

Soft Power in a Hard Place: China, Taiwan, Cross-Strait Relations and U.S. Policy

by Jacques deLisle

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Abstract: Soft power, like so much else in relations between the People’s Republic of China and Taiwan, is asymmetrical and freighted with implications for U.S. policy and U.S.-China relations. For China, soft power largely serves—or strives—to reduce alarm (or at least reaction) among other states concerned about China’s new-found hard power or, perhaps more realistically, the hard power that China’s economic rise can underwrite. Much of the value for Beijing of soft power is—and is likely to remain for quite some time—its potential contribution to reducing the likelihood that other states will react to China’s rising hard power in ways that could threaten China’s interests.

China’s accretion and use of soft power can be a palliative, genuinely allaying other states’ worries about a “China threat.” Short of that, soft power can divert other states’ foreign policymaking from assessments based solely on China’s growing capabilities into more complex ones focusing on intent as well, giving Beijing a second front or a second chance to dissuade balancing or containment-oriented responses. Or, more modestly still, China’s soft power assets and initiatives can provide arguments (or at least cover) for those in policy circles abroad who oppose stronger reactions to China’s rise, whether rooted in calculations of national or narrower parochial interest, political preference, expectations of opportunities to free ride on U.S.-provided international security public goods, or other reasons. As China’s hard power resources continue to rise and Beijing undertakes efforts to cultivate and employ greater soft power, the PRC may turn to relying on soft power to pursue more assertive and potentially status quo-altering ends, but it has not done so yet. Taiwan is a major element in China’s soft power agenda, and one toward which China’s aims have long been less than fully pro-status quo. Taiwan is both the immediate target of some PRC uses of soft power and the indirect object of others, primarily those seeking to undermine other states’

support for conferral of state-like status on the Republic of China (ROC)/Taiwan.

For Taiwan, soft power matters a great deal. Soft power offers Taiwan a vital if uncertain substitute for hard power resources that it otherwise lacks. It provides an indispensable means for seeking support from the United States and others in the international community and for parrying China's efforts to use soft power to its advantage in pursuing its Taiwan policy.

The current version of cross-Strait soft power competition is the latest installment in a decades-old and long-evolving contest that predates widespread use of the term "soft power." The contest takes place on many fronts. It surely will continue to change with the ongoing growth of China's power (whether hard or soft) and ambition and developments in cross-Strait and U.S.-China-Taiwan relations.

Soft Power and the Cross-Strait Context

Analyses of "soft power" often bear the marks of the concept's origins as a description of the United States and its place in the world, especially after the Cold War, and a prescription for United States foreign policy, especially in the post-9/11 era or the post-George W. Bush administration years.¹ The notion of soft power as the capacity through appeal or attraction—rather than coercion or side-payment—to induce others to behave in ways that serve one's own aims and interests skews toward a subtype of soft power that reflects the idea's seminal historical case. So framed, soft power easily comes to mean the ability to move persuaded states to embrace, or at least acquiesce in, an affirmative policy agenda of a soft power-strong state. Soft power easily and often narrows to its role as a substitute or supplement (or alternative explanation) for the traditionally hard power-based phenomena at the core of hegemonic stability or bandwagoning patterns in international relations theories. Even many analyses from China and Taiwan—for which this formulation of soft power ill-fits local reality—often view soft power in these terms.

Focusing on these aspects of soft power can mean slighting other relevant dimensions. One is analogous to functions of hard power that do not consist of the Thucydidean task of compelling weaker states to act in ways willed by more powerful ones. Classic realist accounts of power are rooted in a vision of international relations as an anarchic, even Hobbesian, world in which power's most fundamental and essential purpose is narrow and

¹ Joseph Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990); *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Cannot Go It Alone* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004). Broader conceptions of soft power, including some akin to those set forth here, include those addressed in articles by Alan Wachman and David Kang in this edition of *Orbis*.

defensive: securing the state from domination, or even destruction, by other states. Another facet of soft power is more relevant to less insecure states but is still a relatively modest one: well used, soft power might dissuade potentially vulnerable states from pursuing alliances or other balancing or hedging responses to another state's hard power. Weaker states' threat perceptions reflect assessments of a great or rising power's capacity and will. Soft power can address the question of will, fostering more benign or accommodating assessments of a powerful state's intentions.

These less-often emphasized dimensions of soft power are salient for China, Taiwan and cross-Strait issues. The first has been most pertinent for Taiwan, which seeks means to cope with a powerful PRC that wants, at minimum, to deter Taiwan from pursuing full-fledged or formal independence and, more ambitiously, to achieve Taiwan's formal political integration into a larger China. The second has been more significant for the PRC, especially as China's economic ascension has generated resources for military modernization (and hard power more generally) on a scale that dwarfs Taiwan, surpasses other East Asian states and raises doubts about the U.S.'s long-term dominance of the regional security landscape.

Despite their different positions and agendas, the PRC and Taiwan have sought to develop and deploy soft power sometimes in similar ways. This is the case, at least, if soft power is taken broadly to mean a state's invocation of, or reliance on, ideas or ideals (typically, ones that the state purports to embody, support and seek to advance abroad)² to improve its international security, influence and achievement of its foreign policy goals, relative to a baseline situation where a state's security, influence and policy success are based only on its (relative) hard power (and the alignment of national interest of other states with unevenly distributed hard power resources).

Whatever the merits of soft power in understanding international relations generally, it should be no surprise that the idea of soft power would gain traction in China and Taiwan. Notions akin to soft power are enduring tropes in Chinese political culture, including elements relevant to external affairs.³ Confucius advised his hoped-for audience of rulers that the wise king facing international insecurity should first give up weapons, then wealth and only last the confidence of the people. (On the Confucian view, popular confidence depended on soft power-like resources in domestic politics, including inculcating the people with the right values and leading—and transforming—them by virtuous example).⁴

²This definition broadly tracks elements in common definitions of sources of soft power, including a state's values, institutions, culture and foreign policy.

³Jacques deLisle, "China's Approach to International Law: A Historical Perspective," 94 *American Society of International Law Proceedings* vol. 94 (2000), pp. 267–275.

⁴Confucius, *Analects* XII:7, XII: 19, XIII:9.

Relative disesteem for reliance on hard power, rather than persuasion and other soft power-like methods, is another hoary theme of Chinese statecraft. It is famously reflected in the often-quoted aphorism from Sun Tzu's *Art of War*: that the supreme skill is to subdue the enemy without fighting.⁵ Mencian thought contrasts the way of the king (*wangdao*) with the less estimable way of coercion or hegemony (*badao*).⁶ The notion of soft power's importance, and potential superiority to hard power, may have reached its apogee with China's Taoists (concededly a lesser strain in Chinese political thought, as were the hard power-touting Legalists): Lao-tzu explained that water, which is singularly soft and weak, is unsurpassed in attacking things that are "firm and strong," and that the sage did not resort to violent measures to achieve his ends.⁷

In the great Han Dynasty debate over foreign policy, the *Discourses on Salt and Iron*, Confucians countered their Legalist antagonists' emphasis on hard power with the argument that the barbarians beyond China's borders might be managed not with force but through what was at base a soft power strategy: drawing the outsiders near and transforming them (*lai hua*) to share Chinese civilization and values.⁸ Soft power as transnational Sinification persisted through times of Chinese strength (including when states along China's periphery acknowledged China's political power and moral-cultural leadership) and weakness (including when China absorbed and largely converted its Mongol and Manchu conquerors in the Yuan and Qing dynasties). Confucian and broader Chinese values have made a striking comeback and become a prominent part of China's soft power foreign policy thinking in recent years.⁹ Such soft power-like elements were far from absent even during the revolutionary and Maoist period when Confucianism and Chinese tradition more generally suffered withering assaults.

In Mao Zedong's thought, much of it shaped and articulated before the PRC's founding, soft power-like elements are common. Hard power clearly mattered for Mao and China's revolution: Mao notoriously opined that political power grows from the barrel of a gun, and the Chinese Communist Party came to power on the strength of the People's Liberation Army's defeat of its Nationalist rival and its earlier contributions in the war against Japan. Nonetheless, perhaps Mao's signal contribution (or apostasy) in Marxist thought was his emphasis on the power of ideas and, in Chinese communist jargon,

⁵ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, ch. 3; see also Alistair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 24–26.

⁶ Mencius, *Book of Mencius*, 1A7.

⁷ Lao Tzu, *Tao Teh Ching* trans. James Legge (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover, 1997), chs. 28, 58, 78.

⁸ *Discourses on Salt and Iron* trans. Esson M. Gale (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1931).

⁹ For a selective account of this pattern and argument for Confucian-style soft power, see Daniel A. Bell, "War, Peace and China's Soft Power: A Confucian Approach," *Diogenes* vol. 56 (2009), pp. 26–40.

revolutionary “standpoint.” Culminating during the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s but with deep roots in Chinese Communism’s pre-PRC years, Maoism brought the migration of the key driving force of revolution from the hard power-linked substructure of economic forces of production to the soft power-like superstructure of ideology.¹⁰ Throughout the PRC era, both domestic politics and foreign policy have been marked by a consistent (although unevenly intense) concern with another soft power-related imperative: articulating a correct “line” to underlie and integrate specific policies and to steer the use of whatever power the Chinese state could wield.

Although the “Chinese-ness” of Taiwan is a perennially fraught issue, Taiwan is culturally Chinese enough (and on many accounts more so than the mainland) that it too is heir to a tradition with much affinity for soft power. As scholars, critics and advocates of the phenomenon have emphasized, soft power, and ideas or ideology more broadly, also have loomed comparatively large in the external relations of the United States—the principal culturally non-Chinese interested party in cross-strait relations. This aspect of the U.S.’s engagement with the world surely is part of the explanation for the term “soft power” having emerged primarily to assess and guide Washington’s foreign policy (and at a time of singular American hard power dominance, no less). This American proclivity, recognized in Beijing and especially in Taipei, has made the United States a key audience—and motivation—for cross-strait soft power competition.

China’s Soft Power Agenda and Implications for Taiwan

The PRC’s turn to soft power in foreign policy arguably dates to early days of relative weakness and international isolation. Cut off from the United States and its allies amid Cold War tensions and in the aftermath of the Korean War and facing rising conflicts of ideology and interest with the Soviet Union, China embraced ideals of developing country solidarity and post-colonial political values. Beijing pursued the “Bandung Line” (named after the site of the 1955 summit of African and Asian states with which Beijing sought to cultivate soft power-based bonds) and adopted the “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence” (formally accepted in a joint statement with India and calling for robust respect for state sovereignty).

More than a decade later, China held itself out as a paragon, and supporter, of world revolution, in contrast to the revisionist and “hegemonist” Soviet Union and the imperialist—and equally “hegemonist”—United States. To be sure, the content of Maoist revolutionary values in foreign relations was

¹⁰ See generally Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005) pp. 1183–2005; Benjamin I. Schwartz, *Communism in China: Ideology in Flux* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968); John Bryan Starr, *Continuing the Revolution: The Political Thought of Mao* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979).

something of a mess. They came to the fore when the domestic turmoil and inward focus of the Cultural Revolution left little room for Chinese foreign policy of any stripe and made it hard to discern any stable and coherent Chinese domestic model for potential emulation. They mixed class revolution against bourgeois or nationalist regimes with endorsement of such regimes as part of the “global countryside” seeking to overthrow the dominance of the metropolitan former colonial powers. Predating U.S.-PRC rapprochement and in the midst of a bitter Sino-Soviet feud, China’s most radical ideological values had little soft power-like impact abroad beyond a handful of marginalized states (such as Albania) and scattered Maoist rebel groups in the developing world. But a Chinese view that soft power, or something very much like it, mattered in international affairs was unmistakable.

The Reform Era that began with Deng Xiaoping’s consolidation of power near the end of the 1970s is generally—and generally accurately—characterized as a turn to pragmatism and a repudiation of the excesses of ideology during the late Mao years. But this shift did not bring a lasting repudiation of elements in Chinese foreign policy that today could be characterized as taking soft power seriously. A significant retrenchment of ideology-driven and idea-based foreign policy had come earlier, with Mao’s rapprochement with the once-reviled United States to check the Soviet threat—a feat notably accomplished in partnership with the American arch-practitioner of foreign policy *realpolitik* and balance of power strategies, Henry Kissinger.

The early decades of the Reform Era marked a relative low point for soft power in PRC foreign policy. China sought largely to rejoin the international system, largely on the latter’s own terms. Beijing’s overriding goal was to secure a stable and peaceful environment in which it could pursue the imperatives of market-oriented and internationally engaged economic development. The PRC was, thus, more supplicant than persuader, more regime-taker than regime-shaper. The most enduring foreign policy slogan of the period was Deng Xiaoping’s call for China to “hide brightness and nourish obscurity” (*taoguang yanghui*)—a phrase that has produced numerous less literal translations with controversial and not entirely consistent meanings but which, on any plausible rendering, contains no ambitious agenda for Chinese soft power in the near term.¹¹ To the extent that China’s rising, but still weak, hard power (or potential hard power) could be successfully downplayed, Beijing had relatively little need for soft power to assuage other actors’ worries that China might use its growing means to pursue a revisionist or aggressive agenda.

Despite this initial Reform Era remission, features of Chinese foreign policy associated with soft power never went away. The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence have endured as a principal leitmotif throughout the

¹¹ Wei Jing, “Foreign Analysts Misread China’s Strategic Golden Rule,” *Global Times*, June 6, 2010.

post-Mao era.¹² Even the more radical-sounding “anti-hegemonism” lingered, falling into near-desuetude only when it gave way to kindred concerns with resisting a “unipolar” order centered on the United States as a “hyperpower” in the post-Cold War era, especially after the startling demonstration of American hard power in the first Gulf War and still more amid the U.S.’s simultaneous—and somewhat paradoxical—turn to unilateralism in the Iraq War and pursuit of Chinese support in the war against terrorism. The accompanying Chinese foreign policy emphasis on “multipolarity” or “multilateralism” also recalled earlier gambits that sought solidarity with weaker states in resisting super-power dominance.

As China grew in power, influence and confidence in the later 1990s and 2000s, soft power-type concerns assumed renewed prominence. Chinese official and orthodox discourse spoke of “comprehensive national power” (*zonghe guoli*) that extended beyond military strength to include economic and soft power.¹³ The term “soft power” itself (translated as *ruan shili* or, less commonly, *ruan lilian* or *ruan guoli*) has taken hold in China’s foreign policy and in official analyses of, and policy intellectuals’ prescriptions for, China’s approach to the outside world.¹⁴ No less a figure than President and Chinese Communist Party General Secretary Hu Jintao called for China to develop its soft power resources. He did so at the singularly high-profile and significant occasion of his speech to the Seventeenth Party Congress.¹⁵

Throughout, Taiwan has been a major consideration in China’s development and deployment of soft power. Kuomintang-ruled authoritarian Taiwan earlier stood as both front-line target and standing rebuke of Maoist China’s intermittent infatuation with casting itself as a fourth Rome

¹² See, for example, “Text of Premier Wen Jiabao’s Speech Delivered at Meeting Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence,” Xinhua, June 28, 2004.

¹³ The phrase—and the idea of international competition in this area—made it into the opening paragraphs of then-President and Party General Secretary Jiang Zemin’s Report to the Sixteenth National Party Congress.

¹⁴ Joshua Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive: How China’s Soft Power is Transforming the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Carola McGiffert, ed. *Chinese Soft Power and Its Implications for the United States* (Washington, D.C.: CSIS, 2009); Sheng Ding, *The Dragon’s Hidden Wings: How China Rises with its Soft Power* (Lanham, Md.: Rowland and Littlefield, 2008); Joseph S. Nye, Jr. and Wang Jisi, “Hard Decisions on Soft Power,” *Harvard International Review* (Summer 2009), pp. 18–22; Hongying Wang and Yeh-Chung Lu, “The Conception of Soft Power and its Policy Implications: A Comparative Study of China and Taiwan,” *Journal of Contemporary China* (August 2008), pp. 425–447; Young Nam Cho and Jong Ho Jeong, “China’s Soft Power,” *Asian Survey*, (May–June 2008), pp. 455–461; Li Mingjiang, “China Debates Soft Power,” *Chinese Journal of International Politics* vol. 2 (2008), pp. 287–308.

¹⁵ “Full Text of Hu Jintao’s Report to the Seventeenth Party Congress,” Xinhua News Agency, October 14, 2007. Such speeches are of special importance, delivered at the Party’s most important public meeting and by the top leader who is being renewed for a second term and has moved beyond his previous Party Congress report when he operated under the heavy shadow of his then-just-retired predecessor.

(whether anti-colonial nationalist or communist revolutionary). In more recent times, Taiwan's place in China's soft power calculus has become more complex and embedded in a more varied and wide-ranging PRC foreign relations agenda.

Nearly a third of a century into the Reform Era, China's efforts to cultivate and use soft power, generally and concerning Taiwan, include several diverse strands. First, there remains a vestigial communist component. In the post-Cold War world, the number of communist (and kindred) regimes has become vanishingly small. Vietnam's relations with China have been no better than mixed and volatile, and China's influence with, and policy toward, North Korea are largely based on calculations of national interest and hard power (including especially the potential effects of a regime collapse at China's border). Nonetheless, soft power is part of the picture. Although causation is hard to prove, China likely derives special benefit and influence with these difficult neighbors from being a paragon of a communist regime that has remained in power and become internationally powerful, partly through a stunningly effective development formula. That Vietnam has self-consciously mimicked earlier Reform-Era Chinese institutions and policies and is marching down a path trod by Deng's China may have reduced the sharpness of perennial bilateral conflicts. So too may have the connection, or sense of connection, that such emulation generates.

Beijing's limited ability (largely rooted in the Kim Jong-Il regime's dependence on Chinese support) to steer Pyongyang away from paths that would be worse for China's interests might well be weaker still if North Korea did not regard the PRC as part of the small fraternity of people's republics. In the case of North Korea, there are broader effects for Chinese soft power. Beijing's cultivated position as the indispensable and facilitating central state in the Six Party Talks (and the larger multilateral diplomacy of addressing Pyongyang's destabilizing behavior) adds to Beijing's soft power, enhancing its clout with the other four powers (especially Washington) and with the wider world (where China can portray itself as a responsible great power dealing with a serious regional security problem). All of this can help the PRC in its soft power contest with Taiwan, both directly (in terms of the two sides' relative soft power resources) and indirectly (in affecting the efficacy of Taiwan's soft power efforts in Washington and elsewhere).

This aspect of Chinese soft power is of comparatively little importance, however, given the limited universe of communist states and its limitation to China's neighbors.¹⁶ It is also in tension with several other, more significant faces of Chinese soft power, including ones that matter for Taiwan issues, both directly (in that the contrast with the communist regime across the Strait has

¹⁶ Ideological solidarity has not been a dominant factor in China's relations with Cuba and Venezuela. Katherine E. Bliss, "China's Projection of Soft Power in the Americas" in McGiffert, ed. *Chinese Soft Power*, pp. 45–62.

long been a pillar of Taipei's soft power) and indirectly (in that Beijing's residual solidarity with a chronically provocative Pyongyang undermines efforts to portray itself as a responsible great power and in that China's ostensible "socialism" potentially narrows the appeal of China's development model and highlights less internationally appealing Chinese political values and institutions).

Second and much more significantly, China's economic development success has been the greatest source of contemporary Chinese soft power. The PRC's achievement of extraordinarily rapid growth and sustained economic development inspires awe and desire to emulate throughout much of the developing world. In the considerable portion of that world ruled by undemocratic regimes, China's achievement of an astounding economic transformation while maintaining political stability and authoritarian rule comprise another compellingly attractive feature. China's apparent ability to weather the global economic crisis more smoothly than the advanced market economies has made the China Model all the more impressive and appealing abroad. The slower recovery elsewhere and the U.S. role in the crisis's origins tarnished previously triumphant American-style capitalism and thus raised the international stature of China's more state-steered and capital flow-regulating approach.

With such phenomena, China gained prestige and respect among policy elites and broader publics abroad.¹⁷ This soft power resource contributes (along with China's underlying economic importance) to Beijing's ability to get its views taken into account, especially on issues of global economic policy. Absent China's economic prowess (something that is not soft power according to standard Western accounts but is included in some Chinese ones) and the sense that China's approach to economic regulation might be right where the U.S.'s had proved wrong (something that is within the realm of soft power), we would not have seen, for example, the relatively serious reception accorded Chinese leaders' criticisms of American financial regulation, prescriptions for international economic policy reforms at G20 meetings, or suggestions that International Monetary Fund special drawing rights (a basket of currencies that Chinese sources also argued soon should include China's *renminbi*) be considered to replace the U.S. dollar as the dominant international reserve currency.¹⁸

No less important, admiration and envy of the Chinese economic miracle has supported a more benign global narrative about the PRC than would be the case if China's accretion of hard power were the only story.

¹⁷ Bates Gill and Yanzhong Huang, "Sources and Limits of Chinese Soft Power," *Survival*, vol. 48 no. 2 (2006), pp. 20–21; McGiffert, ed. *Chinese Soft Power*.

¹⁸ "Wen Implies U.S. Provoked Global Crisis, Outlines Solutions," *Inside U.S.-China Trade*, Feb. 4, 2009 (remarks at Davos World Economic Forum); "Chinese President Calls for Joint Efforts to Promote Global Economic Recovery," Xinhua, June 28, 2010 (concerning G20 Toronto meeting); "PBOC Governor Calls for Establishment of Supra-Sovereignty International Reserve Currency," Xinhua, Mar. 24, 2009.

Although overly simplistic, the contrast with the Soviet Union's lack of soft power during the heyday of the Cold War is instructive, particularly in terms of relations with the United States (and, in turn, cross-strait relations). The point has not been lost on participants in Chinese academic and policy debates, who have pointed to the vast soft power gaps between the United States and the USSR as significant factors in their disparate fates and as a cautionary lesson to China about the need to develop its own soft power.¹⁹

The impact of the economic development component in Chinese soft power is perhaps most evident in the vast discussion it has spawned of a "China Model" of development or a "Beijing Consensus" as a rival to the neo-liberal economic, liberal-legalist and democratic political creed of the Washington Consensus (and American or Western-style capitalist development paradigms more generally).²⁰ Prominent and influential Chinese academics have embraced and advanced the idea of a Chinese template that others in the developing world might follow and that is more relevant and promising than the experience and advice of the United States and other developed countries.²¹ Although the phrase has less currency in official statements, the idea lurks close to the surface in PRC diplomacy on the ground in poor countries and even in the high-profile excoriations at international summits of the failures of the United States and others that spawned the financial crisis and the implied negative comparison to China's approach of more extensive state control.

These phenomena are significant for the cross-strait context. They matter generally in their formidable contributions to China's overall soft power. They also matter more specifically. China's successful variation on the East Asian Model of development—rooted in the earlier Japanese experience and exemplified in the postwar industrialization of Taiwan, Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore—has done much to erode the soft power that accrued to Taiwan by virtue of the four "tigers" or "dragons" accomplishments during an earlier era. Here, the impact may be greatest on small, developing countries (a category that includes most of Taipei's meager group of diplomatic partners) and industrializing Southeast Asia (an area that, for Taiwan, includes economies with significant complementarities and

¹⁹ Shen Jiru, "Cannot Neglect Improving Our Country's 'Soft Power,'" *Outlook Weekly [Liaowang]*, October 11, 1999, pp. 12–13; Cho and Jeong, "China's Soft Power," pp. 458–460.

²⁰ Joshua Cooper Ramo, *The Beijing Consensus* (London: Foreign Policy Centre, 2004); John Williamson, "What Washington Means by Policy Reform" in *Latin American Adjustment: How Much Has Happened?* ed. John Williamson (Washington, D.C.: Peterson Institute, 1990), pp. 5–20; *In Search of China's Development Model: Beyond the Beijing Consensus* eds. Suisheng Zhao, Philip Hsu and Yu-shan Wu (New York: Routledge, 2010); Justin Yifu Lin, Fang Cai, and Zhou Li. *The China Miracle* (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2003).

²¹ See, for example, Yu Keping, Huang Ping, Xie Xuguang and Gao Jin, eds. *The China Model and the Beijing Consensus: Beyond the Washington Consensus* (Beijing: Social Sciences Press, 2006); Pan Wei, ed. *The China Model: A New Model of Development from Sixty Years of the People's Republic* (Beijing Central Press, 2009).

large economic opportunities not yet tapped, partly because of China's recalcitrance).

This element of Chinese soft power is also limited and problematic. Official China and many policy intellectuals have been wary of touting the notion of a "Chinese Model" and, even more so, a "Beijing Consensus." The reticence partly reflects soft power calculations. Emphasizing China's stellar progress is in tension with Beijing's reduced but persisting agenda of asserting solidarity with poor nations. More broadly, Deng Xiaoping's admonition to lay low still echoes powerfully in Chinese policy circles and cautions against anything that underscores China's success, draws foreign attention to the hard power potential it brings, and suggests that China sees itself as a challenger to the United States and the "Washington Consensus." Policy intellectuals, regime advisers and, surely, top leaders themselves worry that touting a "China Model" or the "Beijing Consensus" feeds into the notion of a "G2" duopoly centered on the PRC and the United States. There is danger for China, and perhaps cold comfort for Taiwan, in that China's rise to a perceived "development model" and, by some lights, near-equality with the United States reinforces fear of Chinese domination among China's neighbors and greater skepticism about Chinese motives in the United States.

Many Chinese policy analysts and advocates are concerned that a too-robust notion of a Chinese model ultimately may undermine the economic success-based component of Chinese soft power. Attempts to imitate a "Chinese Model" may well fail in many developing countries for many reasons, including: the distillation of the wrong definitive elements of a "model" from China's complex experience; the absence of elements vital to China's success—ranging from cultural attitudes to state capacity to human capital to potential economies of scale—in would-be imitator states; and the inefficacy of policies derived from China's earlier experience when applied in very different national conditions and international circumstances. If expectations run too high and if a relatively specific "China Model" is implemented and falls short, this risks diminishing China's soft power. In keeping with such concerns, many Chinese discussions of a China Model or lessons for foreigners from China's Reform-Era development experience have stressed pluralism and eclecticism—that what China's success fundamentally teaches is pragmatism and experimentalism and that each country must find and follow its own path.²² Whatever the wisdom of such arguments, they do cut against the

²² See e.g., Zheng Yongnian, "Do Not Exaggerate the 'Beijing Consensus,'" *Lianhe Zaobao* (Taiwan), Feb. 15, 2005; Zhao Qizheng, "Scope of 'Chinese Model' Too Wide," *China Daily*, April 2, 2010; Men Honghua, ed. *China's Soft Power Strategy* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang People's Press, 2005); "The China Model: The Beijing Consensus is to Keep Quiet," *The Economist*, May 6, 2010; author's interviews with scholars at leading Chinese think tanks, 2007–2010. The foreign commentary that spawned the Beijing Consensus debate emphasized pragmatism. The idea of multiple paths to development is consistent with the contemporaneous Chinese foreign policy principle of "harmony amid diversity" (discussed below).

growth of soft power that might flow from a more holy grail-like or blueprint-like China Model for economic development.

Third, and with deeper roots, Beijing's commitment to respect for state sovereignty has been an enduring element in China's soft power. It is the central theme in the most durable tenet of PRC foreign policy, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, which call for mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual nonaggression, mutual non-interference in internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. The principles have retained and even gained prominence amid China's recent rise. China has invoked norms of strong sovereignty and non-interference to resist U.S. and multilateral efforts to press for regime change, redress of human rights violations, or internal political reforms in North Korea, Myanmar, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Zimbabwe, the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere.²³

Periodically, Beijing's support for especially hearty state sovereignty has been supplemented by soft power-resonant endorsements of pluralism and relativism. These include rejection until the early 1990s of universal human rights, a later 1990s flirtation with (and a modest revival nearly a decade later) of "Asian values" as an alternative to Western-style individual rights and democratic political norms, and a 2000s embrace of a Confucian-derived notion of *he er butong*—harmony amid diversity in the international system.²⁴ All of these pushed back against the international norms that underpinned arguments from Washington, the EU and elsewhere to accord lessened deference to the sovereignty of states targeted by the interventions, sanctions or other means of suasion opposed by Beijing.

Traditional calculations of interest—including national security, great power rivalry and access to strategic resources—may adequately explain China's positions in many cases. But Beijing has stuck to its stand on sovereignty in contexts well beyond its fundamental interests and at the cost of friction with the United States and other great powers. Moreover, giving a normative face and policy coherence to its opposition to intervention (and lesser measures) has been a notable component of Chinese soft power. If China's commitment to strong sovereignty fails to persuade the United States and like-minded states, it may at least blunt or deflect charges, in UN processes and among some parts of the international community, that Beijing cynically backs and irresponsibly protects rogue regimes. The PRC's insistence on sovereignty and noninterventionism also has helped win China favor and appreciation—beyond the influence that flows from the PRC's military or material prowess—among several

²³ Allan Carlson, "Keeping the Peace (Albeit Reluctantly): China's Recent Stance on Sovereignty and Multilateral Intervention," *Pacific Affairs*, (Spring 2004), pp. 9–27.

²⁴ "Party Journal: There Are No Universal Human Rights," *Xinhua*, Aug. 14, 1989; "Chinese President at Cambridge Stresses 'Chinese Values,'" *Xinhua*, Oct. 22, 1999; Greg Torode, "The Debate on Asian Values Gets a Revival," *South China Morning Post*, Apr. 23, 2007; Wen Jiabao, "It's Not a Clash but a Coalition of Civilizations that China Wants," *The Independent*, Nov. 10, 2009.

repressive regimes (including ones controlling strategic resources or located in strategic areas) and among a wider group of weak states concerned about pressure or interference from the West. Perhaps most fundamentally, it has offered a veneer of principle (again, a key currency of soft power) to the Chinese regime's otherwise self-interested, and therefore more easily dismissed, resistance to efforts from abroad to promote liberal or pro-democratic reforms in China—things that Beijing long derided as an American-led agenda of “peaceful evolution” (*heping yanbian*) that was no less nefarious or impermissible than more forcible intervention in China's internal affairs.²⁵

In the cross-strait context, the implications of China's embrace of sovereignty norms are in principle simple and favorable for Beijing although in practice more complicated and mixed. In the PRC's account, U.S. support for a de facto independent Taiwan, and especially U.S. sales of weapons to Taiwan, is a highly offensive form of impermissible, forcible interference in China's sovereignty and internal affairs. Beijing makes the point with varying degrees of stridency each time an arms sale is approved, including in early 2010 when the issue became a major factor in a downturn in bilateral relations.²⁶ The PRC undertook a particularly forceful and formal articulation of its sovereignty point in a 2005 Anti-Secession Law, which claimed that Taiwan was currently under Chinese sovereignty and would not be allowed to leave and which mirrored the U.S.'s Taiwan Relations Act that Beijing has long denounced as mandating impermissible disregard for China's sovereignty over the island.²⁷ (Beijing notably sought to frame the bellicose-seeming legislation with a statement that it still sought to use “soft power” to resolve the Taiwan issue.²⁸) Although imputation of causation is speculative, China's effort to secure acceptance in the international community of some form of a one-China principle—itself an ideological and not merely behavioral goal—likely owes some of its success to China's ability and determination to cast the issue as not merely its own parochial interests and goals, but as a matter of general and fundamental principles that resonate with the experiences and perspectives of former colonies and weak states that comprise the majority of states in the international system.

This attempted use of soft power has long collided with the problem that Taiwan has many of the attributes of sovereign statehood that, China

²⁵ Russell Ong, “Peaceful Evolution, ‘Regime Change’ and China's Political Security,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, (Nov. 2007), pp. 717–727; Paul Heer, “A House United: Beijing's View of Washington,” *Foreign Affairs*, July-Aug. 2000, pp. 18–22.

²⁶ “Chinese Foreign Minister Urges US to Stop Selling Weapons to Taiwan,” *Xinhua*, Jan. 31, 2010; Andrew Jacobs, “More Anger from China over U.S. Arms Sales,” *International Herald Tribune*, Feb. 26, 2010.

²⁷ Jacques deLisle, “Legislating the Cross-Strait Status Quo?” in *Economic Integration, Democratization and National Security in East Asia* ed. Peter C.Y. Chow (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2007).

²⁸ “Zhao Qizheng: Taiwan Issue Should be Resolved with Soft Power First,” *Zhongguo Xinwen She*, Jan. 12, 2005.

argues in other contexts, warrant high international stature and freedom from intervention.²⁹ More recently, the sovereignty-centered component in China's soft power has undergone broader retrenchment as China has grudgingly weakened its commitment to anti-intervention and strong sovereignty norms abroad. Although Beijing has sought to contain this erosion by insisting on UN imprimaturs for sanctions or some degree of consent from targeted states, the shift in China's position has been widely noted and ardently sought by the United States and others, and it has been costly to the good will China had cultivated among sanctioned and pressured states with its once-uncompromising insistence on deference to sovereignty. Examples include Beijing's participation in efforts to address human rights in Sudan and piracy off the Somalia coast, the PRC's more tentative acquiescence in multilateral sanctions and pressures on North Korea and Iran concerning nuclear weapons programs, and China's long-running participation in UN peacekeeping operations.

The reasons for this readjustment surely include ones rooted in hard power and assessments of national interest. A much more powerful and wealthy China has much less reason to fear foreign encroachment on Chinese territory and sovereignty. A much stronger and globally engaged China has far-flung interests—including access to energy resources in the Middle East, Africa and Central Asia and protection of Chinese investments (and the Chinese nationals who accompany them) in sometimes unstable places around the world—that can be better protected through a more flexible approach to international pressure and intervention. But tensions with other, no less compelling aspects of China's soft power agenda likely matter here as well. Especially when extended to states that great powers regard as pariahs and international security threats, PRC solicitude for expansive notions of sovereignty and concomitant opposition to sanctions or stronger actions against such states undermines Beijing's increasingly emphasized agenda of casting itself as a responsible power, a supporter of multilateralism and, in turn, a beneficiary of the soft power gains that come with such moves.

Such concerns are central to a fourth, and most complex, dimension of China's soft power: persuading foreign audiences that China is and will be a different kind of power and that China's rise (or, more accurately, return) to regional great power status and prospective superpower stature is not the threat that it might appear to be from assessments based solely on China's capacity or malign interpretations of China's aims. This agenda has roots early in the Reform Era when Chinese leaders began insisting that the main principle of PRC foreign policy was to secure a peaceful and stable environment in which China could pursue modernization and growth.³⁰ Therein lay a

²⁹ Jacques deLisle, "The Chinese Puzzle of Taiwan's Status," *Orbis*, Winter 2000, pp. 35–62.

³⁰ See generally Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge: China's Grand Strategy and International Security* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 2005).

relatively rudimentary and humble soft power ploy, proffering assurances of China's unthreatening intent to the indispensable foreign partners for—and potential impeters of—China's development strategy.

Especially in dealing with nearby states, China began in the 1990s and into the 2000s to place greater emphasis on cooperation, multilateralization (*duojihua*) and a “good neighbor” policy, settling long-standing inland border disputes (and striking a less strident tone on maritime ones), forging new structures for relations with former Soviet republics, engaging with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum and various ASEAN-plus structures, signing on to a Code of Conduct for the disputed South China Sea area, and so on. In economic affairs, China assiduously cast itself as a benevolent, cooperative actor and provider of public goods in the Asian Financial Crisis in the late 1990s and again in the global economic crisis a decade later. In the former case, Beijing stressed that it forewent currency devaluation, at considerable cost to China's exporters in a period when other East Asian exporting states' exchange rates were plummeting. In the more recent crisis, Beijing portrayed its nearly U.S. \$600 billion domestic stimulus package and other policy responses as serving global collective interests, limiting the global downturn's impact by sustaining Chinese growth and, thus, the Chinese demand that had become so vital for many national economies, especially in Asia.³¹

China also portrayed its ardent pursuit of free trade areas and regional economic integration in ways that, if persuasive, promised to increase soft power benefits (or minimize soft power costs). Most prominently, Beijing pitched the massive and ambitious ASEAN China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) as one among many “win-win” economic arrangements pursued by the PRC. In addressing the ACFTA and a broader Asian zone's economic ties with China, Beijing aimed to convince its neighbors that the PRC's growth and economic integration with the region presented export market opportunities and a source of investment, rather than the rise of a fierce and dynamic competitor or an asymmetrical relationship of economic dependence that Beijing might exploit to serve its own political ends. A similar pattern characterized PRC accounts of China's generally smaller but more sharply rising trade and outbound investment relationships with Latin America and Africa. Such moves were supplemented in the case of China's poorer partners with development assistance that seemed potentially relatively cost effective, given the novelty, absence of political strings, and focus on high-profile projects that characterized Beijing's aid.³²

³¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, “Proactive Policies of China in Response to the Asian Financial Crisis” Nov. 17, 2000; “One Year of China's Economic Stimulus Package,” *People's Daily Online*, Nov. 7, 2009.

³² “China Seeks Mutual Benefits in ACFTA,” *Xinhua*, Jan. 23, 2010; Chu Shulong, “China's Approach to the Free Trade Area,” in *Free Trade and East Asia* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2004), available at <http://www.fpri.org/research/asia/fretradeeastasia/>; Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive*, pp. 82–107.

China has sought to allay concerns, especially in Washington and among U.S. allies and near-allies in Asia, about the implications of China's turn to regional multilateralism in the form of the ACFTA, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a still-notional East Asian Community (or East Asia FTA), and so on. Here too, Beijing has asserted strongly—if not, for some audiences, persuasively—that these actions reflect its cooperative, multi polar and non-zero-sum understanding of international relations and imply no ambition to undertake the likely futile project of marginalizing the U.S.'s role in East Asia.³³

As China grew more economically formidable and accumulated and began to expend material resources for hard power, some analysts and commentators—especially in the United States—began to issue sharpening warnings that China's rise and agenda likely or surely would mean conflict with the United States.³⁴ As talk of the “China threat” grew in the later 1990s, Beijing's soft-power efforts to assuage international concerns became more elaborate. In late 2003 came the notion of China's “peaceful rise” (*heping jueqi*). Articulated by Party School vice president and Hu Jintao advisor Zheng Bijian and affirmed by Premier Wen Jiabao in a speech at Harvard, this doctrine asserted that China would remain, for a very long time, focused on economic development, that China's economic development strategy depended heavily on international integration, and that China's rise therefore depended on an open, peaceful and stable international environment and would not lead to disruption akin to that which accompanied the rise of great powers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.³⁵ Although “peaceful rise” faced some attacks from the “left” (for insufficient zeal in proclaiming China's right to use more assertive means), it mostly fell victim to more “right”-leaning criticisms that it sounded too aggressive, overstating China's current power and stoking rather than soothing other states' fears. It was scrapped in favor of more anodyne terminology that continued the same basic claim that China's rise generated no threat. By 2004, the Hu Jintao leadership proffered instead the notion of China's “peaceful development” (*heping fazhan*), which dropped

³³ Zhang Xiaoming, “The Rise of China and Community Building in East Asia,” *Asian Perspective*, vol. 30, no. 3 (2006), pp. 129–148; “Beijing Opposes Exclusive East Asia Bloc,” United Press International, Dec. 13, 2005.

³⁴ Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro, *The Coming Conflict with China* (New York: Vintage, 1998); John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001); Jia Qingguo, “Partners or Competitors: A Choice to be Made,” in Robert M. Hathaway, ed. *George W. Bush and East Asia: A First Term Assessment*, (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center, 2005) pp. 117–130.

³⁵ Zheng Bijian, “China's ‘Peaceful Rise’ to Great Power Status,” *Foreign Affairs*, Sept./Oct. 2005; Zheng Bijian, *On China's Peaceful Rise: A New Road of Development* (Beijing: Chinese Communist Party Central Party School Press, 2005); “Turning Your Eyes to China”—Speech by Premier Wen Jiabao at Harvard University,” (December 10, 2003), available at <http://www.china-un.org/eng/zt/wfm/t56090.htm>; Jiang Xiyuan and Xia Liping, *China's Peaceful Rise* (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2004).

the seemingly assertive and hard power-focused “rise” and underscored China’s focus on an internal development agenda that depended on a benign external context.³⁶ By late 2005, this phrasing gave way to the doctrine of a “harmonious world” (*hexie shijie*)—a term that refocused on foreign policy assurances, employed a still more benevolent-sounding adjective, and reaffirmed the link between the regime’s domestic agenda (now recast as the pursuit of a “harmonious society”—*hexie shehui*—and not merely the GDP fundamentalism that had characterized the Jiang years) and its approach to international affairs.³⁷

Drawing on an older axiom of PRC foreign relations, Beijing has insisted that China will be a distinctively benign great power that others have no reason to fear. The recurrent claim is that China never would be a hegemon.³⁸ It would never become the kind of aggressive, domination-seeking and intervention-prone great power that the Soviet Union was and that the United States arguably remains. The reasons given are largely circumstantial and historical but verge into arguments about the Chinese “character.” As asserted in the “peaceful rise” thesis and its successors, China remains a developing country and thus will continue to be constrained and preoccupied with urgent, primarily domestic matters of development and stability, rather than any agenda to dominate others. As a fellow developing country, China retains a commitment to solidarity with the potential victims of superpower dominance. As a past victim of colonial and quasi-colonial encroachment, China would never replicate the patterns of great power behavior that inflicted such deep and still acutely remembered harm and humiliation on China. As a power with increasing extra-regional interests and reach, the PRC has undertaken and emphasized missions that it can portray as internationally cooperative and non-threatening. These include contributing to UN-sponsored peacekeeping missions, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and anti-piracy efforts off the Somali coast.

³⁶ State Council Information Office of the PRC, *China’s Peaceful Development Road (White Paper)* (December 22, 2005); “Full Text of Hu Jintao Speech at Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2004,” available at <http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/93897.htm>; Bonnie S. Glaser and Evan S. Medeiros, “The Changing Ecology of Foreign Policy Making in China: The Ascension and Demise of the Theory of ‘Peaceful Development,’” *China Quarterly* No. 190 (2007), pp. 291–310.; Jean-Pierre Cabestan, *La Politique Internationale de la Chine* (Paris: Science Po, 2010), pp. 87–99; Robert L. Suettinger, “The Rise and Descent of ‘Peaceful Rise,’” *China Leadership Monitor*, (Fall 2004), pp. 1–10.

³⁷ “Hu Calls for Harmonious World at Summit,” *China Daily*, September 6, 2005. Chinese commentators explicitly link the “harmonious world” concept to China’s soft power and efforts to build a “responsible image” internationally. See, for example, Wang Zonglai and Hu Bin, “China’s Reform and Opening Up and International Law,” *Chinese Journal of International Law*, (Mar. 2010), pp. 196–197.

³⁸ “Wen: Argument of Big Power Bound to Seek Hegemony Does Not Apply to China,” Xinhua, Feb. 2, 2009; “China Never Seeks Hegemonism: Chinese Vice Premier,” Xinhua, May 14, 1995.

The “harmonious world” trope that has been central during the Hu Jintao period extends this theme of China’s singular benevolence as a great or rising power, and it also evokes Chinese culture, specifically Confucian norms in foreign policy and governance. The cultural dimension of soft power—which looms large in accounts of American soft power and in soft power theories generally—has been central to the contemporary Chinese discussion. Hu’s exhortation at the Seventeenth Party Congress to build China’s soft power referred specifically to “cultural soft power” (*wenhua ruan shili*). Chinese academic and think tank analyses, and outside observers’ assessments, of China’s soft power often emphasize the cultural component.³⁹ Examples to which they often point include the Chinese cultural pageantry at the Beijing Olympics, the international popularity and critical success of Chinese films and authors, and the surging numbers of foreign students studying in fields that include some culture-related components.

The most visible manifestation of China’s cultural soft power agenda has been the Confucius Institutes. With nearly three hundred in place and over two hundred more a goal (and in some respects evocative of U.S. postwar and recently reinvigorated public diplomacy efforts and other Western organizations such as the Alliance Francaise or the Goethe Institute), these PRC state-funded bodies teach about China, Chinese language and Chinese culture. They are also part of a broader effort to make China seem less inscrutable, less alien and, thus, less threatening (and, in the view of their harsher critics abroad, to propagandize for Beijing).

The Confucius Institutes dovetail with a broader effort that is vital to Chinese soft power: having China—and not other, less sympathetic sources—define images of China abroad. Undertakings in this vein include: a revised and impressively successful mandate to China’s once-stand-offish diplomatic corps to immerse themselves in, and engage with, the societies in which they serve; an increased emphasis on Chinese public diplomacy and renewed talk of people-to-people diplomacy; and the creation of foreign language (especially English) media outlets by state-run Central China Television and the Xinhua News Agency (with al-Jazeera as an implicit model).⁴⁰

³⁹ Yu Xintian, *Strengthening Soft Power: The Impact of Culture on Contemporary International Relations* (Shanghai: People’s Press, 2007); Pang Zhongying, “Soft Power in International Relations and Other [Matters],” *Strategy and Management [Zhanlue yu Guanli]* no. 2 (1997), pp. 49–51; Nye and Wang, “Hard Decisions,” pp. 19–20; Bonnie S. Glaser and Melissa E. Murphy, “Soft Power with Chinese Characteristics,” in McGiffert, ed. *Chinese Soft Power*, pp. 13–24; Ding, *Hidden Wings*, pp. 59–74, 113–130.

⁴⁰ Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive*, pp. 60–71; Liu Kang and Li Xiguang, “Shaping China’s International Image,” *Global Times*, Aug. 6, 1999; Ingrid d’Hooghe, “Into High Gear: China’s Public Diplomacy,” *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* vol. 3 (2008), pp. 37–61; Zhao Qisheng, “Better Public Diplomacy to Present a Truer Picture of China,” *People’s Daily*, Mar. 30, 2007; David Barboza, “China Puts Best Face Forward with News Channel,” *New York Times*, July 1, 2010; David Shambaugh, “China Flexes its Soft Power,” *International Herald Tribune*, June 7, 2010.

This multifaceted storyline depicting a rising China as a particularly benign power has important, if complex, applications to Taiwan. Taiwan (and the United States as Taiwan's indispensable patron) are among the principal targets of claims that China is and will remain focused on economic development through external engagement, that China's economic rise offers win-win scenarios for its partners (especially in East Asia), and that China will not use its new and growing power in coercive ways. The narrative speaks, albeit with uneven efficacy, to worries on the island and in Washington that closer cross-Strait economic integration—through an FTA-like Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) and more generally—will bring political peril through asymmetrical economic interdependence that Beijing will exploit to political ends. The accommodating orientation among regional states that China seeks to augment through soft power initiatives and economic inducements can enhance China's ability to dissuade those states from forging or deepening economic as well as political ties with Taiwan absent Beijing's approval. The Chinese cultural component in China's soft power agenda plays on the sense of shared Chinese-ness that retains significant influence in Taiwan despite the broad rise of a Taiwan identity and a narrower Taiwanese constituency for anti-Chinese Taiwanese nationalism. It also offers the promise for Beijing of reinforcing a view in the wider international community that Taiwan is “really” or “naturally” or culturally-historically a part of China and that the island's long separation from mainland rule is therefore anomalous. It is a significant part of the soft power underpinning and the not-purely-hard-power rationale for the specific policy position China most frequently presses abroad, particularly among developing countries and especially in the parts of Latin America, Africa and Oceania where some countries still recognize the ROC: the “one China” policy.⁴¹

Taiwan's Soft Power Agenda: Weapons of the Weak

For Taiwan, the cultivation and use of soft power⁴²—as with so much else in the ROC's external relations—is overwhelmingly defensive, focused on implications for relations with the mainland, and concerned with sustaining U.S. backing to offset or deter pressure from Beijing. While the utility of soft power relative to more traditional hard power is open to question, soft power has been an important and sensible focus for the leadership in Taiwan, both because its

⁴¹ See generally, Taiwan Affairs Office and State Council Information Office of the PRC, “The One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue” (White Paper), Feb. 21, 2000 and “The Taiwan Question and the Reunification of China” (White Paper), Aug. 31, 1993; deLisle, “Chinese Puzzle.”

⁴² Although the translation of the term has been more varied, “soft power” has become a staple of foreign policy discourse in Taiwan as well. See Wang and Lu, “Conception of Soft Power,” pp. 426, 431–434.

hard power resources have been intractably weak compared to those of the mainland and because soft power has promised to help bring the United States's unparalleled hard power resources to bear for Taiwan's benefit.⁴³

Taipei's soft power resources and tactics in many respects mirror Beijing's. First, political and ideological contrast with the self-proclaimed communist regime across the Strait has been a principal weapon in Taiwan's soft power arsenal and a key to maintaining U.S. support. During the ROC's early decades on Taiwan, anti-communism provided the core rationale for the U.S.'s initial support for Taiwan (with the outbreak of the Korean War spurring the U.S. to extend the Cold War's front line to the Taiwan Strait) and sustained the U.S.-ROC alliance through the advent of Sino-American rapprochement. Repressive authoritarian politics and a poor human rights record during the Chiang Kai-shek and much of the Chiang Ching-kuo presidencies meant that Taiwan had few other politics-based soft power resources that would have much purchase with the United States and its allies beyond shared ideological distaste for the regime across the Strait.

As U.S.-PRC relations continued to improve and reforms on the mainland made Chinese communism seem less antithetical to U.S. values, anti-communism rapidly waned as a soft power resource for Taiwan. Hard power considerations were vital factors as well, generally moving in tandem with soft power trends: an increasingly hostile relationship between Beijing and Moscow, U.S.-PRC rapprochement, and the decline and collapse of the Soviet Union severely undermined Taiwan's perceived value as a strategic asset for the United States. In this context, the anti-communist strand in Taiwan's soft power clout with Washington has become a faded remnant (mostly invoked by increasingly marginal and often superannuated Taiwanese sources targeting their counterparts in the United States). Since Taiwan began democratizing, this element of soft power has been largely subsumed in a more vibrant and wide-ranging assertion of contrasts in values and institutions across the Strait.

A second dimension of Taiwan's soft power derives from Taiwan's economic accomplishments. With its high growth rate, sectoral transformation and rise to the top echelon of global trading entities beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, Taiwan emerged as a paragon of successful development and an exemplar of the East Asian Model of rapid industrialization. Taiwan was routinely grouped with Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore in accounts of the regional economic "miracle" of the era. It became an attractive model and object of emulation by other states wanting rapid development amid political stability (and, until the 1980s, without full-fledged political democracy and the risks of social unrest, stalled development and loss of power by the ruling party

⁴³ Y.F. Low, "President Pledges to Promote 'Soft Power Diplomacy,'" Central News Agency (Taiwan), Oct. 8, 2009; Elizabeth Hsu, "'Soft Power' Shields Taiwan Against China's Aggression: VP," Central News Agency (Taiwan), June 10, 2006.

that democratization seemed to pose.)⁴⁴ At the same time, Taiwan had become a significant participant in an interdependent international economy and a valued partner for the United States and others (although this was something of a mixed blessing for Taiwan's soft power amid U.S. concerns about trade imbalances and the policies of exporting nations that produced them).

Like anti-communism, this economic aspect of Taiwan's soft power has waned with changes on the mainland. Among developing countries, the PRC's development model (which shares many elements with the East Asian Model that Taiwan exemplified) has gained much greater cachet. China's experience is more recent, more impressive in scale, and more obviously relevant to countries with per capita incomes and levels of development much nearer to contemporary China's than to contemporary Taiwan's. The mainland's model is more obviously dynamic (given Taiwan's maturation into the plateauing growth rates characteristic of developed economies) and (for the authoritarian regimes that still rule in parts of the developing world) reassuringly free of the mess and uncertainty of contemporary Taiwan's democratic politics.

Faced with such relative erosion of its economic-based soft power, Taiwan has sought to secure and enhance its international stature by emphasizing its importance as a valuable and reliable partner in an increasingly globalized economy and, especially, in that economy's higher-end segments. Here, the claim goes beyond the basic point of quantitative economic importance and into more qualitative areas associated with soft power.⁴⁵ Assertions or implied references to contrasts with the mainland consistently have run through this account which stresses what Taiwan now has in common with the United States and other more developed countries in terms of commitments to market economics, transparency, the rule of law, respect for intellectual property, and so on. Lee Teng-hui's seminal Guidelines for National Unification included the mainland's equaling Taiwan's market-based economic freedom and equitable prosperity as a condition for political unification. In Taiwan's long struggle to enter the WTO—universally understood to depend on a deal for the PRC's entry—ROC sources stressed the

⁴⁴ A large body of policy-relevant literature feeding into the "East Asian Model" or "East Asian economic miracle" grouped these four entities together and variously examined the bases for their success and cast their experience as a possible prescription for other aspiring states. See Ezra F. Vogel, *The Four Little Dragons* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991); Stephan Haggard, *Pathways from the Periphery* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990); Jacques deLisle, "Development without Democratization? China, Law and the East Asian Model in *Democratizations* ed. Jose V. Cipurut (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 2008). The idea had sufficient force that some leading PRC analysts of China's economic development experience appropriated the term for an overview work. Lin et al., *China Miracle*.

⁴⁵ Rachel Chan, "Ma's State Visits Will Display Taiwan's Soft Power: FM," Central News Agency (Taiwan), May 6, 2009 (technology among soft power assets to be stressed in ROC diplomacy).

extent to which Taiwan was, unlike its giant neighbor, already largely in conformity with GATT rules and the liberal economic principles that underpinned them.⁴⁶

In all of this, the message from Taipei, particularly directed to Washington, was that Taiwan was, economically, part of the club of similar and like-minded entities that China was not yet fit to join. Here too, however, ongoing developments on the mainland posed a threat to Taiwan's effort to build soft power. Examples include China's progress, even if modest and uneven, on intellectual property rights, and Beijing's high-profile and dramatic measures to liberalize trade, including the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area and the cross-Strait ECFA.

A third element in Taiwan's soft power rests upon principles of national sovereignty, which have been no less important for Taipei than they have been for Beijing. For Taiwan, this facet of soft power has been somewhat complicated and volatile, affected by political transformation, alternations of the party in power and open partisan divides that do not occur in PRC politics. Into the 1990s, the KMT regime in Taiwan remained heir to the tradition that also held sway on the mainland of strong sovereignty rooted in nationalist opposition to colonial and quasi-colonial encroachment and territorial fragmentation born of civil conflict. The cross-Strait issue was the simple but intractable one of which regime—the ROC in Taipei or the PRC in Beijing—rightfully wielded Chinese sovereignty. With always-fanciful prospects of “recovering” the mainland becoming farcical, Cold War rationales of an ostensible struggle for China waning and Taiwanese politics democratizing, the sovereignty-related argument from Taiwan underwent profound changes.

Taiwanese leaders and others began to play to some widely shared and foundational principles of the international system, emphasizing Taiwan's satisfaction of key criteria for state or state-like status and, in turn, enjoyment of the right to acceptance and independent existence that states possess under international law and the system of international relations that underlies it. Although a state-centric world order, beloved of international relations realists, has foundations in hard power, the norms of state-like status and rights that Taiwan began to invoke spilled into the realm of values and soft power.

The process began during the Lee Teng-hui presidency with: constitutional amendments that limited the jurisdiction of the ROC to Taiwan and its offshore islands; a claim that Taiwan and the mainland were two essentially equal political entities; a diplomatic posture that was open to

⁴⁶ Mainland Affairs Council, Executive Yuan, Republic of China, “Guidelines for National Unification (Mar. 14, 1991); “Taiwan Accuses China of Blocking its Entry to WTO,” Deutsche Presse-Agentur (Nov. 1, 1999); Nelson Chung, “No Justification for Holding Up Taiwan's WTO Entry,” Central News Agency (Taiwan), Jan. 12, 2001.

“dual recognition” of the PRC and ROC; and a series of official and quasi-official statements that pointed to the ways in which Taiwan possessed the legal attributes required for statehood, including a separate and distinct territory and population, an autonomous and capable government, and engagement in extensive if informal international relations (as well as more modest formal ones in the form of full diplomatic ties with a small number of states and full participation in international organizations for which recognized statehood was not a criterion for membership). This soft power play took a further step forward with Lee’s famous July 1999 declaration that cross-Strait relations were “state to state” or, at least, a “special type” of state-to-state relations, and that the ROC had been an independent sovereign state since 1912 and had no need to declare independence.⁴⁷

Lee’s successor Chen Shui-bian went further, proclaiming that there was “one country on each side of the Strait” (*yibian yiguo*), asserting that Taiwan was an independent sovereign country currently known in the international system as the Republic of China, and pursuing an unsuccessful referendum that would have endorsed pursuit of full membership in the states-member-only United Nations under the name Taiwan.⁴⁸ Chen’s successor Ma Ying-jeou has adopted a more moderate stance but stopped well short of a thorough repudiation of his predecessors’ positions. Ma too has pledged to safeguard the nation’s sovereignty, sought to maintain formal relations with the ROC’s remaining partners (facilitated by a de facto “diplomatic truce” with Beijing), rejected near-term political unification with the mainland, and brought to fruition moves begun under Chen to secure observer status at the UN-linked WHO and the nearest equivalent possible of accession to the two principal UN human rights covenants.⁴⁹

Taiwan’s leaders also have evoked the widely shared international legal and political norms of self-determination of peoples. Dating to Wilsonian interwar ideals (a *bête noire* of hard power-emphasizing realist analyses), achieving widespread currency in the international community amid postwar decolonization and experiencing a revival amid the post-Cold War collapse of multiethnic societies once held together by communist rule, these self-determination norms—when effectively engaged—can ground

⁴⁷ Lee Teng-hui, “Responses to Questions Submitted by Deutsche-Welle,” July 9, 1999; deLisle, “Chinese Puzzle.”

⁴⁸ “President Chen’s Opening Address at the World Federation of Taiwanese Organizations,” Aug. 3, 2002, available at <http://www.gio.gov.tw/taiwan-website/4-0a/20020803/2002080301.html>; “Executive Yuan Spokesman Reiterates Taiwan Already ‘Sovereign, Independent,’” Central News Agency (Taiwan), Nov. 22, 2004; “Interview with President Chen Shui-bian,” *New York Times*, Oct. 18, 2007.

⁴⁹ Ma Ying-jeou, “Taiwan’s Renaissance” (Presidential Inauguration Speech), May 20, 2008; Y.F. Low, “President Affirms Commitment to Upholding National Sovereignty,” Central News Agency (Taiwan), Oct. 30, 2008; “Ma’s ‘Diplomatic Truce’ Policy Seems in Place,” *China Post*, Mar. 18, 2009; Flora Wang, “Legislature Ratifies UN Rights Treaties,” *Taipei Times*, Apr. 1, 2009.

legitimate claims to independent statehood. Examples of their invocation are numerous and scattered across the administrations of the ROC's democratically elected presidents. Lee Teng-hui, for example, offered the notion of a "New Taiwanese" that included all people on the island regardless of their indigenous Taiwanese (*benturen*) or pre-1949 mainlander (*waishengren*) background and a Taiwanese *gemeinschaft* or distinct society.⁵⁰ Chen Shui-bain stressed a distinct Taiwanese identity with deep historic roots in aboriginal cultures and early Western influences and increasingly tied to separate sovereignty that made the people on the island fundamentally distinct from the Chinese across the Strait, and insisted on a popular referendum—the classic mechanism for exercising a people's right to self-determination—as the only acceptable means for any change in Taiwan's status (including possible unification with the mainland).⁵¹ Although the Ma Ying-jeou presidency has brought retrenchment from Chen's positions in this area as in many others, here too change stopped short of full reversal. Ma insisted on his and his countrymen's Taiwan identity and had compelling reasons to do so given his political vulnerability as someone born in Hong Kong to mainlander parents and his political need to assure median Taiwanese voters that his policy of close cross-Strait ties did not mean rapid political integration.⁵²

With self-determination rights generally seen as accruing to ethnoculturally defined peoples, Taiwanese efforts on this front dovetailed with moves that mirrored, and countered, aspects of Beijing's approach to the cultural dimension of soft power, particularly its persistent insistence—memorialized in the U.S.-PRC Joint Communiqués, among many other places—that the residents of Taiwan and the mainland are all Chinese and the people of a single China. Lee's New Taiwanese and *gemeinschaft* resonated with claims of a culturally and historically distinct group on Taiwan, all the more so given Lee's status as the first Taiwan-born president of the ROC. Chen's approach to identity issues was often characterized as "desinicization" (*quzhongguobua*) and the less translatable Taiwan "subjectivity" (*zhuti*).⁵³ Although Ma has moved to a more intermediate position, all leaders in Taiwan are now

⁵⁰ deLisle, "Chinese Puzzle"; Lee Teng-hui, "Understanding Taiwan: Bridging the Perception Gap," *Foreign Affairs*, Nov.-Dec. 1999; Lee Teng-hui, *Creating The Future* (Taipei, Taiwan: Government Information Office, 1993), p. 117.

⁵¹ Chen Shui-bian, "Paving the Way for a Sustainable Taiwan" (Presidential Inaugural Address) May 20, 2004; "Interview with Chen Shui-bian," *Washington Post*, July 8, 2007; Y.F. Low, "Sovereignty is Basis of Taiwanese National Identity," Central News Agency (Taiwan), Dec. 29, 2005.

⁵² Ma, "Taiwan's Renaissance"; Lee Shu-hua and Deborah Kuo, "Presidential Office Counters Accusations of Timidity toward China," Central News Agency (Taiwan), Jan. 15, 2010.

⁵³ Daniel C. Lynch, "Taiwan's Self-Conscious Nation-Building Project," *Asian Survey*, vol. 44 no. 4 (2004), pp. 513–533; Lilian Wu, "President Wants Constitution that Fits Taiwan People," Central News Agency (Taiwan), Oct. 6, 2003.

constrained by a popular political identity that makes a return to pre-Lee and even some pre-Chen baselines impracticable. Throughout, the contrast with the Chiang-era insistence on—and indoctrination in—Taiwan’s mainland-based Chineseness has been profound. The Ma administration has even taken a page from Beijing’s soft power playbook (while also building on earlier ROC efforts to promote Taiwan as an authentic and vital site of Chinese culture), announcing that his government would support the creation of “Taiwan Academies” to rival Beijing’s kudzu-like Confucius Institutes.⁵⁴

Here too Taiwan’s soft power faces difficulties. As reflected most formally in the two sides’ dueling “white papers,” Taiwan’s moves have been part of a sometimes-vicious circle of engagement with Beijing’s efforts to advance its very different reading of the application of international norms concerning self-determination and national identity to the Taiwan case. Taiwan’s successes have been relatively modest and arguably fading. Beijing has succeeded in pressuring (with hard power carrots and sticks) or persuading (with more soft power methods) the vast majority of states to accept, or acquiesce in, some version of a one-China principle (including adopting a no “two Chinas” and no “one China, one Taiwan” policy). Under PRC pressure, a once politically salient independence movement on Taiwan has wilted (despite a rise in Taiwan identity and amid much continuing dual identification as both Taiwanese and Chinese).⁵⁵

A fourth and especially important component in Taiwan’s quest to claim and use soft power has entailed emphasizing another set of differences from the mainland and focusing on features of Taiwan’s internal order. Paralleling and challenging the PRC’s efforts to portray itself as a benign rising power, Taiwan has heavily played the “values card.” It has stressed that, unlike the mainland, it deeply shares cosmopolitan and, particularly, U.S.-supported political norms of democracy and human rights.

Democracy and human rights—which, in the post-Cold War world, have an impact on the international acceptance and stature of states and state-like entities—have been key features of Taiwan’s soft power strategy. Beginning by the 1980s, Taiwan’s leadership recognized that Taiwan faced depleting standing with Washington, in the wake of the Kaohsiung Incident (which entailed the violent repression of pro-reform demonstrations in Taiwan’s second largest city and politically tainted trials of dissident leaders) and the Jiang Nan case (which centered on the Taiwanese government-linked assassination in the United States of a journalist critical of the ruling Chiang family), amid the ongoing improvement of the PRC’s image in the United States

⁵⁴ “Taiwan to Challenge China’s ‘Soft Power,’” Agence France Presse, Feb, 17, 2010; Lee Shuhua and Lilian Wu, “Taiwan to Showcase ‘Soft Power’ in ROC Centennial Celebrations—President,” Central News Agency (Taiwan, Nov. 13, 2009).

⁵⁵ Robert S. Ross, “Taiwan’s Fading Independence Movement,” *Foreign Affairs*, Mar.-Apr. 2006; Shelley Rigger, *Taiwan’s Rising Rationalism* (Washington: East-West Center, 2006).

and Chinese relations with Washington, and against the backdrop of the “third wave” of democratization and pro-democracy movements that were sweeping East Asia. Indeed, Taiwan’s democratization and embrace of international human rights norms in the final years of the Chiang Ching-kuo presidency are generally seen to owe much to the recognition that the ROC needed to find new sources of soft power, specifically of a type that could persuade Washington not to abandon Taipei’s interests.⁵⁶

This democratic component in Taiwanese soft power waxed as Taiwan passed key milestones beginning in the early 1990s, including the first democratic elections for the legislature since the ROC decamped to the island, the first direct democratic election for an ROC president in 1996, the peaceful transition of power to a president from the former opposition party in 2000, the maintenance of political stability when that president was reelected in a close and disputed election in 2004, and a second peaceful transition of power back to a president from the former ruling party in 2008.

Democracy and human rights in Taiwan, and the contrast with conditions across the Strait, have been durable motifs in the soft power side of Taipei’s policies toward the outside world and Taiwanese analysts’ foreign policy advice. President Lee routinely pressed this point, most prominently for the United States and most provocatively for China in a speech he gave at Cornell University.⁵⁷ The Guidelines for National Unification insisted that political reintegration with the mainland could occur only after the PRC joined Taiwan in a consensus for guaranteeing fundamental human rights and practicing democracy. The Chen era witnessed regular invocations of Taiwan’s democratic and human rights accomplishments as definitive features of Taiwan and central themes in Taiwan’s quest for state or state-like international status.⁵⁸ Beginning with his inaugural address, Ma and his administration have stressed Taiwan’s democracy—and Taiwan’s standing as the first democracy in the Chinese world—as features that should confer high levels of international status on Taiwan, make Taiwan a model for the mainland and provide a key foundation for close and friendly relations with the United States. Both Chen and Ma identified democracy as a key component of Taiwan’s soft power and committed Taiwan to observation of the two principal UN human rights covenants. In 2003, the ROC established the

⁵⁶ Jacques deLisle, “International Pressures and Domestic Pushback” in *Political Change in China: Comparisons with Taiwan*, eds. Bruce Gilley and Larry Diamond (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2008); Andrew J. Nathan and Helena V.S. Ho, “The Decision for Reform in Taiwan,” in *China’s Transition* ed. Andrew J. Nathan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

⁵⁷ Lee Teng-hui, “Always in My Heart” (Olin Lecture, delivered at Cornell University, June 16, 1995).

⁵⁸ Chen Shui-bian, “Taiwan Stands Up” (Presidential Inaugural Address, May 20, 2000); Chen, “Sustainable Taiwan”; deLisle, “International Pressures”; Jacques deLisle, “Reforming/Replacing the ROC Constitution,” *Woodrow Wilson International Center Asia Program Special Report* (Nov. 2004), pp. 12–18.

Taiwan Foundation for Democracy, with a mandate to study and support democracy internationally and, incidentally, to highlight Taiwan's accomplishments. Throughout the period, Taiwanese sources have stressed Taiwan's contrast with human rights conditions across the Strait and Beijing's long-standing failure to ratify the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights.⁵⁹

In this dimension as well, Taiwan's soft power has faced setbacks and challenges. They have come from both sides of the Strait. The trials of disgraced former President Chen and his associates and relatives have tarnished Taiwan's democratic and rule-of-law reputation, both through exposure of the defendants' corruption and through a prosecutorial process that has faced harsh criticism for perceived shortcomings in terms of due process and apolitical justice. KMT dominance of the legislature, Ma's landslide victory and seemingly dismal prospects for the DPP in future national elections dimmed the luster of Taiwanese democracy by raising the prospect of a single party-dominant system (although such concerns faded as Ma's approval ratings flagged and opposition candidates won several by-elections).⁶⁰

On the mainland, the Hu-era emphasis on "human" or "scientific" rather than purely economic development, talk of a "new deal" (*xinzheng*) benefiting those left behind in China's break-neck development, and a leadership with a more populist sensibility threatened to narrow the domestic order aspect of the soft power gap that Taiwan had enjoyed. This dismal prospect for Taiwan was offset somewhat by a series of repressive measures by the Chinese regime against would-be liberal political reformers (including the leaders of the Charter 08 constitutional reform proposals), asserters of legal rights (including "rights protection"—*weiquan*—lawyers) and others who embraced values akin to the democratic and human rights norms that have been central to Taiwan's soft power strategy.⁶¹

Whatever the trajectory of Taiwan's soft power resources and the efficacy of Taiwan's attempts to deploy them, their limited and defensive character and cross-Strait focus are unmistakable. Taiwan's soft power and its use are not intended or able to make Taiwan an object of widespread emulation or a polity to whose will others bend without coercion or bribes. They are, rather, means for primarily pressing back against PRC soft and hard

⁵⁹ Ma, "Taiwan's Renaissance"; Wang and Lu, "Conception of Soft Power," p. 432; Hsu, "'Soft Power' Shields"; Han Nai-kuo, "Freedom and Democracy are Taiwan's Soft Power: President," Central News Agency (Taipei), Dec. 30, 2008.

⁶⁰ Jacques deLisle, "Taiwan under President Ma Ying-jeou," FPRI Enote, June 2008, available at <http://www.fpri.org/enotes/200806.delisle.taiwanmayingeoufull.html>; Shelley Rigger, "Ma's Puzzling Midterm Malaise," *Brookings Northeast Asia Commentary*, no. 37 (March 2010), available at http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2010/03_taiwan_president_ma_rigger.aspx.

⁶¹ See generally, Li, *China's Changing Political Landscape*; *China Under Hu Jintao* eds. T.J. Cheng, Jacques deLisle and Deborah Brown (Singapore: World Scientific Press, 2006).

power efforts to deny Taiwan state-like stature or to marginalize Taiwan in the international order. They serve as second-best substitutes in pursuing the security that Taiwan cannot achieve with its overmatched hard power resources.

U.S. Foreign Policy, China's Soft Power, and Cross-Strait Relations

China's rising soft power resources and use of soft power, especially concerning Taiwan, raise questions for U.S. policy: Will China become a soft power rival to the United States? Will China move beyond using soft power primarily for the relatively limited and primarily defensive purpose of allaying concerns about a "China threat" and avoiding balancing or containing reactions? Will it use soft power to more affirmative, transformative ends (as has been characteristic of American uses of soft power)?

For the near term, the answer to these questions remains no. In several ways, China's soft power resources remain relatively weak and lag far behind those which the United States still wields, despite dissipation during the last decade and amid recent and still-uncertain efforts to rebuild. First, the degree to which China has closed the gap is easily over-estimated and frequently overstated. Like China's hard power,⁶² China's soft power is geographically uneven, appearing weaker, narrower or less securely rooted outside its neighborhood and especially in the West.⁶³

In much of the developing world, the apparent love affair with China likely remains shallow and fragile. The ambiguous and much-debated China Model or Beijing Consensus is only superficially understood and disappointments that would accompany attempted implementation have not yet been encountered. The embrace of China may prove little more than an implicit quid pro quo for diplomatic support, modest development assistance and foreign investment. These are not the most pure or robust forms of soft power. In some cases and on some accounts, they do not even count as soft power.

With China's growing economic presence—concentrated in extractive industries, low-end service sectors, and manufactured exports—come looming and already-materializing risks to China's image in Africa, Latin America and elsewhere. Complaints of labor abuses, neocolonialism, environmental degradation and hollowing out of labor-intensive local economic sectors have already begun to surface. Nearer China's periphery, economic integration-driven bandwagoning with China is easily exaggerated. As more careful analyses have pointed out, East and Southeast Asian states are wary of China, remain more attracted to U.S. values than PRC ones, and have combined growing links to China with recommitments to ties with the United States

⁶² See article by Robert S. Ross in this edition of *Orbis*.

⁶³ See generally, McGiffert, ed. *Chinese Soft Power*; Yanzhong Huang and Sheng Ding, "Dragon's Underbelly: An Analysis of China's Soft Power," *East Asia* (Winter 2006), pp. 35–41.

through strategies that can be variously—if not wholly satisfactorily—characterized as balancing, double-bandwagoning or hedging.⁶⁴ Throughout much of the non-Western world, seeming Sinophilia is to some extent superficial and self-indulgent tweaking of a sole superpower that is seen as having been on a binge of neglect and abuse. According to major global public opinion surveys and influential Chinese scholars' own estimates, China has scored only limited successes and still badly trails the United States in soft power.⁶⁵

Second, as we have seen, China's soft power resources are plagued by internal contradictions. To build and emphasize some dimensions is to undermine others. Playing up residual communism can narrow the relevance and appeal of the China Model. Trumpeting strong commitments to sovereignty can raise doubts—especially when Taiwan is the issue or when Beijing backs pariah regimes—about Beijing's claims to be a benevolent, peace-seeking and responsible power. And so on.

Third, key types of Chinese soft power resources remain thin. As many analysts at home and abroad have noted, China's political institutions and official values do not enjoy broad appeal, nor does China's record on social equity, the environment, international human rights and other matters.⁶⁶ The international relevance, content and even existence of a China Model for development are as much foci of debate as they are rich sources of soft power that can alter foreigners' attitudes and preferences in ways that serve Chinese interests. China's soft power remains heavily statist, lacking the popular culture, commercial and civil society dimensions that provide much of the might of American soft power.⁶⁷ A slowing of China's growth rate or rise in its perceived collateral costs is far from unimaginable and would dim the luster of the China Model. Even continued success could sap soft power as a more prosperous China would become, like Taiwan, seemingly less relevant to the developing world.

⁶⁴ See Evan S. Medeiros et al., *Pacific Currents: The Response of U.S. Allies and Security Partners in East Asia to China's Rise* (Washington, D.C.: Rand, 2008); David C. Kang, "Getting Asia Wrong: The Need for New Analytical Frameworks," *International Security* vol. 27 no. 4 (Spring 2003), pp. 57–85.

⁶⁵ Denise E. Zheng, "China's Use of Soft Power in the Developing World," in McGiffert, ed. *Chinese Soft Power*, p. 8; Huang and Ding, "Dragon's Underbelly," (variously discussing Pew Global Attitudes, BBC and Chicago Council on Global Affairs surveys); Yan Xuetong and Xu Jin, "Comparison of China and United States Soft Power," *Modern International Relations [Xiandai Guoji Guanxi]*, (Jan. 2008), pp. 24–29; Glaser and Murphy, "Chinese Characteristics," pp. 20–23; Li, "China Debates," pp. 301–303 (presenting Chinese scholars' assessments of China's limited soft power and discussions of domestic political and social reform to enhance China's soft power).

⁶⁶ See, for example, Gill and Huang, "Sources and Limits," pp. 26–31; Ding, *Hidden Wings*, pp. 75–109.

⁶⁷ Wang Yiwei, "Public Diplomacy and the Rise of Chinese Soft Power," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (Mar. 2008), pp. 264–270.

Fourth, China may suffer from a particularly pronounced case of the general problem that soft power resources can be difficult to deploy, especially to achieve affirmative (as opposed to defensive) policy aims. The attractive force of a China Model of development or vigorous defenses of sovereignty or traditional Chinese culture do not translate neatly or more than very indirectly into support in the international system for likely PRC policy agendas that go beyond defusing fears of a rising China.⁶⁸ Many of China's high-profile soft power-building international activities have been pro-status quo (for example, supporting a state-centric international system and a relatively liberal international economic order and largely accepting then-Deputy Secretary of State Zoellick's call on China to be a "responsible stakeholder") or have served values that are more like the United States' than the PRC's (in the case of humanitarian and democracy-promotion agendas associated with UN peacekeeping operations and other PRC moves to engage with the international human rights regime).⁶⁹ Seemingly more revisionist efforts (mostly on economic issues and especially with the advent of the 2008 global financial crisis) so far have been, variously, rhetorical, vague, tentative and not very influential.

Especially in the closing years of the twenty-first century's first decade, China has given reason to doubt its will or ability to stick to a line that will maximize its soft power. Some of what Beijing says and does is bad for China's soft-power influence with key international constituencies. Examples include: newly haughty (if, on the merits, plausible) lectures about the shortcomings of American-style capitalism and Washington's regulatory regime; proud and sometimes strident nationalism at the 2008 Beijing Olympics and in response to perceived provocations from alleged foreign-backed separatists in Tibet and Xinjiang; high-profile actions against pro-democracy, pro-human rights and pro-civil liberties elements; declarations that Western-style democracy is not appropriate for China; and prominent statements implying or asserting that the world needs to learn to deal with China on Chinese terms.

Beijing's rhetorical emphasis on building a "harmonious world" (and antecedent slogans) has lessened amid greater emphasis on protecting China's "core interests" (*hexin liyi*). "Core interests"—and especially the security, territorial integrity (including Tibet, Xinjiang and Taiwan) and economic elements that figure prominently in Chinese accounts of such interest—are more often the stuff of realism and hard power. Signs of a trend toward

⁶⁸ Huang and Ding, "Dragon's Underbelly," pp. 32–41; Ding, *Hidden Wings*, pp. 39–55.

⁶⁹ Robert B. Zoellick, "Whither China: From Membership to Responsibility," Remarks to the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations, Sept. 25, 2005; Xia Liping, "China: A Responsible Great Power," *Journal of Contemporary China* (Feb. 2001), pp. 17–25; Nye and Wang, "Hard Decisions," pp. 21–22. For the argument that China's participation in UN peacekeeping operations in Africa illustrates Chinese soft power being used in the service of Western-defined ideals and to allay fears of a China threat, see Shogo Suzuki, "Chinese Soft Power, Insecurity Studies, Myopia and Fantasy," *Third World Quarterly* vol. 30, no. 4 (2009), pp. 779–793.

Chinese core interests to include geographically more remote areas (such as the South China Sea⁷⁰) and substantively more varied interests (such as energy security) portend little generation of soft power and possible increases in interest-based international frictions that can erode soft power.⁷¹ This proclivity is not entirely new and is thus relatively likely to endure; in some respects, it looks like a more powerful and confident China's extension of the "accomplish something" (*yousuo zuowei*) side of the earlier debate with the Dengist imperative to "hide brightness and nourish obscurity" (*taoguang yanghui*).⁷²

The reasons for this pattern in Chinese behavior are uncertain but likely multiple and intractable. Partial and plausible explanations include: the temptations to pride and assertiveness that come from China's volatile mix of resentment over historic harms and slights (dating to the nineteenth century and including post-Tiananmen Incident ostracism) and sudden rise to the ranks of great powers (*daguo*—a term that became common in Chinese official and policy-intellectual discourse beginning in the late 1990s); the emotional popular nationalism that the Chinese leadership has cultivated, in substitution for communist ideology, as a source of legitimacy but that has proved difficult for the regime to control; divisions within China's famously fragmented Party-state over the content, desirability and utility of various components of soft power; and a foreign policy culture that retains a significant realist strain skeptical of soft-power or believing that soft power (including international respect for and deference to Chinese aims and interests) flows relatively directly and completely from the hard power of national strength (whether strategic or economic).⁷³

Finally, in assessing the path of Chinese soft power and corresponding U.S. foreign policy, Taiwan is both the canary in the coal mine and the acid test. With sovereignty over the island consistently identified as among China's "core interests," Taiwan has been the object of much of China's effort to muster and

⁷⁰ "China Tells U.S. that South China Sea is 'Core Interest' in New Policy," Kyodo, July 4, 2010.

⁷¹ This prospect was underscored by the tensions in U.S.-China relations that followed Chinese assertions that the South China Sea was part of its "core interests." See Mark Lander, "Offering to Aid Talks, U.S. Challenges China on Disputed Islands," *New York Times*, July 23, 2010; Geoff Dyer, "Power Play in the South China Sea," *Financial Times*, Aug. 9, 2010; Li Hongmei, "Unwise to Elevate 'South China Sea' to be Core Interest?" *People's Daily Online* (English), Aug. 27, 2010. The resulting strains in bilateral relations are all the more striking, and redolent of soft power issues, because China had long asserted its sovereignty over much of the relevant area and because the United States issued a pointed reassertion of both its interests in the region and its will to intervene in support of principles that coincide with the interests and aims of regional states worried by China's rise.

⁷² See Cabestan, *Politique Internationale*, pp. 100–106; Glaser and Murphy, "Chinese Characteristics," p. 12.

⁷³ On this issue of foreign policy culture, see Wang "Public Diplomacy," pp. 260–269; Johnston, *Cultural Realism*.

deploy soft power. Despite Hu Jintao's reorientation of China's cross-Strait policy from reunification to anti-secession, Taiwan remains the item on Beijing's soft power (and broader policy) agenda that is most clearly not pro-status quo. For the United States, China's agenda concerning Taiwan renews or reemphasizes the perennial debate in American policy about how much Taiwan is a soft power issue (involving commitment to anti-communist or democratic ideals) or a hard power issue (with Taiwan figuring either as a strategic asset in countering a threatening or rising China or as an impediment to strategically desirable good relations with Beijing and a source of significant risk of unnecessary military confrontation with the PRC). To the considerable extent that U.S. support for Taiwan is, as Taipei recognizes, dependent on soft power calculations, the continuation and possible escalation of cross-Strait-focused soft power struggles will write a new chapter in the long-ambivalent American debate about the relative importance in U.S. foreign policy of values (a key part of soft power) and interests (defined in predominantly hard power terms).

