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CHINESE SOFT POWER: EXCEPTIONAL LONG-TERM POTENTIAL

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Exercise Solo Flight

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SOLO FLIGHT

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By Major Spencer V. Selhi

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For China's classical sages, the world could never be conquered; wise rulers could hope only to harmonize with its trends.

- Henry Kissinger, *On China*

INTRODUCTION

The end of the Cold War brought with it a clear winner of the 44 year tension, and was accompanied by questions of what the future would look like. Throughout this unipolar moment, the world has continued to become a more complex and challenging environment, and interactions between foreign governments have become more sophisticated and interconnected. In order to exercise dominance in the information era, a great power such as the United States has had to hone their statecraft skills and learn to wield instruments beyond its military or economic power in order to influence global outcomes. Now, as it becomes clearer that the era of American global hegemony will not endure the test of time, the question of which nation will become the next superpower remains. It is becoming generally accepted that the answer to this question is that there will be a major shift Eastward, towards China.

There are a number of reasons for China's anticipated rise to superpower status, including: its population is over 1.3 billion; the economy of the People's Republic of China (PRC) is the second largest in the world; and it is investing heavily in its military capabilities. Other aspects of China's recent history tell a different yet equally compelling story: 400 million Chinese citizens have been raised out of poverty; widespread illiteracy has been virtually eliminated in the country; and the country is home to the world's largest developing middle class.¹ With these numbers and stories in the background, millions of people around the world watched with awe as the PRC proudly displayed

¹ Donald Gross, *The China Fallacy: How the U.S. Can Benefit from China's Rise and Avoid Another Cold War*, (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 2.

itself in the opening ceremonies of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. For some, the moment signalled that China had arrived.² Since the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, it appears that China is still not ready to be received globally. Although there are many reasons for this, one of the commonly held beliefs is that China lacks the instruments that a mature power such as the U.S. possesses. In short, many believe that China suffers from a “soft power deficit”. Through an examination of the state of Chinese soft power, this paper will identify the causes of the PRCs shortage, and highlight areas where China shows the most potential to grow its soft power. In particular, while the PRCs political ideology is harmful in the short-term, it is developing the means to grow an impressive amount of soft power in the long-term.

The following discussion will start by looking at soft power, and provide some context for the Chinese case. The examination will then look at aspects of China’s ideological resources, investigate its influence within international institutions, and assess the attractiveness of Sino culture. These three facets will be scrutinized in order to identify the status and future potential of the PRCs soft power.

THE CONTEXT OF SOFT POWER

The concept of power in global affairs is well known; however, there is no generally accepted definition in international relations theory, and the measurement of power is somewhat elusive.³ The definitions of power in this sphere have evolved over time and expanded in their nature. Originally thought of in strictly military terms, the idea of power grew to encompass population, territory, economy, and other quantifiable

² Erik Eckholm, “For Many Expatriates, Olympics Signal China’s Arrival,” *The New York Times*, 10 August 2008, accessed 10 May 2014,

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/11/sports/olympics/11chinatown.html?_r=0.

³ Joseph, S. Nye, *The Future of Power*, (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011), 3-5.

aspects of a state. In 1990, Joseph S. Nye identified another, less identifiable and quantifiable aspect of power in his book *Bound to Lead*. He contrasted his new theory of *soft co-optive power* with that of measurable types of power (or hard command power) by highlighting the fact that hard power provided results through coercion such as military “sticks” or economic “carrots”. In contrast, the outcomes attributed to soft power are associated with “attraction”.⁴ Put simply, hard power can make a country do something they would not otherwise want to do. Soft power, on the other hand, would cause a country to *want* to do the same thing without threat or the need for a transaction.

Since the concept of soft power was introduced, much thought and discussion has taken place surrounding its usefulness and limits. Soft power first surfaced as a topic in China in 1993,⁵ and the country’s political and international relations theorists have since become obsessed with it.⁶ This is because the PRC sees soft power as a means to avoid conflict as it re-emerges as a world power.⁷ In keeping with this, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) softened its “peaceful rise” policy to “peaceful development,” and makes the acquisition of soft power a priority. To this end, they have placed an emphasis on “enhanc[ing] the international influence of Chinese culture” through public diplomacy.⁸ Nye, however, conceived soft power as a resource that emanates from a country’s

⁴ For further discussion, see Joseph S. Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 31-33.

⁵ David L. Shambaugh, *China Goes Global: The Partial Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 210.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

⁷ Bates Gill, “China’s Evolving Regional Security Strategy,” in *Power Shift*, ed. David Shambaugh, 248-252 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

⁸ Xinhua Domestic Service, quoted in David L. Shambaugh, *China Goes Global...*, 208.

ideology, its standing within international institutions, and its cultural attraction.⁹ Hence, it is through Nye's three lenses that Chinese soft power will be examined.

IDEOLOGY

China political system is not attractive and they have no attractiveness as a model. China has little soft power.

- Lee Kuan Yew, quoted in *China Goes Global*

When considering the soft power of a nation, the most overt aspect of a state that might attract other nations towards its position would be its ideology. Legitimacy is central to soft power,¹⁰ and the legitimacy of a state rests squarely on whether or not other states share somewhat common ideas, values, and objectives. In this respect, the PRC suffers from several weaknesses that undermine its ability to grow its soft power. The primary of which is its governing political system. The PRC follows the principles of democratic centralism, which is a Leninist form of government that emphasizes "freedom of discussion, unity of action."¹¹ This structure of government is formed through direct elections to local people's congresses, followed by indirect elections from those local congresses to higher levels of the state.¹² According to the constitution of the PRC, representatives in the National People's Congress and the local people's congresses at various levels are elected to five-year terms, and are responsible to the people and subject to their supervision. While this structure may appear acceptable (or even appealing) on the surface, unattractive aspects lay beneath it.

⁹ Joseph, S. Nye, *Bound to Lead...*, 188.

¹⁰ Center for Strategic and International Studies, *CSIS Commission On Smart Power: A Smarter, More Secure America* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2007), 6.

¹¹ V.I. Lenin, "Report on the Unity Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. Chapter VIII: The Congress Summed Up" accessed 2 May 2014, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1906/rucong/viii.htm>.

¹² The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, "Constitution of the People's Republic of China" accessed 2 May 2014, http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/Constitution/node_2825.htm

In the aftermath of World War II, China was left physically devastated and ideologically divided by Nationalists and Communists.¹³ Following renewed civil war hostilities, the Nationalists were forced to retreat to Taiwan, and subsequently relocated the capital of the Republic of China (ROC) to Taipei. The communist forces of Mao Zedong emerged from the countryside victorious, and establish the PRC in 1949. Although it was Mao's CCP that maintained control over the mainland, it would take the world 22 years to acknowledge its legitimacy, as the ROC retained China's seat at the United Nations (UN) until October 1971. This lag highlights that the prospect of having the CCP representing China at the UN was not attractive to member states, and indicates a state-level preference for multi-party democracy. While it is true that the world was in the midst of the Cold War in this period, the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 illustrated the lack of staying power of communism in the face of Western liberal democracy. This is reaffirmed by the fact that China is one of only five communist countries remaining in the world today.¹⁴ This clearly demonstrates that many ideas and values that emerge from the PRC will remain unattractive as long as they follow a single party communist model, which will severely impact their ability to employ soft power as a means of achieving their objectives.

The PRC and many of the other communist countries are undertaking economic reforms in order to align their economies with Western market principles. Although the CCP has become much more sensitive to domestic issues in order to maintain "political

¹³ Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2011), 89.

¹⁴ The others being the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Republic of Cuba, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea).

security,” there are not any meaningful moves towards political reform.¹⁵ The CCP fiercely defends itself against any foreign entity that criticizes their handling of domestic issues. As far as the CCP is concerned, topics such as suppression of Tibetans, Taiwan succession, and religious and political dissent are not the business of foreign governments or non-governmental organizations.¹⁶ While many would agree that the domestic realm lies squarely within the CCPs purview, the court of world public opinion will always judge their behaviour. For this reason, the CCP is caught between policies that maintain control domestically but harm its image abroad. Because of this, political reform and compromise on domestic issues will be required should the PRC wish to increase its ability to wield soft power. These, however, are domestic issues that adversely impact the PRCs ability to attract other states towards it. There are also aspects of its foreign policy that may not appeal to other countries.

The economic growth of the PRC since market liberalization reforms began in late 1978 has been impressive to say the least. Furthermore, and of greater importance:

is the fact that the fallout from the [Great Financial Crisis] has, especially in the eyes of many in the developing world, bolstered the credibility of China’s economic development model, and fed a growing sense that while the 20th Century was the American Century, the 21st Century might just be China’s.¹⁷

The performance and resilience of the Chinese economy over the last six years adds to the soft power of the PRCs economic model, however, the model is not perfect in the eyes of

¹⁵ Susan L. Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 53.

¹⁶ David L. Shambaugh, *China Goes ...*, 58.

¹⁷ Stephen Olson and Clyde Prestowitz, “The Evolving Role of China in International Institutions,” prepared for: The U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, January 2011, accessed 4 May 2014,

<http://origin.www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/TheEvolvingRoleofChinainInternationalInstitutions.pdf>

many observers. Of critical significance is the ways in which the economic power is achieved.

In order to support and sustain this rapid growth, China has had to secure vast quantities of resources. These raw materials are coming primarily from Africa. Sino-Africa contact can be traced as far back as the Han Dynasty of 206 BCE to 220 CE.¹⁸ Since then, trade between the African continent and China remained fairly insignificant until early in the 21st century. In 1999, the dollar value of China-Africa trade was 6.3 billion USD.¹⁹ In 2009 China became Africa's number one trading partner, and by 2012, the dollar value of Chinese-African trade stood at 198.5 billion USD.²⁰ This inspiring growth is accompanied by a Chinese policy of not tying any political conditions to the African nations with which it does business.²¹ Doing business with China may seem an appealing proposition to attract other states to China's ideals. However, for the PRC this is not the case.

The premise of conducting business and development without conditions contrasts with the practices of Western liberal states and institutions, such as the U.S., the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank (WB). Although the aforementioned groups have not been perfect by any means, they have historically attempted to tie requirements such as political and economic reform to aid, loans, and

¹⁸ Philip Snow, *The Star Raft: China's Encounter with Africa* (New York: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988), 2.

¹⁹ David H. Shinn and Joshua Eisenman, *China and Africa: A Century of Engagement* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 99.

²⁰ People's Republic of China, "China-Africa Economic and Trade Cooperation (2013) section I: Promoting Sustainable Development of Trade," accessed 3 May 2014, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-08/29/c_132673093_2.htm.

²¹ People's Republic of China, "China-Africa Economic and Trade Cooperation (2013) section V: Stressing African People's Livelihoods and Capacity Building," accessed 3 May 2014, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-08/29/c_132673093_6.htm.

development funds. While these stipulations often impede economic interests, they are ultimately put in place to satisfy domestic and international public opinion. This is simply because the prospect of aiding or supporting activities that are deemed unacceptable in the West is unappealing to the public. In other words, economic benefits must be balanced with public opinion in Western liberal democracies. The PRC, on the other hand, does not contend with this issue domestically, as the CCP retains control over the media. They cannot, however, manage international public opinion, which is of critical importance when a state wishes to increase its soft power.

Whether the purpose of Beijing's "no strings attached" policy is a purely pragmatic effort to secure economic ends, is meant to counter "chequebook diplomacy" practiced by Taipei's ROC, or stems from a genuine belief in national sovereignty, the effect on the PRC's soft power has not been beneficial. The economic benefits have come at the cost of being aligned with the governments of countries such as Chad, Sudan, and Zimbabwe, whose records on governance and human rights have been questionable at best.²² In addition, maintaining a principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of another nation has enabled it to sell weapons to states without regard for their behaviour. The quality of Chinese arms and their relatively low price make them an attractive option for many regimes, and sales to African nations highlights that China is more than willing to fill any supply demand. In fact, the PRC was so eager to supply arms that they were able to furnish weapons to both sides of the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict from 1998-2000.²³ What is more, the conduct of Chinese state-owned businesses in Africa has been far from

²² The three countries are listed among the top 10 in the 2013 Fund For Peace Failed State Index. Fund For Peace, "2013 Failed State Index," accessed 3 May 2014, <http://ffp.statesindex.org/rankings-2013-sortable>

²³ David H. Shinn and Joshua Eisenman, *China and Africa...*, 168.

exemplary. A 2011 report from Human Rights Watch indicated that conditions in Chinese mines in Zambia were worse than in any other foreign-owned mines.²⁴ Headlines in the Western media similar to these stories are clearly an impediment to the acquisition of soft power for China.

While no doubt opportunistic, the practices of the PRC in Africa are attractive to regimes that are hindered in their ability to do business with other world powers by conditions. Any appeal for the governments that are not subject to similar stipulations is purely economic, and these countries may be reluctant to align themselves with the likes of Chad, Sudan, and Zimbabwe. Similarly, countries that consider following the PRCs model may be reluctant to go against international norms. The normative dimension of state behaviour is often set in international institutions, which is the next source of soft power to be considered.

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

If a state can make its power legitimate in the eyes of others and establish international institutions that encourage others to define their interests in compatible ways, it may not need to expend as many of its costly traditional economic or military resources.

- Power and Interdependence

The arena in which China has perhaps the largest potential capacity to grow soft power is the domain of international institutions. In this sphere, the PRC is positioning itself to influence the norms of global governance. With their extensive human capital, the PRC could provide a substantial input into every organization in which they are a part

²⁴ Human Rights Watch, "You'll Be Fired if You Refuse: Labor Abuses in Zambia's Chinese State-owned Copper Mines," accessed 3 May 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/zambia1111ForWebUpload.pdf>

of. Changing the nature of international institutions will take time though, and will require an improved ability on the part of the PRC to conduct itself both competently and confidently in these fora. Here, they are beginning to show maturity, and will eventually develop the soft power within these global frameworks that is commensurate with their potential. This has already been a long process, and will not generate any meaningful soft power for China any time soon. In spite of being a powerful member of the UN Security Council, maintaining diplomatic relations with over 175 countries, being a member of over 150 international organizations, and a party to more than 300 multilateral treaties, China's behaviour in the past was remarkably passive and reactive at the global level.²⁵ There were several reasons why the PRC was not exercising their perceived full capacity in international institutions, and thus been slow to grow their soft power. The explanations range from:

- not viewing the institutions as legitimate;²⁶
- being fearful of multilateralism as a Western instrument to restrain China's rise;²⁷
- having insufficient internal institutional maturity (and by extension, a lack of confidence);²⁸ and
- deliberately maintaining a low level of current ambition in order not to upset the international status quo and reassure other states that their intentions are benign.²⁹

Whatever the rationalization, the result is that the PRC currently has very little influence over the numerous international institutions in relation to the size of its economy and its population, and therefore disproportionately low soft power. This is of critical importance, as it is within the existing framework of multilateral institutions that the PRC

²⁵ David L. Shambaugh, *China Goes Global...*, 45.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 125.

²⁷ Donald Gross, *The China Fallacy...*, 134.

²⁸ David L. Shambaugh, *China Goes Global...*, 71.

²⁹ "Chinese Soft Power and its Implications for the United States: Competition and Cooperation in the Developing World," A Report of the CSIS Smart Power Initiative, edited by Carola McGiffert, accessed 3 May 2014, https://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/090403_mcgiffert_chinesesoftware_web.pdf

is emerging, and not possessing enough soft power in these organizations is likely to adversely impact China's ability to rise. For this reason, the PRC is altering its views, focusing its efforts, and changing its behaviour within many of these institutions. The result of these adjustments, if done properly, will be additional soft power.

A key factor in gaining soft power within international institutions is how a state conducts itself within the organization. A 2011 report prepared for the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission highlighted a number of trends in the evolution of China's participation in international institutions. The report indicated that the PRC is demonstrating greater assertiveness, maturity, and effectiveness, that its influence is expanding, and that its sphere of engagement is broadening. Other trends that were highlighted in the report were that China demonstrates patience in its conduct and in how it learns to work within each framework. In addition, the report emphasized that the institutions demonstrated very modest influence over how China operates.³⁰ All of this indicates that the PRC is gaining more confidence in its dealings in the multilateral environment, and this will eventually translate into more influence and ultimately additional soft power. Having said that, China has not demonstrated a willingness to stray from its core philosophical and foreign policy regarding the supremacy of national sovereignty, and the prime focus in its interactions remains the further isolation of Taiwan.³¹ These policies have the potential to undermine Chinese efforts to acquire soft power. In time, either Beijing's policies will fall in-line with those of the international institutions, or its soft power will grow enough to alter the policies of the institutions

³⁰ Stephen Olson and Clyde Prestowitz, "The Evolving Role of China ..."

³¹ *Ibid.*

themselves. If that does not happen, China could seek out other options to provide it with soft power; a possibility it has already explored.

The post-World War II Bretton Woods system and institutions were formed with the philosophical imprint of the U.S. and an assumption of shared liberal norms between members.³² The PRC, however, does not share these liberal views, which means that it would be difficult for China to gain soft power within this construct without changing itself.³³ As indicated above, China has become adept in its interactions in multilateral environments, and has demonstrated a willingness to slow one institution down in order to allow another institution time to solidify their position and role. This has occurred in China's dealings with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, in which the U.S. is one of 21 participants.³⁴ The mission of APEC is:

“to support sustainable economic growth and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region. . . by championing free and open trade and investment, promoting and accelerating regional economic integration, encouraging economic and technical cooperation, enhancing human security, and facilitating a favorable and sustainable business environment.”³⁵

The problem with this forum for China is that it provides the U.S. with regulatory influence over the South-East Asian market. The PRC, in order to stifle this influence, dissuades or holds up APEC activities that could strengthen APEC as an institution. This then gives time for China to influence and strengthen its position within the Association

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Ann Kent, *Beyond Compliance: China, International Organizations, and Global Security* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 56.

³⁴ Stephen Olson and Clyde Prestowitz, “The Evolving Role of China...”

³⁵ Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, “Mission Statement,” accessed 5 May 2014, <http://www.apec.org/About-Us/About-APEC/Mission-Statement.aspx>.

of South-East Asian Nations plus three (ASEAN+3),³⁶ and thereby provide balance against APEC (and therefore the U.S.).³⁷ In doing so, they are actively undermining one body to the benefit of another. Over time, this has the potential to reduce (or at least slow the increase of) the legitimacy of status quo organizations. Furthermore, this approach could work in favour of institutions that are more aligned with Chinese, non-liberal ideologies, and increase the PRCs soft power. This is not, however, the only way in which China has the potential to gain soft power in institutions.

Rather than attempting to grow soft power solely from existing institutions, the PRC is taking steps to increase its soft power by participating in new and emerging organizations. Although China's economy is the second largest in the world, it is not a member of the exclusive Group of Eight (G8). Instead, the PRC is a member of the Group of Twenty, which is comprised of twenty major economies. It is also a member of the WB and IMF. Frustration with the pace of reform to give developing countries a stronger voice within these institutions has caused countries like China to seek out alternative institutions in which it can acquire additional soft power. The BRICS is such a group.

The term BRIC was coined to describe the emerging national economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and China, whose leaders met for their first summit in 2009.³⁸ South Africa was added to the group in 2010, and the name was therefore amended to BRICS. Together, these five countries represent half the world's population and possess a

³⁶ ASEAN+3 is a forum that functions as a coordinator of cooperation between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the three East Asia nations of China, Japan, and South Korea.

³⁷ Stephen Olson and Clyde Prestowitz, "The Evolving Role of China..."

³⁸ The name of the group was coined by a Goldman Sachs analyst in 2001, however, the countries did not meet formally until June, 2009.

combined economy of over 17.4 trillion USD.³⁹ Together, they provide a powerful voice to counter the established status quo of global governance, and their influence continues to grow as their economies expand. Although the five countries do not have much in common beyond improving balance sheets, they do share a general dissatisfaction with the current global governance regime. Based on their discontent, the BRICS members share the common goal of realizing a global governance structure that better reflects current political and economic realities, and is based on the principle of multipolarity.⁴⁰ To this end, they have begun to institutionalize their meetings, and are in the process of creating institutions that provide an alternative to the liberal Bretton Woods institutions. The BRICS development bank will have all of its preparatory work completed by July 2014,⁴¹ and the group is planning to create an institution whose purpose would be to provide stability to currency markets. Together, the nascent BRICS institution, while providing a counter-weight to the G8, is creating alternatives to the WB and IMF. For the PRC, this provides legitimate and viable means in which it can grow a substantial amount of soft power, and does so on its own terms. These new institutions will not be seen as legitimate, though, unless the world comes to see China's ideology and culture as attractive. While the PRC's ideologies are presently a hindrance, Chinese cultural attraction possesses vast potential.

³⁹ International Monetary Fund, "World Economic Outlook Database," accessed 5 May 2014, <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2013/01/weodata/index.aspx>

⁴⁰ Sotiris Petropoulos, "The emergence of the BRICS — implications for global governance," *Journal of International & Global Studies* 4, no. 2 (May 2013): 40.

⁴¹ Lidia Kelly and Paul Simao, "BRICS aim to finish development bank preparations by July summit," *Reuters*, 11 April 2014, accessed 7 May 2014, <http://in.reuters.com/article/2014/04/10/g20-economy-brics-idINDEEA390GA20140410>.

CULTURAL ATTRACTION

. . . We must keep to the orientation of advanced socialist culture, bring about a new upsurge in socialist cultural development, stimulate the cultural creativity of the whole nation, and enhance culture as part of the soft power of our country to better guarantee the people's basic cultural rights and interests, enrich the cultural life in Chinese society and inspire the enthusiasm of the people for progress. . .

- Hu Jintao, Report at 17th Chinese Communist Party Congress

The last, and perhaps most important component of soft power to be discussed here is cultural attraction. The PRC is attempting to grow its soft power by influencing the norms of the international populace at large. This could, of course, take a very long time. The cultural aspect of soft power speaks to a desire to consume the products of another state. The term product is intended to be an inclusive term of both tangible and intangible aspects of culture. For instance, products could include manufactured goods such as electronics, but also includes food, fashion, and various forms of media such as art, music and television. The cultural attraction of the U.S. is, perhaps, the strongest feature of its soft power, as American culture is distributed around the world through the spread of its goods, its businesses, and most importantly, its media. Recognizing this, the PRC has gone to great lengths to improve the appeal of Chinese culture, as their view is that culture is the core of soft power.⁴² As previously highlighted, however, the principle of democratic centralism and the single party system on which the PRC is modelled has proven to be unattractive around the world. Seemingly acknowledging that the current political culture cannot be leveraged to increase Chinese soft power, the CCP has gone on the offensive to try to grow its (cultural) soft power in other ways.

⁴² “Chinese Soft Power and its Implications for the United States...”

Starting in 2004, the PRC initiated the establishment of university level Confucius Institutes (CIs) and secondary education level classrooms (CCs) with the goal of spreading Chinese culture and language around the world. These CIs and CCs are modelled on similar British, German, French, and Spanish endeavours. The stated goal of the government is to open 1000 CIs around the world by 2020,⁴³ and they are well on their way. By the end of 2011, there were over 350 CIs and 500 CCs spread throughout 105 countries around the world.⁴⁴

While appearing to be benign, this approach has the powerful potential to provide China with a great amount of soft power in the long term. At present, Sino culture, values, and objectives are foreign to most European and North American audiences, and the country is generally viewed in a negative light by people in those regions.⁴⁵ By facilitating the learning of Chinese culture and language, the PRC has created a venue where it hopes to build a bridge into the lives of Western populations and begin to influence any cognitive biases that may impede it. Over time, the cognitive shifts that the PRC hopes to achieve through increased exposure should alter the normative foundation on which potential conflict may be initiated. Given enough time, the efforts of the CCP will generate slow cognitive and normative shifts, which have the potential to provide China with an impressive return of soft power.

⁴³ Kelly Chung Dawson, "Confucius Institutes enhance China's int'l image," *China Daily*, 23 April 2010, accessed 4 May 2014, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-04/23/content_9766116.htm.

⁴⁴ Chen Jia, "Making a World of Difference," *China Daily*, 14 December 2011, accessed 4 May 2014, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-12/14/content_14261831.htm

⁴⁵ BBC World Service, "Views of China and India Slide While UK's Ratings Climb: Global Poll," GlobeScan and Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA), 22 May 2013, accessed 8 May 2014, http://www.globescan.com/images/images/pressreleases/bbc2013_country_ratings/2013_country_rating_poll_bbc_globescan.pdf.

The strategy being employed by the CCP is not lost on Western spectators, though, and there are doubts as to whether the CIs and CCs will generate the response that the CCP hopes for. Of primary concern for many is the potential that CIs are “Trojan horses” being masked as educational “olive branches”.⁴⁶ This alarmist view often accompanies perceptions that the rise of Chinese economic and military power as a threat to human rights and democracy.⁴⁷ This perception draws attention to a critical weakness in the CCPs approach to cultural attraction: itself.

The PRC has emphasized the use of public diplomacy in its quest to improve its cultural attraction and ultimately grow soft power.⁴⁸ The problem with this approach, however, is that it is the state that is pulling the levers. Unfortunately for the CCP, most indications are that soft power is generated from civil society. As Nye argued, “[t]he paradox of using public diplomacy to generate soft power in a global information age is that decentralization and diminished control may be central to the creation of soft power.”⁴⁹ Whereas America’s soft power emanates from “everything from universities and foundations to Hollywood and pop culture,”⁵⁰ the CCP is trying to grow its soft

⁴⁶ James F. Paradise, “China and International Harmony: The Role of Confucius Institutes in Bolstering Beijing’s Soft Power,” *Asian Survey* 49, no.4 (July/August 2009): 659.

⁴⁷ For an example of this perception, see Steven W. Mosher, “Confucius Institutes: Trojan Horses with Chinese Characteristics,” Testimony Presented to the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations House Committee on Foreign Affairs, 28 March 2012, accessed 8 May 2014, <http://archives.republicans.foreignaffairs.house.gov/112/HHRG-112-FA17-WState-MosherS-20120328.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Public diplomacy is broadly defined as a country’s engagement and communications with foreign publics. For further discussion, see Nicholas J. Cull, “Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 616 (March 2008): 31-54; Etyan Gilboa, “Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 616 (March 2008): 55-77.

⁴⁹ Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power...*, 109.

⁵⁰ Joseph S. Nye, “What China and Russia Don’t Get About Soft Power,” *Foreign Policy*, 29 April 2013, accessed 27 March 2014, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/04/29/what_china_and_russia_don_t_get_about_soft_power.

power from centrally controlled government institutions. The result is that while attempting to grow soft power, the CCP “continue[s] to muzzle many of its most creative and diverse elements,”⁵¹ and therefore hinders the country from reaching its full soft power potential. Exacerbating this are the restrictions on free speech that exist in the PRC, as limits on dissent and rejection of criticism reduce the credibility of messages.⁵² Nowhere is this more evident than in the perception of Chinese media in the Western world.

In an examination of the impact of China’s image projection abroad, Hongying Wang found that Chinese efforts to influence American elites on important issues have generally failed, and that they do not seem to have accepted the images and narratives projected by the PRC.⁵³ This presents an issue to the governing CCP, as it relies on successes in its foreign perception to secure domestic legitimacy. Without a satisfied populace at home, though, no amount of external communication will improve the image of China abroad.⁵⁴ In this respect, the CCP has no choice but to adapt and provide the necessary political reform that will deliver ideological shifts. Much like when it decided that it had to transform the centrally driven command economy into a free market economy for the good of the people, the CCP has no choice but to make political reforms if it wants to increase the attractiveness of China to the Western world. In doing so, they would be able to unleash China’s vast numbers of varied and imaginative resources into the marketplace, which would result in a surge of attraction to Chinese culture. Given the

⁵¹ David L. Shambaugh, “China Flexes its Soft Power,” *The New York Times*, 7 June 2010, accessed 8 May 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/08/opinion/08iht-edshambaugh.html?_r=0.

⁵² Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power...*, 109.

⁵³ Hongying Wang, “China’s Image Projection and its Impact,” in *Soft Power in China: Public Diplomacy through Communication*, ed. Jian Wang, 37-56 (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

⁵⁴ Jian Wang, “Introduction,” in *Soft Power in China: Public Diplomacy through Communication*, ed. Jian Wang, 1-18 (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

CCPs history of slow, managed reform, it is unlikely that changes of this nature will be seen for some time. It is therefore unlikely to produce any meaningful soft power from Chinese culture in the short-term. The prospects in the long-term, however, are vast.

As highlighted above, the long-term ability of the PRC to possess a substantial amount of soft power generated from cultural attraction is excellent. Current endeavours to expose the world to Sino culture and spread the Mandarin language are preparing the ground for future acceptance of, and attraction to the PRC. The prospect of this happening will only become viable if the CCP removes the single party restraint on its governing system. Commensurate with this, the country will need to improve the reach and maturity of its media if it hopes to improve the appeal of Sino culture and increase its soft power. Once more, the CCP is strategically positioning China by expanding the capacity and capability of its inadequate international communication infrastructure.⁵⁵ While it is doing this, the increasing footprint of Chinese media around the world is serving to improve the competency of its media professionals, and is exposing them to the ideas and practices that exist outside China. This is helping to improve the delivery and ability of Chinese domestic media outlets,⁵⁶ a process that will help to expedite discourse within the country, and will hopefully lead to political reform. When political reform finally happens in the PRC, there will be a remarkable effect on the rest of the world, as the limitations that are currently placed on its society will be relaxed, which will lead to a greater appetite for Chinese culture, along with a matching growth of Chinese soft power.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

CONCLUSION

Although there has been a great deal of thought and research put into Nye's concept of soft power around the world, it is clear that China currently has very little soft power. In spite of this, the PRC is growing an array of resources that will likely increase its soft power in the future. In the short-term, China's soft power will continue to be adversely affected by its domestic and foreign ideologies. Its domestic form of government, which is based on the principle of democratic centralism, has proven to be unattractive to other states. In addition, while the performance and resilience of the Chinese economy over the last two decades clearly illustrates a successful model for other developing countries to emulate, the regimes with which the Chinese government is partnering with, and the manner in which state-owned businesses have conducted themselves leaves a lot to be desired by foreign audiences. While policy changes of this nature may be difficult to implement, they would likely result in immediate growth in the PRC's soft power.

Over the long term, the PRC possesses the extensive human capital that is necessary to acquire soft power through the influence of international institutions. Although China has participated on the international stage for some time, it has largely done so from the sidelines. This is changing, though, and the PRC is demonstrating an increasing level of assertiveness, maturity, and effectiveness within the numerous fora, and this is resulting in an expanding sphere of influence. Unfortunately, China's influence within these institutions is perceived to be restrained by the fact that the PRC does not share the same underlying values as the developed nations that influenced the establishment of many of the global institutions. For this reason, the PRC is seeking other

means to influence global organizations. Given enough time, either China's influence will alter the underlying norms of international institutions, or the institutions will have an affect on China. As this will take time, it is unlikely that China will gain any significant soft power within the international institution framework for some time to come.

Finally, the attraction of Sino culture remains hindered by domestic restrictions that exist due to CCP ideology. Where the PRC is engaged in a public diplomacy effort to spread its culture around the world, it is doing so without being seen as a legitimate messenger by foreign circles. Although China is endeavouring to alter global cognitive and normative biases through educational means, it is ultimately the domestic audience that matters the most, as populations abroad have proven to be unresponsive to state produced narratives. In order to improve foreign attraction to Chinese culture, the CCP will need to alter its policies in order to enable its vast, diverse, and creative population to freely participate in today's globalized world. When this finally takes place, the culture, values, and ideas of the PRC will become more palatable to foreign audiences, and China's soft power will grow to a level corresponding to its tangible hard power.

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