**“China, an arising soft power”**

**Joseph Nye** introduced the concept of "soft power" in the late **1980s**. Soft power describes the use of **positive attraction** and **persuasion** to achieve foreign policy objectives. Soft power shuns the traditional foreign policy tools of stones and sticks, seeking instead to achieve influence by building networks, communicating compelling narratives, establishing international rules, and drawing on the resources that make a country naturally attractive to the world.

So, what was Nye’s intentions with introducing and using the soft power? Nye said, “If a state can make its power seem legitimate in the eyes of others, it will encounter less resistance to its wishes.” That is, he argued, “if its culture and ideology are attractive, others will more willingly follow.” For Nye, the basis of U.S. soft power was liberal democratic politics, free market economics, and fundamental values such as human rights—in essence, liberalism.

US introduced this new era of influence over minds and many countries immediately started following the same ideology. “*Never before in human history had so many countries given up so many old political and economic arrangements for one new system.”*

Germany ranks 1st globally in having the strongest soft power while China ranks 8th in the list in 2021 stats. China was 10th in 2020 and 27th in 2019. We can clearly see the huge jump China made as an arising soft power.The reason to be concerned about China coming near the highest ranks in Global Soft Power is quite valid as China is already a hard power as well as the world’s second largest economy and is gradually rising over other countries in almost every manner.

China’s much-noted economic progress has been accompanied by a steady expansion in its cultural and diplomatic influence globally, especially in the developing world. This growth in this so-called soft power has been apparent in Southeast Asia for a number of years. But it is also evident in Beijing’s economic partnerships in Latin America, and in its surge of business deals and development projects in Africa. Some experts see China’s influence expanding at the expense of the United States, which used soft power effectively through the Cold War. But others point out China’s considerable internal challenges could undermine its international appeal.

China is steadily increasing its support for cultural exchanges, sending doctors and teachers to work abroad, welcoming students from other nations to study in China, and paying for Chinese-language programs abroad. In 2005, China’s education ministry announced a new initiative to boost Chinese-language teaching in American universities and language institutes around the world. Beijing University, China’s most prestigious, just announced a visiting-scholars fund to encourage foreign PhDs to study in China. "A decade ago, no Chinese university could support such a program," Economy says. And Chinese cultural influence, already evident in many parts of the world, is spreading. "Right now, your kids wear Chinese clothes and play with Chinese toys. It is not at all inconceivable that their kids will listen to Chinese pop and prefer Chinese movies," John Derbyshire writes in the National Review Online.

In Southeast Asia, "Chinese culture, cuisine, calligraphy, cinema, curios, art, acupuncture, herbal medicine, and fashion fads have all emerged in regional culture," writes Eric Teo Chu Cheow of the Singapore Institute of International Affairs. Young people in the region are fascinated by Chinese culture, as seen in films, pop music, and television, he says, even though those trends may have originated in Hong Kong or Taiwan. Students from Southeast Asia make up a sizeable number of the more than 110,000 overseas students from 178 countries who studied in China in 2004. This figure marked a ten-year high, and an increase of over 40 percent from 2003. "There’s a belief that to get ahead, it would behoove you to go to China, in the same way that ten years ago people said the same about the United States," Economy says.

What is the impact of China’s Soft power? Other authoritarian regimes, like that of Zimbabwe’s Robert Mugabe, have intensified their ties with China. Their leaders look to China for a model of how to grow economically without relinquishing political control. But their citizens aren’t fooled, experts say. They see that China suffers from endemic corruption, internal dissent, and repressive governance. "[Beijing] may face the wrath of the people at a future point in time," Economy says.

Many developing countries, linked to China through bodies such as the Group of 77 developing nations, had hoped China would offer an alternate model of leadership to that of the United States. In the Doha Round of trade negotiations, China sided with developing countries in demanding the end of rich-country agricultural subsidies, even though Beijing protects its own agricultural sector. "There are signs that China could resume its role as a leader of the developing world," Gilley says. "But my view is that China will never have this role until it’s democratic."

However, there are limits to the use of soft power for China as its appeal is restricted by the nature of the Communist state, experts say. "They don’t have a coherent vision of the world to offer," Gilley says. "They’re stuck in a 19th-century vision of state sovereignty and non-interference, which is really out of step with where the world has moved." And no matter how strong its charm offensive grows, China remains an authoritarian society that jails dissidents and puts down revolutions by its own people. As Gilley points out, "Most of China’s influence is still security-related. It wins its influence because it can pose a threat—military, economic, or political—to many countries." In the end, Economy says, China may find its expanding influence to be a double-edged sword. "China has the potential to become the 600-pound gorilla in the room," she says. "Chinese influence may begin to breed resentment."

China’s investment in its soft power institutions has since been both significant and rapid. Indeed, China’s spending on soft power over the last decade has hit $10bn a year, according to David Shambaugh of George Washington University. This is more than the combined government spending of the U.S., UK, France, Germany, and Japan on soft power. The top-down endorsement of this approach has continued with President Xi Jinping vowing "to promote China's cultural soft power by disseminating modern Chinese values and showing the charm of Chinese culture to the world."

The last 10 years of investment has provided China with an impressive portfolio covering the range of instruments of attraction usually associated with soft power. In education, China now has over 400,000 international students studying at its universities. It has set up a global network of 500 Confucius Institutes teaching Chinese language and culture. In international broadcasting, CCTV broadcasts globally on television, radio, and online in English, Russian, Spanish, and Arabic as well as Chinese.

Conclusively, China continues to grow in stature and appears to be a paradigm of stability and prosperity. China’s success is of course not guaranteed, but in a world of economic uncertainty, the China model increasingly looks more attractive than Pax Americana.

**Sources:** foreignpolicy.com , crf.org , theconversation.com , Wikipedia.org , uscpublicdiplomacy.org , thediplomat.com

**Roll no. 20L-1027**