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CHINA'S SOFT POWER

Discussions, Resources, and Prospects

===== Young Nam Cho and Jong Ho Jeong
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Abstract

This article analyzes discussions, resources, and prospects for soft power in China, focusing on the Beijing Consensus, foreign policy, and civilization. It posits that the country's recognition of soft power and its application to national policies is an important factor in explaining China's rapidly increasing influence in Asia.

Keywords: soft power, foreign policy, Beijing Consensus, peaceful rise, Chinese civilization

China's influence in Asia has increased remarkably over the past decade. Some scholars point out that besides increases in economic and military power, the strengthening of China's soft power has been pivotal in expanding the country's regional influence.¹ Beyond its rapid economic growth, China, by advertising Chinese values and publicizing its culture, has risen as a potential competitor to the United States in the Asian region. Other efforts to this end include establishment of a

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1. David M. Lampton, "China's Rise in Asia Need Not Be at America's Expense," in *Power Shift: China and Asia's New Dynamics*, ed. David Shambaugh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 317–19; Shambaugh, "Return to the Middle Kingdom? China and Asia in the Early Twenty-First Century," in *ibid.*, p. 25; Robert G. Sutter, *China's Rise in Asia: Promises and Perils* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), p. 201.

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24-hour Chinese TV and radio broadcasting stations targeting Southeast Asia, increased aid to Asian countries, steps to attract international students and promote the study of Chinese language, and active participation in regional multilateral organizations such as the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN).²

Professor Joseph S. Nye of Harvard University, in an article published in the *Wall Street Journal (Asia)* on December 29, 2005, argues that China's soft power is rapidly increasing in Asia; he calls upon the United States to respond. This article reveals a definite change in Nye's previous attitude toward China's soft power: in *Soft Power* (2004), he downplayed the strengthening of China's soft power as being a development for the future. In his book, Nye argued that China's soft power resources, despite being culturally attractive, are still limited compared to those of the U.S. and Europe because of China's lack of intellectual freedom, its political corruption, and the issues surrounding the Taiwan Strait.

Nowadays, we can easily come across evidence that supports the palpable improvement of China's image in the world. Various survey results show increasing international affinity for China. According to survey results announced by the Pew Research Center in June 2005, most Asians in the surveyed areas (Turkey, Pakistan, Indonesia, Lebanon, Jordan, and India) regard the rise of China as positive and believe its economic growth would benefit their countries.³ The BBC World Service Poll of 22 countries conducted from November 2004 to January 2005 also shows China as being viewed positively by most countries, including its neighbors. The percentage of Asian respondents who viewed China's global influence as "Mainly Positive" was 74% in Lebanon, 70% in the Philippines, 68% in Indonesia, 66% in India, and 49% in South Korea.⁴

Several factors account for the improvement of China's image and rise of its influence in Asia. The most important is rapid economic growth. A little less obvious, but equally important, factor is China's regional policy. As previous studies have shown, China has been exhibiting a change in its attitude toward Asia since the mid-1990s: it regards Asia as a core strategic region and has actively implemented regional policies toward the continent, which had not been the case in the past. For instance, China has

2. Bates Gill and Yanzhong Huang, "Sources and Limits of Chinese 'Soft Power,'" *Survival* 48:2 (Summer 2006), pp. 18–19, 22; Joshua Kurlantzick, "The Decline of American Soft Power," *Current History* (December 2005), pp. 422–23; Jean A. Garrison, "China's Prudent Cultivation of 'Soft' Power and Implications for U.S. Policy in East Asia," *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 32:1 (2005), pp. 25–30.

3. Pew Research Center, "American Character Gets Mixed Reviews" (2005), pp. 33–34.

4. <http://www.pipa.org/OnlineReports/China/China_Mar05/China_Mar05_rpt.pdf>, accessed July 25, 2006.

begun propagating various diplomatic ideas such as “responsible power,” “new security concept,” “peaceful rise and development,” and “harmonious world,” and has implemented a “good neighbor policy” to support these notions. These efforts have mitigated the concerns of neighboring countries and warranted China’s rise as a regional power.⁵

This paper emphasizes that China’s recognition of soft power and its application to national policies is an important factor in explaining the country’s rapidly improving image and increasing influence in Asia, along with rapid economic growth and military power. As we will discuss in detail later, in China there is great interest in Nye’s concept of soft power, in contrast to the U.S., where mainstream academic circles have responded tepidly to this topic. In addition, entering the Hu Jintao era, discussions of soft power have become a major issue among China’s academics as well as media. Accordingly, we need to examine China’s soft power in order to understand the country’s rise from a regional power and its efforts to develop into a global power.

To this end, this paper will first examine the discussions of soft power and the efforts to apply it to China’s national strategy. Via this analysis, we will be able to make out how Nye’s soft power theory is being received in China and what efforts are being made in intellectual and policy circles to develop it into a national strategy. We will then investigate China’s soft power resources, focusing especially on three core areas: the Chinese developmental model (i.e., the Beijing Consensus, discussed in detail below); China’s foreign policy (i.e., peaceful rise and peaceful development theories); and Chinese civilization.

A brief discussion of the concept of soft power is in order. There is currently no consensus on the definition of soft power in China. Chinese translations of soft power vary depending on the scholar; among the choices, *ruanshili*, *ruanquanli*, *ruanliliang*, and *ruanguoli* are most frequently used. Generally using Nye’s concept as a frame of reference, Chinese scholars slightly modify the original definition of soft power as the need arises. According to Nye, the power a state exercises can be divided into two categories: *hard power*, which is mainly composed of military and economic might, and *soft power*, which refers to “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments.” Soft power also rests primarily on three resources: culture, political values and ideas, and foreign policies. Soft power has become increasingly important as a sphere of power

5. Jianwei Wang, “China’s Multilateral Diplomacy in the New Millennium,” in *China Rising: Power and Motivation in Chinese Foreign Policy*, eds. Yong Deng and Fei-Ling Wang (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), pp. 159–200; Zhang Yunling and Tang Shiping, “China’s Regional Strategy,” in *Power Shift*, ed. Shambaugh, pp. 48–68.

with the advent of the information revolution and globalization of the economy. Hard power and soft power are closely related to each other in many cases, and thus, strictly differentiating the two is very difficult in the actual process of exercising power.⁶

Discussions on Soft Power in China

One Chinese researcher argues that interest in soft power has increased dramatically among scholars in China since the 1990s. He further argues that China's interest and research in this area surpass those of all other countries today, even including the U.S.⁷ For example, shortly after the first publication of Nye's *Bound to Lead* (1990) in Chinese in 1992, President Jiang Zemin's chief advisor and former professor at Shanghai's Fudan University, Wang Huning, published an article in the *Fudan University Journal* (1993), stressing the need for China to strengthen its soft power.⁸ In 1997, a Nankai University professor, Pang Zhongying, published an article in *Strategy and Management* that introduced Nye's soft power theory in greater detail.⁹ A prominent American specialist, Shen Jiru, published another paper in *Outlook Weekly* in 1999 that called for strengthening China's soft power.¹⁰ 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." Recently, criticisms of Nye's theory have surfaced, asserting that Nye's soft power pertains mainly to the American experience and arguing for a soft power theory more acclimated to China's situation.¹¹

In the Hu Jintao era, top leaders in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) have also started to take greater interest in strengthening China's soft power. In May 2004, the CCP Politburo held its 13th collective seminar on "Development and Prosperity of Chinese Philosophy and Social Science." The backdrop to this seminar was the introduction of the Beijing Consensus and increasing international interest in the Chinese development

6. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), pp. x, 7, 18–19, 30–32.

7. Liu Debin, "Ruanshilishuode Youlai yu Fazhan" [The origin and the development of soft power], *Jilindaxue Shehuihexue Xuebao* [Jilin University Journal of Social Science] 4 (2004), p. 55.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

9. Pang Zhongying, "Guoji Guanxi Zhongde Ruanlilang Jiqita" [Soft power and others in international relations], *Zhanlue yu Guanli* [Strategy and Management] 2 (1997), pp. 49–51.

10. Shen Jiru, "Buneng Hushi Zengqiang Woguode Ruanshili" [Can't neglect strengthening our country's soft power], *Liaowang* [Outlook Weekly] 41 (October 1999), pp. 12–13.

11. Pang Zhongying, "Zhongguo Ruanlilangde Neihan" [Connotation of China's soft power], *ibid.*, 45 (November 2005), p. 62.

model. Although we cannot draw concrete conclusions, because of the lack of information on what was actually discussed at the seminar, a Chinese report argues that holding the seminar was itself significant because doing so serves as an example of “Chinese leaders at the center beginning to pursue the strengthening of China’s soft power from a strategic point of view.”¹²

Not until the late 1990s did China intellectuals discuss soft power theory in relation to Chinese national strategy. As Chinese national power expanded with rapid economic growth, the world took notice of China’s rise and Chinese people also took greater interest in global affairs. Unlike in the past, major press media began reporting extensively on global issues; as a result, active discussions of these issues and on foreign policy occurred not only on the government level, but also within civil society. These complex factors prompted changes in the self-consciousness of Chinese people and in the way the Chinese government conducted self-evaluations.¹³ International opinion on China also improved, with China’s response to the 1997–98 Asian economic crisis coming as a decisive event: throughout the crisis, Beijing maintained a fixed value for its currency, the renminbi (RMB), and contributed to stabilization funds for afflicted countries.¹⁴

With these developments, Chinese intellectuals have attempted to come up with a new national strategy that aids China’s rise from regional to global power. The concept of comprehensive national power (*zonghe guoli*) also emerged in the late 1990s; as soft power gained wider recognition as an important component of comprehensive national power, Chinese scholars regarded the strengthening of China’s soft power as a top national objective. This appraisal is well documented in research that includes phrases like “comprehensive national power” and “grand strategy” (*dazhanlüe*) in their titles. For example, in 1999 Huang Shuofeng published *Theory on Comprehensive National Power*, widely regarded as a pioneering achievement in this field. In this book, Huang describes comprehensive national power as comprising hard power (i.e., economic power, science and technology power, national defense power, and natural resource power); soft power (i.e., political power, diplomatic power, and cultural and educational power); and coordinating power (i.e., political structures, government leadership, organizational decision-making power, management capabilities, and reform coordination capabilities). Subsequent researches by distinguished

12. Yang Taoyuan, “Tisheng Zhongguo Ruanshili” [Raising China’s soft power], *ibid.*, 23 (June 2004), pp. 14–15.

13. Zhang Jianjing, *Zhongguo Jueqi* [Rise or else: China’s road to a great power] (Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 2005), pp. 126–27.

14. Lampton, “China’s Rise in Asia,” p. 307.

Chinese scholars have further developed the study of China's national strategy, including soft power.¹⁵

Discussions of soft power in China broadly fall under one of two categories: soft power theory as national development strategy and soft power theory as foreign policy. The former mainly involves discussions on institutional reforms needed for economic development, while the latter centers on the establishment of foreign policy regarding China's rise. Some Chinese scholars stress the strengthening of soft power as a means of addressing China's domestic problems originating from the blind pursuit of economic growth in recent decades. Ye Zicheng, a professor at Peking University, argues that China should try to strengthen its soft power in the areas of politics, economy, and foreign policy in order to avoid following in the footsteps of the Soviet Union. In his opinion, the Soviet Union collapsed because of the weakening of its soft power and resulting decrease of its international influence, even though it was the strongest military power in the world, on a par with the U.S. at the time. Ye proposed "institutional innovation" in all areas (especially in political, economic, and cultural institutions) as a method of increasing China's soft power.¹⁶

Similarly, Pang Zhongying posits that soft power, allegedly indispensable for a country to become a global power, is predicated on good governance. Pang argues that China should implement some measures with a view to improving governance: socialist democracy, rationalization of economic structure, and efforts to resolve economic inequality and imbalance.¹⁷ In *China's International Status Report 2005*, Zhang Youwen and Huang Renwei, researchers at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, introduced for the first time the strengthening of soft power as one of the criteria to estimate the increase of China's national power. In their report,

15. Hu Angang, *Zhongguo Fazhan Qianjing* [China's development prospects] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 1999); idem, *Zhongguo Dazhanlüe* [The grand strategy of China] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 2003); idem, *Zhongguo: Xin Fazhangan* [China: New development strategy] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 2004); Hu Angang and Yang Fan, eds., *Daguo Zhanlüe* [Great power's strategy] (Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, 2000); Hu Angang and Men Honghua, eds., *Zhongguo: Dongya Yitihua Xinzhuanlüe* [China's new strategy for East Asia integration] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 2005); Men Honghua, ed., *Zhongguo: Daguo Jueqi* [The rise of modern China] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 2004); idem, *Goujian Zhongguo Dazhanlüe Kuangjia* [China's grand strategy: A framework analysis] (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2005); Ye Zicheng, *Zhongguo Dazhanlüe* [The grand strategy of China] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehuikexue chubanshe, 2003); Yan Xuetong and Sun Xuefeng, eds., *Zhongguo Jueqi Jiqi Zhanlüe* [The rise of China and its strategy] (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2005).

16. Ye, *Zhongguo Dazhanlüe*, pp. 116–17.

17. Pang Zhongying, "Fazhan Zhongguo Ruanlilang" [Developing China's soft power], *Liaowang* 1 (January 2006), p. 63.

they argue that China's soft power increased in 2004 chiefly because of its new attempts at institutional building. These included revising the Constitution to protect private property, enhancing the ruling capacity of the CCP, and construction of the legal system.¹⁸

However, soft power discussions have been conducted mainly on foreign policy. Entering the Hu Jintao era, claims became universal that China must strengthen its soft power as well as hard power to develop into a global power. As mentioned, the term soft power has gained even greater popularity; discussions on soft power are abundant not only in academic papers but also in newspapers and magazines.¹⁹ In particular, the introduction of the peaceful rise theory in 2003 and the Beijing Consensus in 2004 both helped decisively to shape the use of soft power theory into a nationwide trend.

In fact, even before the Hu Jintao era, China had made efforts related to this topic, although the specific term "soft power" was not used. The most conspicuous examples include the "new concept of international politico-economic order," developed from the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence during the Mao era, which criticized the American-led international order. Other examples include the "new security concept," which criticized traditional security measures (e.g., NATO and the U.S.-Japan alliance), and the "responsible power theory," which argued against the view that China was destructive to the international system and claimed that China was a responsible power accountable for its actions in international society. Other theories proposed included the "China opportunity theory" and "China contribution theory," essentially countermeasures to the "China threat theory" and "China collapse theory."²⁰ Moreover, China has pursued various foreign policies to support this cause: the policy toward Africa is representative.²¹ Discussions of soft power in the Hu Jintao era have enjoyed greater systemization via these attempts of which the proposal of the "peaceful rise theory" and "harmonious world" as well as the strengthening of public diplomacy are major examples.

18. Zhang Youwen and Huang Renwei, eds., *2005 Zhongguo Guoji Diwei Baogao* [China's international status report 2005] (Beijing: Remnin chubanshe, 2005), pp. 273–80.

19. Liu, "Ruanshilishuode Youlai Yu Fazhan," p. 60.

20. The China contribution theory claims that China's economic development facilitates the economic development of Asia and the world, improves global division of labor in a logical way, and contributes to solving the problem of global poverty. Meanwhile, the China opportunity theory maintains that China's potential as a large international market provides opportunities for trade and investment to other countries. Men, *Goujian Zhongguo Dazhanliude Kuangjia*, pp. 19–21.

21. Drew Thompson, "China's Soft Power in Africa: From the 'Beijing Consensus' to Health Diplomacy," *China Brief* 5:21 (2005), pp. 1–4.

Soft power, discussed in terms of a diplomatic strategy, has taken two directions. One stream expounds on how to cope with the so-called American soft power strategy through appropriate countermeasures; the other details foreign policy measures that will allow China to emerge as a global power.

Those Chinese scholars who are more wary of the negative effects of American soft power on China propose to confront this issue head on. They focus on the fact that America's soft power strategy played a big role in the collapse of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. In the era of information and globalization, they argue, the strengthening of America's cultural hegemony and the spread of American values through Internet and media broadcasts are great risk factors. These scholars regard this as America's attempt at peaceful evolution (*heping yanbian*). To counteract these attempts, they urge the Chinese government to strengthen education in socialist ideology and institute policies to protect China's traditional culture.²²

Thus, it is not surprising that these scholars consider Nye's soft power theory as a reflection of America's desire to maintain hegemonic leadership in the post-Cold War era and are especially critical of Nye's December 2005 article in the *Wall Street Journal*. As mentioned above, Nye cautions in this article against the rapid increase of China's soft power in Asia and calls for America to directly confront China's rise. The scholars think that Nye overestimates China's soft power and claim that Nye's theory amounts to nothing more than a "soft power version of the China threat theory," which they say provides the U.S. with an excuse to restrain China's development more forcefully in the post-Cold War era.²³

On the other hand, Chinese scholars who research international politics generally maintain that strengthening soft power is needed on a strategic level in order for China to become a global power. According to these

22. Zhan Dexiong, "Ruanshilide Hanyi Yiji Dui Woguo de Qishi" [Implication of soft power and its meaning to China], *Zhongguo Zhengdang Ganbu Luntan* [China Party Cadre Forum] 7 (2004), pp. 37–39; Zhang Shan, "Baquanzhuyide Ruanlilang He Yinglilang" [Hegemony's soft power and hard power], *Lilun Tansuo* [Theory Exploration] 1 (2000), pp. 4–6; Zhao Changmao, "Zhongguo Xuyao Ruanshili" [China needs soft power], *Liaowang* 23 (June 2004), p. 1; Dong Liren, Kou Xiaoyu, and Chen Rongde, "Guanyu Zhongguo de Ruanshili Jiqi Tishengde Sikao" [A consideration on China's soft power and its rise], *Tansuo* [Seek] 1 (2005), pp. 143–46; Huang Renwei, "Lun Zhongguo Jueqide Guoneiwai Huanjing Zhiyue" [A discussion on domestic and international constraints on China's rise], *Shehui Kexue* [Social Science] 2 (2003), pp. 5–12.

23. Zhang Chi, "Zhongguo Weixielun Xinbanben" [A new version of China threat theory], *Renminwang* [Peopledaily.com], January 26, 2006, <<http://world.people.com.cn/GB/4064869.html>>, accessed January 27, 2006.

scholars, the emergence of China as a regional power is already an established fact recognized by the international community. China's economic growth alone is said to evince this fact. As a result, they argue, China's diplomatic objectives have changed along with the expansion of national power and the rise in its global leadership. With admission into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in December 2001, China's past diplomatic objective of entering the global community has in effect been realized. Now its main objective is securing the right to speak in the process of making new international rules and conceiving major regional and global policies.²⁴

In this regard, they argue that China now faces two new challenges. The first is to rid itself of the China threat theory and persuade international society, especially Asian countries, to accept China's rise as an established and desirable fact. The second challenge is securing the right to voice China's opinion in the global community by shouldering international responsibilities. These two tasks are closely related to the strengthening of China's soft power. In light of these goals, most Chinese scholars come to agree that in order for China to develop into a global power, it needs to strengthen its soft power.²⁵

China's Soft Power: Resources and Prospects

Today, China's soft power is dependent on the following three resources: the Chinese developmental model, foreign policy centered on peaceful rise or peaceful development theories, and Chinese civilization.

The Beijing Consensus and the Chinese Development Model

The term Beijing Consensus was first proposed by Joshua Cooper Ramo, a senior advisor to the investment firm Goldman Sachs and adjunct professor at Tsinghua University, in a research report entitled *Beijing Consensus* published in May 2004 at the Foreign Policy Center (affiliated with the

24. Yan and Sun, *Zhongguo Jueqi Jiqi Zhanlüe*, p. 5.

25. Wang Yuchen, "Lüelun Beijing Gongshi Dui Tisheng Zhongguo Ruanshili Qidi" [A brief discussion on the Beijing consensus and its effect on the rise of China's soft power], *Zhongnan Caijing Zhengfa Daxue Xuebao* [Journal of Zhongnan University of Economics and Law] 1 (2005), pp. 3–8; Deng Xianchao, "Qiaoran Jueqide Zhongguo Ruanshili" [Softly rising China's soft power], *Pandeng* [Ascent] 6 (2005), pp. 89–93; Ruan Zongze, "Shixian Zhongguo Waijiao Huayuquan" [Realizing China's rights to speak in diplomacy], *Liaowang* 32 (August 2005), pp. 26–28.

British prime minister's office). Since then, this term has received international recognition through high-profile foreign media reports. Ramo's report summarizes China's new power base, claiming that China has become a competitor to the U.S. in terms of comprehensive national power. Furthermore, he argues that the Beijing Consensus is beginning to replace the established Washington Consensus, especially in developing countries.²⁶

The Beijing Consensus, Ramo explains, consists of three theorems: the first states that China's development model is based on innovation, the second states that China's development model considers sustainability and equality as top priorities, the third states that China strives for self-determination in foreign policy.²⁷ The Beijing Consensus, like the Washington Consensus, includes not only economic but also political, social, and diplomatic issues. As a new development paradigm, Ramo argues, the Beijing Consensus has given hope to developing countries in an uncertain international situation that has witnessed the collapse of the Washington Consensus, the breaking off of WTO negotiations, and the implosion of Argentina's economy.²⁸ Thus, in Ramo's view, rather than uniformly applying a series of so-called neoliberal policies to achieve economic development, as emphasized in the Washington Consensus, the Chinese development policy is more effective and practical for system-transition states and developing countries.

The Beijing Consensus that Ramo describes is, however, disappointing in content. In fact, most people take note of it not because of what it says but because the term itself seems to counter the concept of the Washington Consensus. When examining the first theorem of the Beijing Consensus, we see that it simply reiterates that entering the Hu Jintao era, China emphasizes innovation. The second theorem also repeats word for word the economic strategy that China has put into effect under Hu, abandoning

26. Joshua Cooper Ramo, *Beijing Consensus* (London: Foreign Policy Center, 2004), pp. 3–4. The Washington Consensus is a term created by John Williamson at the Institute for International Economics in 1990. Williamson proposed a series of policies to solve Latin America's economic problems, including tax reform, interest rate liberalization, a competitive exchange rate, trade liberalization, liberalization of foreign direct investment, and deregulation. Since then the Washington Consensus has become synonymous with "neoliberalist" policies that speak on behalf of the U.S., the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, etc. John Williamson, "What Should the World Bank Think about the Washington Consensus?" *World Bank Research Observer* 15:2 (August 2000), pp. 251–64; John Williamson, "A Short History of the Washington Consensus," paper commissioned by Fundaci CIDOB for a conference, "From the Washington Consensus towards a New Global Governance," Barcelona, September 24, 2004.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 11–12.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

previous policies that prioritized economic growth and proposed a balanced development strategy based on a “scientific concept of development.” The sustainable and equal development that Ramo speaks of is simply a summary of this strategy. The third theorem (i.e., self-determination) is also merely a catalog of the independent foreign policies officially declared by China in 1982. As such, not only does Ramo’s Beijing Consensus have nothing new to offer, but it sounds more like a proxy measure to propagate China’s official stance.

When Ramo’s *Beijing Consensus* was first published, it received extensive media coverage in China and many scholarly analyses followed. Mainstream opinion within the country has welcomed the Beijing Consensus concept; as it drew greater international recognition, some countries began to accept it as a universal development model applicable to Third World nations. Chinese scholars have tended to regard these receptive evaluations as a sign of China’s increasing soft power.²⁹ The fact that the major force initially disseminating the Beijing Consensus is neither the Chinese government nor Chinese scholars but rather foreign scholars and foreign media is a very encouraging sign. This situation resembles the one where Chalmers Johnson summarized Japan’s development experience and presented it to the world as the “capitalist developmental state model”; Japan (especially the Ministry of International Trade and Industry [MITI]) became a strong proponent of Johnson’s work.³⁰

Meanwhile, there are other groups in China that are concerned about the spread of the Beijing Consensus and its potential negative effects, although they acknowledge and welcome its signal of the rise of China’s soft power. These groups worry that the Beijing Consensus may end up refueling the debate on the China threat theory. Until now, the threats to America have

29. Yu Keping, Huang Ping, Xie Shuguang, and Gao Jian, eds., *Zhongguo Moshi Yu Beijing Gongshi: Chaoyue Huashengdun Gongshi* [China model and the Beijing consensus: Beyond the Washington consensus] (Beijing: Shehuikexue wenxian chubanshe, 2006); Huang Ping and Cui Zhiyuan, eds., *Zhongguo Yu Quanguohua: Huashengdun Gongshi Haishi Beijing Gongshi* [China and globalization: The Washington consensus, the Beijing consensus, or what?] (Beijing: Shehuikexue wenxian chubanshe, 2005); Zhang Jianjing, “Beijing Gongshi Yu Zhongguo Ruanshilide Tisheng” [Beijing consensus and rise of China’s soft power], *Dangdai Shijie Yu Shehuizhuyi* [Contemporary World and Socialism] 5 (2004), pp. 10–14; Tian Chunsheng, “Huashengdun Gongshi Yu Beijing Gongshi Bijiao Chutan” [A preliminary comparison between Washington consensus and Beijing consensus], *Jingji Shehui Tizhi Bijiao* [Comparative Studies of Economic and Social System] 2 (2005), pp. 77–80; Zhou Jianjun and He Hengyuan, “Zhongguo Zhuaxingde Shijie Yiyi” [Global meaning of China’s transition], *Shijie Jingji Yu Zhengzhi Luntan* [World Economy and Politics Forum] 1 (2005), pp. 72–75.

30. Chalmers Johnson, “The Developmental State: Odyssey of a Concept,” in *The Developmental State*, ed. Meredith Woo-Cumings (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 32–60.

all been of the hard power type, but if China continues to promote its development model as having universal meaning, the Beijing Consensus can be perceived as a new type of threat challenging American values. Also, with greater dissemination of the Beijing Consensus, some people are concerned with China's unintentional position at the vanguard of the anti-globalization movement, which is an affront to American neoliberalism. Some anti-globalization groups have criticized America-led globalization and neoliberalism using the arguments of the Beijing Consensus. If this trend were to continue, China, contrary to its wishes, would face the possibility of being misunderstood as anti-Western and as a major force challenging the established global order.³¹

Above all else, Ramo's Beijing Consensus is invaluable for China because it substantiates the uniqueness of the Chinese development model. When China initiated reform and opening policies in 1978, it examined various development models throughout the world. Among these, the strongest candidates were Hungary's market socialist model and the East Asian developmental state model; China leaned toward the latter. The establishment of four special economic zones, pursuit of an export-led industrialization strategy, and operation of pilot agencies that carried out industrial policies are all examples of this model in action. Therefore, this has led some researchers to conclude that China is in essence a variation of East Asian developmental states. Chinese scholars implicitly or explicitly appeared to accept this interpretation.³²

As of late, however, Chinese scholars have been stressing the independence and difference of China's development model from the East Asian model. Some argue that in contrast to Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, China has actively pursued foreign direct investment and therefore foreign companies have played a greater role in China's economic development. Likewise, in terms of capital mobilization, but unlike South Korea and Taiwan, which depended on foreign credit and bank loans, China has utilized foreign direct investment as well as the stock market. In addition, compared to the economic development plans pursued by Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan that relied on protectionist trade policies, China from the initial

31. Zhang, *Zhongguo Jueqi*, p. 164.

32. Jonathan Unger and Anita Chan, "Corporatism in China: A Developmental State in an East Asian Context," in *China after Socialism: In the Footsteps of Eastern Europe or East Asia*, eds. Barrett L. McCormick and Jonathan Unger (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), pp. 95–129; Gordon White, "State and Market in China's Socialist Industrialization," in *Developmental States in East Asia*, ed. Gordon White (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), pp. 153–92; Ming Xia, *The Dual Developmental State: Development Strategy and Institutional Arrangements for China's Transition* (Brookfield: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 40–99.

stages of reform has devoted its efforts to strengthening the competitiveness of its firms through active market liberalization. This was achieved with entry into the WTO in December 2001.³³

There are several motivations behind Chinese scholars' recent efforts to emphasize the uniqueness of the Chinese development model. As South Korea and Taiwan demonstrate, East Asian developmental states, which were initially characterized by authoritarian political systems, headed down the path of democratization. These examples suggest that China would also experience democratization subsequent to economic growth. But by distancing its development model from those countries, China can pacify these claims and expectations. Also, in light of rising international criticism of the East Asian developmental state model after the 1997–98 Asian economic crisis, highlighting the ingenuity of China's development model has quelled claims that this development mode is not durable or stable. Ramo's argument has significance in confirming the claims of these Chinese scholars.

A more meaningful reason exists for China to embrace the Beijing Consensus. Because it is a Chinese development model that includes everything from polity to society, dissemination of the Beijing Consensus bestows upon "Chinese-style socialism" greater international recognition, not only as an economic development model but also as a new model of political system and social structure. With the Beijing Consensus, China can finally rid itself of its stigma as a non-democratic state and human rights violator—as argued by the Western world—and can now assume a leading role vis-à-vis the U.S. within international society by recommending various development policies to Third World countries.

Although these benefits are within arms' reach, China still tends to refrain from actively propagating the Beijing Consensus abroad. First, as mentioned above, the contents of Ramo's Beijing Consensus are basically a summary of China's official position. As a result, if China promotes only the merits of the Beijing Consensus to the world, this would amount to nothing more than borrowing the voice of a "Chinese advocate" to advertise its position. At the same time, China is concerned that if it is too aggressive in promoting the Beijing Consensus, it could create unnecessary misunderstandings with the U.S. Zheng Bijian's public insistence prior to Hu Jintao's 2006 visit to the U.S. that China has no intention of exporting

33. Yu, Huang, Xie, and Gao, *Zhongguo Moshi yu Beijing Gongshi*, pp. 21–33; Huang and Cui, *Zhongguo Yu Quanjihua*, pp. 146–78; Men, *Zhongguo: Daguo Jueqi*, pp. 1–17, 41–60; Tsinghua University Contemporary China Study Center, ed. *Guoqing yu Fazhan* [China's situations and development] (Beijing: Tsinghua daxue chubanshe, 2005).

the Chinese development model to other countries is a cogent example of this cautious disposition.³⁴

How much real influence the Beijing Consensus will have on international society cannot be accurately determined yet. We can, however, estimate how much attractiveness the Beijing Consensus will have in certain countries. It has little for countries like South Korea and Taiwan, which already have experience with this type of development model. For them, the Beijing Consensus represents a summary of the obstacles they have overcome, not the introduction of a new model.

For some underdeveloped countries in Asia, Latin America, and Africa, however, China's experience contains very important implications. In particular, the idea that an authoritarian political system can be maintained while also pursuing high economic growth has attracted the interest of the ruling elite in non-democratic countries. Authoritarian leaders in South Asia, Africa, Latin America, Russia, and former Soviet republics such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan have shown tremendous interest in the Chinese development model represented by the Beijing Consensus.³⁵ In this respect, the Beijing Consensus is very important in increasing China's soft power. And if China strengthens its economic assistance and cooperation with these countries, as it has continued to do, the Beijing Consensus might have the potential to replace the Washington Consensus, as Ramo asserts, at least in some developing countries.

*Foreign Policy: Peaceful Rise and Peaceful
Development Theories*

Another source of China's soft power lies in its foreign policy, especially its regional policy toward Asia. As Nye argues, foreign policy is a key factor of soft power resources, and the implementation of well-thought-out foreign policy can greatly affect a country's soft power. China is no exception. In this regard, the peaceful rise and peaceful development theories that have been regarded as diplomatic strategies to realize China's development into a global power, can be looked upon as important cases that examine the discussions of soft power and its applications to national strategy in Hu Jintao-era China.

34. Zheng is the former vice president of the CCP Central Party School as well as the former chairman of the China Reform Forum, a representative semi-governmental organization for China's diplomacy. Zheng also served as Hu Jintao's senior foreign policy advisor. Fang Dehao, "Zheng Bijian Yugao Hu Jintao Fangmei Zhuxuanlü" [Zheng Bijian noticed the main melody of Hu Jintao's visit to the United States], *Chinese News Net*, April 12, 2006, <<http://www7.chinesenewsnet.com/gb/MainNews/SinoNews/Mainland>>, accessed April 13, 2006.

35. Gill and Huang, "Sources and Limits of Chinese 'Soft Power'," pp. 20–21.

The peaceful rise theory was first introduced by Zheng Bijian in November 2003 at the China-sponsored Boao Forum for Asia. Since then, the theory has gained greater visibility, having been mentioned at a Harvard lecture by Premier Wen Jiabao that December and alluded to at a commemoration celebrating the 110th anniversary of Mao Zedong's birth by Hu Jintao the same month. However, Hu and Wen since April 2004 have replaced the use of peaceful rise with the term "peaceful development." For example, in a lecture at the Boao Forum in April 2004, Hu Jintao described China's foreign policy using the concept of peaceful development rather than peaceful rise. This follows a decision reached by the Chinese government not to use "peaceful rise" as an official term.

The catalyst to the peaceful rise theory was the spread of various unfavorable discourses regarding China, such as the China threat theory.³⁶ However, simply understanding the peaceful rise theory as a response to the China threat theory is somewhat of a fragmentary interpretation. If China only needed to counteract the China threat theory, the China opportunity and contribution theories would have been more than sufficient, as these theories are supported by empirical findings: the increasing economic exchange between China and Asian countries, China's contribution to world economic growth, and the increase in trade and investment resulting from opening up. The motivation behind the conception of the peaceful rise theory is more significant than appearances suggest. That is, the reason why the peaceful rise theory was proposed in the Hu Jintao era was in effect an intention to declare China's expansion of national power and its presumed forthcoming rise to global power status, and to gain acceptance of this declaration from neighboring Asian countries.

In this respect, China's proposal of the rise itself has great significance with regard to its foreign policy. As some Chinese researchers argue, the proposal of the peaceful rise theory implicates the transformation of China's foreign policy in three ways. First, there is the switch from American-centered diplomacy to neighbor-centered diplomacy; second, from diplomatic objectives focused on gaining admission into the international society to the goal of undertaking global leadership and responsibilities. Third is the transformation from a diplomatic strategy focused on China's economic development to one centered on increasing its comprehensive national power.³⁷ Put another way, the peaceful rise theory symbolically

36. Peng Peng, ed., *Heping Jueqilun* [Peaceful rising theory] (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 2005), p. 18; Men, *Goujian Zhongguo Dazhanlüede Kuangjia*, pp. 15–21; Jiang Xiyuan and Xia Liping, *Zhongguo Heping Jueqi* [Peaceful rise of China] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehuikexue chubanshe, 2004), p. 1.

37. Yan and Sun, *Zhongguo Jueqi Jiqi Zhanlüe*, pp. 4–6.

declares that China's global strategy has transformed from internal to external orientation.³⁸ Accordingly, the peaceful rise theory now reflects China's continued expansion of national power, the change in perception of domestic and foreign conditions within China, and a desire to search for a new foreign policy facilitating China's emergence as a global power.³⁹

The contents of the peaceful rise theory are relatively simple. The arguments presented by Zheng Bijian, its progenitor, are as follows. First, although China has accomplished rapid economic growth in a short period of time, one cannot consider China's rise a threat because its initial economic development levels were so low to begin with and the leadership is faced with accommodating a population of 1.3 billion. These domestic constraints mean that China needs to focus all its efforts on its own development for the next three generations at least. Second, China is pursuing a development strategy that strives to participate in rather than detach itself from globalization. Third, while participating in globalization, China is also pursuing independent development strategies that do not harm other countries. Fourth, China's economic development contributes to the overall economic development, prosperity, and stability of Asia.⁴⁰

China's Path to Peaceful Development, a White Paper issued by the State Council Information Office in December 2005, explains the peaceful development theory. First, peaceful development is an inevitable path for China's modernization. Second, China achieves development by creating a peaceful global environment and facilitates world peace through this development. Third, China achieves development by relying on its own capabilities, as well as reform and innovation, while steadily opening up. Fourth, China accommodates the trends of globalization and makes an effort to realize mutual benefits and common development with other countries. Fifth, China adheres to the principles of peace, development, and cooperation, and strives to construct a harmonious world of sustained peace and common prosperity.

As we can see from the above, there is little difference in the content of the peaceful development theory and peaceful rise theory, except the change in terminology. Besides the inclusion of a new concept, "harmonious world," and greater use of stylized expressions, peaceful development is, on the whole, a re-termining of peaceful rise theory. Examination of the content proves that China has not altogether abandoned the ideas presented in the peaceful rise theory. Of course, the nuance in the terminology change from peaceful *rise* to peaceful *development* has significance because the word

38. Men, *Goujian Zhongguo Dazhanlüede Kuangjia*, pp. 30, 203–04.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 210.

40. Zheng Bijian, *Lun Zhongguo Heping Jueqi Fazhan Xindaolu* [Peaceful rise: China's new road to development] (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 2005), pp. 2–8.

switch indicates China's decision to officially postpone its declaration that it will rise. According to one Chinese scholar, *rise* designates a shift in power balance between states; *development* does not.⁴¹ To reiterate, China's *rise* in international politics signifies the relative weakening of the leadership of superpowers such as the U.S. and Japan, while China's *development* implies the possibility of parallel development with existing superpowers.

With the strengthening of national power, China faces various new tasks in foreign policy. As some Chinese scholars have stated, it must first rid itself of the pervasive China threat theory. It then needs to coax neighboring Asian countries to willingly accept its rise. And finally, China needs to secure the right to speak in international affairs by participating in the international community as a responsible power. While the peaceful rise theory was introduced to meet these diplomatic objectives, Beijing faced the pressing problem of how it would clarify this new, potentially confrontational foreign policy to the international community. As a consequence, the peaceful development theory was chosen to replace the peaceful rise theory, but only in name and not in content. This terminology change reflects China's present situation: on the one hand, China wishes to make public its rise and gain the acknowledgment of neighboring countries; on the other hand, Chinese officials are leery of possibly negative reactions and consequences from other nations if they proclaim China's rise. In any case, China will cautiously implement its foreign policy under the precepts of the peaceful rise theory and will continue working to bolster its status in Asia.

Chinese Civilization

The third source of China's soft power lies in Chinese civilization, which allows China to take a leading role in creating a new definition of so-called Asian values. According to the constructivist understanding of identity formation, the historical past is highly significant in forming the identity of the present as a social construct.⁴² We need to understand that Chinese civilization has a history of several thousand years and the potential to summon common interests and orientations among those who share its

41. Yan and Sun, *Zhongguo Jueqi Jiqi Zhanlüe*, p. 212.

42. Paris Yeros, "Introduction: On the Uses and Implications of Constructivism," in *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Africa: Constructivist Reflections and Contemporary Politics*, ed. Paris Yeros (London: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 1–14; Anthony Buckley, "We're Trying to Find our Identity," in *History and Ethnicity*, eds. Elizabeth Tonkin, Maryon McDonald, and Malcolm Chapman (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 183–97. These arguments were previously highlighted by Hobsbawm who pointed out the fact that history (or "tradition") is always being invented, selected, and constructed. Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction," in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 12–14.

legacy and other Asians whose cultures it has influenced. Only then can we truly gauge the importance of Chinese civilization with regard to China's soft power. Put differently, Chinese history and civilization are important resources because they can be reconstructed and reinvented to help create an "imagined" Asian identity and values.

For example, if Chinese officials selected a fragmented historical memory of the 19th century Opium Wars (an intrinsic part of China's history) and reconstructed the prolonged conflict as being a common memory of Western imperialist invasions in Asian history, there is a good possibility that many Asians would share in this Chinese historical memory. Thus, taking advantage of its history and cultural legacies, China can attempt to increase its soft power by creating common, imagined identities and values for Asians. This is possible because Chinese civilization and history transcend mere representation of a single national history.

In this sense, the civilization of China, one of Asia's ancient suzerains along with India, is China's greatest soft power asset. Among the many attributes of Chinese civilization, Confucianism is a core factor that presents Chinese values and vision in a different way from the West. Countries in Asia, especially East Asia, are familiar with Confucianism and Confucian values, which carry universal meaning in this region on par with human rights or democracy in the West.⁴³ Of course, this topic is nothing new. In the early 1990s, debates emerged on values by Asian politicians and scholars who contended that Asian values and identity could stand vis-à-vis Western values and identity. But with the 1997–98 Asian financial crisis and concomitant criticisms of Asian values, these discussions quickly lost relevance.⁴⁴

The rise of China is, however, once again making it possible to pursue Asian values based on Chinese civilization, at least in Confucian East Asian countries. These values include the importance of family as the focal point of social structure formation; concerns over virtues and ethics; the primacy of the group over the individual; emphasis on unity or harmony and order; and hard work, frugality, and the importance of education.⁴⁵ China's Asian values are based on the rapid expansion of the Chinese economy following the model of previous arguments over Asian values that championed the East Asian economic miracle. Furthermore, China's civilization and historical legacies add weight to Chinese advocacy of Asian values.

43. On the case of South Korea, see Chong-Min Park and Doh Chull Shin, "Do Asian Values Deter Popular Support for Democracy in South Korea?" *Asian Survey* 46:3 (May/June 2006), pp. 341–61.

44. On a short review of Asian values debates, see Donald K. Emmerson, "Singapore and the 'Asian Values' Debate," *Journal of Democracy* 6:4 (October 1995), pp. 95–105; Mark R. Thompson, "Whatever Happened to 'Asian Values'?" *ibid.*, 12:4 (October 2001), pp. 154–65.

45. Park and Shin, "Do Asian Values Deter," p. 343.

In this context, special attention needs to be paid to China's recent emphasis on Confucian values. Since the Jiang Zemin era, various efforts have been made to replace socialist ideas and absorb Confucianism as a dominant ideology in China. For example, in 2001, China enacted the "Outline of Implementation of National Morality" (Guomin daode shishi gangyao), which combines Confucian virtues and socialist collectivism. These efforts have been further strengthened in the Hu Jintao era. From the Confucian version of democracy (*minben zhuyi*), elements have been drawn and recast in terms such as "considering people as fundamental," "close to the people," "harmonious society," and a "socialist view of honor and disgrace." Confucianism has become an important part of the dominant ideology.

China is also extending Confucianism to diplomatic ideas. Diplomatic principles such as "live peacefully with neighbors, bring prosperity to them, and provide safety to them" and a "harmonious world" are all taken from Confucianism. This is clearly different not only from Marxism-Leninism but also from realism and liberalism in international politics. Through greater systemization, China plans to re-establish Confucianism as an inherently Chinese value and vision. In fact, some Chinese opinion leaders have openly revealed this agenda. Zheng Bijian's article in *People's Daily* is a case in point: in this article, he clamors for a renaissance of Chinese civilization.⁴⁶

Furthermore, China has been systematically and comprehensively developing its public diplomacy. A prime example is the establishment of the Confucius Institute (Kongzi Xueyuan), a Chinese cultural-cum-language center designed to boost enthusiasm for learning the Chinese language, which is already spreading all over the world. In 2004, China established the Leading Small Group for Foreign Chinese Language Education under the State Council, whose objective was to establish 100 Confucius Institutes throughout the world. Since the establishment of the first one in Seoul, South Korea, in November 2004, 140 institutes had been set up worldwide by March 2007.⁴⁷ In addition, China has sponsored large-scale cultural

46. Zheng Bijian, "Zhongguo Heping Jueqi Jinchengzhong Mianlinzhe Sanda Tiaozhan" [Three challenges in the process of China's peaceful rise], *People's Daily*, April 10, 2006, <<http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/30178/4283438.html>>, accessed April 11, 2006.

47. Howard French, "Another Chinese Export Is All the Rage: China's Language," *New York Times*, January 11, 2006, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/11/international/asia/11china.html>>, accessed January 12, 2006; Si Wei, "Zhongguo Xu Cujin Zhenzhengde Minjian Ruanquanli Jianshe" [China needs to promote true construction of civil soft power], *Chinese News Net*, March 22, 2006, <<http://www7.chinesenewsnet.com/gb/MainNews/SinoNews/Mainlan>>, accessed March 23, 2006; "Hanyu jiasu 'zouchuqu': Kongzi xueyuan jinnian jiangda 200suo" [Chinese language speeds up 'go abroad': Confucius Institute will become two hundred this year], *People's Daily*, March 20, 2007, <<http://culture.people.com.cn/GB/22219/5488352.html>>, accessed April 10, 2007.

events starting in France in 2004, extending to the U.S., Italy, and the Netherlands in 2005. China is planning to increase such events in the future.⁴⁸

Conclusion

In the past decade, Chinese officials have been planning and partially implementing a new national strategy to promote China from being a regional power to a global power. That strategy includes the strengthening of soft power (e.g., culture, ideas, and foreign policy) as well as hard power (e.g., economic and military might). Within this process, China has been contemplating how it can establish Chinese values and vision, so-called Chinese ideas (*Zhongguode linian*), which are different from the West, and how it can propagate them throughout Asia and the world.⁴⁹ As noted earlier, the Chinese development model, the peaceful rise and peaceful development theories, and the pursuit of Asian identity founded on Chinese civilization are all important components of Chinese values and vision.

Many obstacles lie in the way of China's strengthening its soft-power influence. As Gill and Huang argue, China faces serious obstacles such as the authoritarian political system of the Communist Party dictatorship, widespread political corruption, a limp global human rights consciousness, the spread of the China threat theory, and the rise of exclusivist Chinese nationalism. Because of these problems, we cannot rightly conclude how willingly neighboring countries will accept China's soft power.

However, we can safely conclude that China, to be comparable to the West not only in terms of economic or military might but also in terms of soft power, will make greater efforts to develop a coherent set of Chinese ideas. It will materially support this cause in order to secure its leadership position in Asia and to emerge as a global leader in the future. Examples of these efforts include the strengthening of ASEAN diplomacy and the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), as well as the introduction of a new security concept and aggressive pursuit of free trade agreements (FTA) through ASEAN. Accordingly, when analyzing China's foreign policy, we need to pay more attention to its efforts from a different perspective, moving away from the prevailing view of China that focuses on its rapid economic and military growth.

48. Liu Huaxin, "Yici Chenggongde Wenhua Waijiao" [A successful cultural diplomacy], *Renminwang*, October 12, 2005, <<http://world.people.com.cn/GB/1030/3760842.html>>, accessed October 13, 2005; Zhang and Huang, *2005 Zhongguo Guoji Diwei Baogao*, pp. 282–85.

49. Yuan Peng, "Zhongguo Jueqizhihou Jiang Ruhe Zai Shijieshang Gei Ziji Dingwei" [How China takes position in the world after its rise], *Renminwang*, April 4, 2006, <<http://world.people.com.cn/GB/1030/4266797.html>>, accessed April 5, 2006.