\$200,000 a year on many campuses.²⁷

Thanks to significant Chinese government subsidies, the costs to the students of courses at Confucius Institutes are kept very low. In Africa, Latin America and parts of Southeast Asia the institute's courses can help individuals to secure work with Chinese companies operating there. They also appeal to those seeking to do business with China, and they can attract people wishing to study or do research in mainland China. Their mission is clearly meant to support both dimensions of Chinese soft power: the achievements of contemporary Chinese society; and the legacy of Confucian traditions.

24. *The Economist*, 'Confucius Says, Xi Does'.

25. Hanban website, 'About Us', <http://english.hanban.org/node_7719.htm>, accessed 10 March 2016.

26. Homare Endo, 中国外交戦略の狙い [*Objectives of China's Diplomatic Strategy*] (Tokyo: WAC, 2013)

27. *The Economist*, 'Confucius Says, Xi Does'.

The UK currently has twenty-nine Confucius Institutes and 126 Confucius Classrooms, more than any other European country. President Xi, during his state visit to the UK in October 2015, attended the opening ceremony in London of the annual conference of UK Confucius Institutes and Classrooms. The president gave a speech highlighting the rapid increase in the number of Confucius Institutes in the UK in recent years.²⁸

Various Western and other sources criticise Confucius Institutes for suppressing discussion of sensitive contemporary issues in China like Tibet, Xinjiang, Taiwan, Hong Kong, the Falungong, democracy and criticism of political leaders. Such restrictions are not found in equivalent European bodies. Particularly in the developed West, where many Confucius Institutes have been set up, such controls cannot help the wider purpose of building sympathy and admiration for China.

Yet Chinese officials appear content: in June 2014, Liu Yunshan said that the Confucius Institutes had 'emerged at the right moment' and described them as a 'spiritual high-speed rail link' between Chinese dreams and those of the rest of the world.²⁹

Public Diplomacy

While China has a long history of using propaganda or disinformation to advance its interests, public diplomacy is a relatively new concept. However, China has now created a clear role for Nye's conception of public diplomacy, with its emphasis on communication with the population rather than just communication with the governments of target states. Public diplomacy is about establishing a national position as reasonable, legitimate and authoritative; establishing specific agenda items as being of significance; and building relationships with specific private individuals and groups in target states through conferences, research programmes and other activities.³⁰ According to Zhang Guozuo, China's concept of external soft power includes 'communicating Chinese positions and opinions, establishing a good international image for China, creating a favourable international environment, and promoting a peaceful, harmonious and co-operative world'.³¹

China appears particularly concerned with two audiences: the people of Western states – especially the US, with whom China has a large, growing trade – and the Chinese diaspora – those who consider themselves ethnic Chinese but live in a wide range of countries, including Association of Southeast Asian Nations states and, of course, the US itself. To reach both groups effectively and at low cost, China makes extensive use of the Internet.

28. Bochen Han, 'The UK: A Success Story for China's Educational Soft Power', *The Diplomat*, 27 October 2015.

29. *The Economist*, 'Confucius Says, Xi Does'.

30. Hill and Beadle, *The Art of Attraction*.

31. Zhang Guozuo, 'Characteristics and Strength of China's Soft Power'.

As far as the Chinese diaspora is concerned, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office referred in 2011 to Chinese-diaspora public diplomacy.³² This is intended to reach overseas Chinese who are increasingly influential in their respective country's economies, societies and political systems, through radio and television, publishing and the Internet. President Hu Jintao in 2009 and Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi in 2010 each stressed the importance of public diplomacy with regard to the Chinese diaspora.³³ In particular, China is keen that its message on key issues such as Taiwan and historical relations with Japan are shared by those in the diaspora.

Academic David Shambaugh argues that China's State Council Information Office (SCIO) is the centre of government control, not only restricting information available domestically, but also targeting the wider world.³⁴ For the SCIO, Taiwan, Hong Kong and overseas Chinese communities are all high-priority target audiences. According to Shambaugh, among the SCIO's responsibilities, it co-ordinates all of China's external communications, 'employs spokespeople, holds press conferences, publishes magazines and books, and produces films.' He claims that it 'reaches visitors to China, including foreign residents, tourists, and business travellers, through publishing houses such as the Foreign Language Press and newspapers such as China Daily and the Global Times.'

It is not clear if China aims to induce overseas Chinese to place their identification and loyalty to China above that to their country of residence, but certainly the hope is to encourage understanding and sympathy for Chinese concerns. There is likely Chinese awareness of what Benedict Anderson calls 'long-distance nationalism', when a migrant's physical distance from his or her home country sometimes makes one feel more patriotic or connected to his or her original state.³⁵ First-generation immigrants especially have to cope with a new culture and language, which can make them feel isolated in their new society and nostalgic for what has been left behind.³⁶ While there can be no automatic alignment between the views of members of the Chinese diaspora and the Chinese government, according to Homare Endo, a Japanese academic who has done research on the views of members of the Chinese diaspora in the US towards China, a prosperous and stronger China tends to be a source of strong pride and hope to all members of the Chinese diaspora.³⁷ As such, provided it continues to reach out to the Chinese diaspora, Beijing can reasonably hope for strong support from overseas Chinese for the direction in which Xi Jinping is taking the country.

32. Rumi Aoyama, '防御的, 積極的, そして攻撃的パブリック・ディプロマシー-中国における3つの要素' ['Defensive, Positive and Aggressive Public Diplomacy: Three Elements in China'], *International Issues* (No. 635, October 2014).

33. *Ibid.*

34. Shambaugh, 'China's Soft Power Push'.

35. Benedict Anderson, *Long-Distance Nationalism: World Capitalism and the Rise of Identity Politics* (California, CA: University of California Press, 1992).

36. Cindy Cheung-Kwan Chong, 'Politics of Homeland: Hegemonic Discourses of the Intervening Homeland in Chinese Diasporic Newspapers in the Netherlands' Wanning Sun and John Sinclair (eds), *Media and Communication in the Chinese Diaspora: Rethinking Transnationalism* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), pp. 115–17. See also Anderson, *Long-Distance Nationalism*.

37. Homare Endo, 中国動漫新人類 [*China's New Generation that Loves Animation*] (Tokyo: Nikkei BP, 2008), pp. 332–33.

On specific occasions, the Chinese diaspora has already proven its value to Beijing. In the run-up to the 2008 Olympics, there were threats in some countries to the Olympic torch relay. The torch became almost a symbol of the legitimacy of the Chinese government. In several countries, including in the US, members of local Chinese communities turned out to defend the route against demonstrators protesting China's treatment of Tibet and the abuse of human rights in China in general.

Kent Calder, of Johns Hopkins, argues that China has sought support from the increasing number of Chinese-Americans – whose number has more than doubled from 1.65 million in 1990 to 3.62 million in 2010 – to influence the agenda and decision-making of the US government. They have encouraged them to do this through the media, academia, think tanks and Congress by taking advantage of the traditional openness of the political culture in Washington. The Chinese embassy in Washington plays a key role.³⁸ Homare Endo has found through her interviews with Chinese-Americans that a proportion of ethnic Chinese want China to be so strong that the US would never consider waging war against it – for example, over Taiwan – regardless of the nature of the Chinese government. For them, an economically prosperous China is a source of pride.³⁹ But a proportion of the Chinese diaspora oppose the regime. For example, Anastasia Lin, a Chinese-Canadian, was refused a visa to participate in the China-hosted Miss World 2015 pageant due to her record of speaking out against some of the policies of the CCP.⁴⁰

A second purpose of Chinese public diplomacy is to build a positive image of China among Western publics. One way it seeks to do this is through the media. CCTV has set up new production facilities and has started broadcasting from Washington and Nairobi, Kenya. This suggests that Beijing sees the US and Africa as the main targets for its public diplomacy. To add credibility to its messages, China uses many American presenters, reporters and other staff in its Washington bureau. China also uses radio: according to Shambaugh, China Radio International – formerly known as Radio Beijing, set up in 1941 as a wartime propaganda tool – broadcasts '392 hours of programming per day in thirty-eight languages and maintains twenty-seven overseas bureaus'.⁴¹ Some analysts estimate that China spends roughly \$10 billion on 'external propaganda' annually, compared with the \$666 million spent by the US in the 2014 fiscal year.⁴²

In its external propaganda efforts, China faces a credibility problem because it generally discourages reports from any sources that are critical of the country. Shambaugh says that 'in Beijing, the SCIO and the Foreign Ministry often call foreign journalists in for "tea chats" to scold them for articles deemed unfriendly to China', and American and European scholars and journalists can be refused visas if they fail to be compliant.⁴³ A 2009 report on China submitted to the US Congress states that 'the Chinese government have clearly placed a number of foreign academics on a visa denial

38. Kent Calder, *Asia in Washington: Exploring the Penumbra of Transnational Power* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2014), pp. 109, 141–53.

39. Homare Endo, *China's New Generation that Loves Animation*, pp. 332–33.

40. Donald Kirk, 'Anastasia Lin: Banned Miss World Beauty Queen Speaks Out on China's Human Rights Record', *Independent*, 20 December 2015.

41. Shambaugh, 'China's Soft Power Push'.

42. *Ibid.*

43. *Ibid.*

“blacklist” due to their publishing on topics that hit a nerve with Beijing.⁴⁴ As one example, a *New York Times* reporter was forced to leave China in January 2014 when Chinese authorities refused to renew his visa. It is suspected that the Chinese government did not approve of the paper’s coverage of the alleged illegal accumulation of money by China’s former Premier Wen Jiabao and his family.⁴⁵

Artistic Talent and Innovation

A further element of soft power relates to a country’s reputation for artistic creativity and innovation. China is recognised in the West as having a strong artistic dimension to its historical culture, and there are some Chinese artefacts and artists that have received acclaim in the West, such as the ‘Terracotta Army’, which was part of a major exhibition at the British Museum in 2007; China’s famous Ming vases; and cultural figures like Zhang Yimou – director of *Hero* and *House of Flying Daggers* – who has received many international film awards in Western countries. However, there are also some artists who are admired in the West but who are critical of Beijing policy, like the artist Ai Weiwei or the émigré novelist, playwright and critic Gao Xingjian (the first Chinese-born writer to win the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2000).

The degree of censorship in China makes it harder to build a positive image of innovation and the arts. The Chinese government is unlikely to be ready to ease its restrictions in the short term; however, over time, the increasing number of young Chinese studying overseas and contributions from the Chinese diaspora may make it harder for the government to control artistic creativity.

Assessing China’s Efforts

A country’s soft-power effectiveness is very difficult to measure. However, some research has tried to assess China’s standing among populations around the world and the effectiveness of its soft-power efforts. A report released by the US Pew Foundation in July 2013 found that China was looked upon favourably in nineteen of the thirty-eight countries surveyed (excluding China itself): those polled in Malaysia were the most favourable toward the country.⁴⁶ Respondents in Pakistan (81 per cent) and African countries including Kenya (78 per cent), Senegal (77 per cent), and Nigeria (76 per cent) all showed high degrees of favourability towards China. According to the same report:⁴⁷

Chinese scientific and technological advances are the most widely appreciated aspect of China’s influence in both Africa (a median of 75% like such aspects of China) and Latin America (72%). On all other measures, Africans tend to have a more positive view toward Chinese soft power than Latin Americans. Africans (a median of 59%) are particularly appreciative of Chinese ways of doing business.

44. US–China Economic and Security Review Commission, *2009 Report to Congress* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2009), p. 228.

45. *Yomiuri Shimbun*, ‘Propaganda Against Japan is Infiltrating the Capital of the US’ [in Japanese], 20 February 2014.

46. Pew Research Center, ‘America’s Global Image Remains More Positive than China’s: But Many See China Becoming World’s Leading Power’, report, 18 July 2013.

47. *Ibid.*

Reportedly, approval for China was much lower in Middle Eastern and Western countries (at 15 per cent or less) and is recorded as having fallen between 2011 and 2013, in part because of Chinese diplomatic unilateralism as well as commercial competition.

A 2014 survey conducted by the BBC World Service looked at how different regions perceive one another and confirmed that Africa was most favourable towards China, followed by Latin America. Again, North America and European countries were generally less favourable towards China.⁴⁸ One exception was the UK, whose evaluations were almost evenly divided. The BBC found that respondents in China rated their own country highly, with 85 per cent responding that China exercised positive influence in world affairs. Across the world, excluding China, the average rate of positive evaluation was 42 per cent.

Finally, in a survey by three major internet companies (Facebook, ComRes and Portland Communications), in culture and engagement indices China scored among the top ten of the thirty countries examined, which, according to the survey, was in part due to its Confucius Institutes and its hosting of the 2008 Olympic Games.⁴⁹ However, in the overall soft-power ranking China was at the bottom, while the UK stood at the top. The survey suggested China may have suffered in the ranking because of the nationalistic tone of its public discourse.

According to Nye, 'China's aid programs are often successful and constructive', its 'economy is still strong, and its traditional culture is widely admired'.⁵⁰ However, two major factors limit China's ability to exercise soft power. The first is the weight of nationalism in its domestic and foreign policies, which include its stances on the South China Sea and elsewhere that antagonise its neighbours. The second is China's reluctance to accept the risks of allowing an 'uncensored civil society'. The CCP has not accepted that 'soft power springs largely from individuals, the private sector, and civil society'.⁵¹ Zhang Xiaojin, dean at Tsinghua University in China, said in an interview in 2015 that although direct intervention by the Beijing government in cultural soft power is critical at its initial stage, in the longer term this could disadvantage China by preventing the participation of civil society or preventing the building of connections with other countries like the UK, which has significant soft-power resources precisely because of the full and unfettered participation of civil society in cultural creation.⁵²

Conclusion

In both China and the West, soft power is recognised as an important and desirable attribute of a state, with cultural standing, language education and public diplomacy recognised as important, and both recognise that the values associated with a society contribute to its soft-power resources.

48. BBC, 2014 Country Rating Poll, <<http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/country-rating-poll.pdf>>, accessed 14 March 2016.

49. 'UK Tops Soft Power Table despite China's Cultural Blitz', *World Today* (Vol. 71, No. 4, August/September 2015), p. 6.

50. Joseph S Nye, 'The Limits of Chinese Soft Power', *Today's Zaman*, 10 July 2015.

51. *Ibid.*

52. Liu Xiaochang, '英国文化软实力发展对中国有哪些借鉴意义' ['Does the UK's Cultural Soft Power Development Have Lessons for China?'], *qsttheory.net*, 26 October 2015, <http://www.qsttheory.cn/zhuanku/qsft/2015-10/26/c_1116942333.htm>, accessed 10 March 2016.

However, China and the West differ in their views about precisely which values should be emphasised and about how the values should be emphasised.

First, whereas in the West it is believed that the resources that support soft power should be mostly generated outside of the government, in China the government takes the lead role in shaping the development of society and these resources. Second, in its soft-power considerations, China places little importance on the nature of its foreign policy; indeed, its external behaviour towards some of its neighbours detracts from its overall world standing. By contrast, in Western states the broad thrust of their external behaviour is seen as a significant aspect of their soft power. Third, while China looks to its diaspora to support its overall position, Western states tend to pay little attention to the views of their diaspora. Finally, the elements of Chinese policy seen as pertinent to external soft power (culture and values) also have an important place in domestic policy – they are used as a means to legitimise one-party rule and to unite the Chinese people around the CCP. By contrast, in the West, external soft-power activities have little or nothing to do with domestic affairs.

As noted, to build its soft-power base on its own terms, China has felt it necessary to both attack the values that are central to Western soft power and to substitute its own values of Marxism and Confucianism.⁵³ This represents a serious challenge. China is still struggling to attract admiration for its culture and its ‘socialist core values’. While its achievements in economic development merit real respect, a problem for the CCP is that many of these achievements can be attributed to removing at least some of the constraints of socialism. Similarly, some important elements of soft power, especially in the artistic domain, flourish in a context of freedom of expression and are stifled in a context of government control of the kind practised by China.

Finally, with regard to its public diplomacy, some Chinese recognise that Beijing needs to be more nuanced in its approach to the formulation and delivery of its messages.⁵⁴ In an interview with China Social Sciences Net, a government-affiliated research organisation, Han Zhen, Party Secretary of the Beijing Foreign Languages Institute, said that China used to communicate what it wanted to say in the same way no matter the audience; now it tailors its message more carefully.⁵⁵ The expectation must be that, while Beijing will not give up on soft power, to gain influence around the world it will rely more on its economic muscle – and perhaps military power.

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53. Zhang Guozuo argues that China should ‘change the objectives of soft power. The US takes soft power as an important measure to promoting hegemony and power politics, while China takes it as an important way to strengthen comprehensive national power and international influence’. Zhang Guozuo, ‘Characteristics and Strength of China’s Soft Power’.

54. Nigel Inkster argues that ‘China is a country with no history of dealing with states on a basis of equality. Traditionally, China has dealt with other states *de haut en bas*, and China’s recent, not-yet-required efforts to get the US to sign up to a “new kind of major-power relationship” speak to a similar mindset in the twenty-first century.’ Nigel Inkster, ‘Coming to Terms with Chinese Power’, *Survival* (Vol. 58, No. 1, February/March 2016), p. 214.

55. Ma Xianzhong, ‘Implementing the Socialist Core Values to Strengthen National Cultural Soft Power: Interview with Han Zhen, Party Secretary of the Beijing Foreign Languages Institute’, *China Social Sciences News*, 29 June 2015.