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China's Public Diplomacy towards Southeast Asian Nations

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Abstract

Since the mid-2000s, there has been great interest in China's soft power. By looking at China public diplomacy toward ASEAN countries, this paper seeks to analyze the shifting discourses and ideological sources of China's public diplomacy.

This paper argues that China's public diplomacy towards ASEAN has the three strategic goals of "explaining China", "disseminating information abroad so as to serve China", and "protecting China's national interests", and these goals combine in a complex fashion. It concludes that China's foreign policy philosophy today includes the three ideologies of universal values, Marxism-Leninism, and Chinese traditional thought, and as a nation that is poised to grow to a global superpower, China cannot depend completely on any one of the three ideologies in its foreign policy philosophy and vacillates between all three.

摘要

特别是自 2000 年代中叶以后，中国越来越重视加强本国的软实力。通过分析中国对东南亚各国的公共外交，本文试图阐明两个问题：（1）1990 年代之后的中国公共外交发生过何种转变，具有何种特征？（2）中国公共外交的意识形态的根基在哪里？

本文认为中国的公共外交经历了三个阶段， 目前的中国公共外交同时具有三个要素：“防御性公共外交”、“积极性公共外交”和“攻击性公共外交”。普世价值，马恩列毛的共产主义思想和中国的传统文化都为中国公共外交的提供理论基础，但是目前的中国公共外交无法立足于任何一种思想之上，导致中国的软实力缺乏意识形态的根基。

China's Public Diplomacy towards Southeast Asian Nations

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Introduction

With its rapid economic growth, China's presence has seen a definitive increase, not only in the political realm but in the cultural realm as well. It has been a little over 10 years since the world's first Confucius Institute was established in Seoul in 2004, and today there are already 525 Confucius Institutes in 138 countries, and 1113 Confucius Classrooms (up until December 2017), according to China's Confucius Institute Headquarters. Transformers 4, which was released in 2014, not only featured famous Chinese actors such as Li Bingbing, but the film was shot in China and many Chinese brand products such as cars, TVs, milk, and mineral water made appearances as well.

Since the mid-2000s, there has been great interest in China's soft power. Soft power is defined as the ability to get what you want through attraction¹, and Joseph Nye argues that China's soft power is increasing on all fronts including culture, political value, and foreign policy, although it is still no match for US soft power². China's public diplomacy is said to have been particularly successful in Southeast Asian countries³.

In recent years, tensions between China and neighboring countries such as Japan, the Philippines, and Vietnam have escalated over maritime sovereignty. China's rigid position towards its neighbors regarding maritime issues has in reality increased concerns and alarm towards China in some East Asian nations. Against this backdrop, East Asia has served as a stage where Japan and China are in fierce competition over

¹ Joseph Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, New York: Basic Books, 1990; and Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York: Public Affairs, 2004; Joseph Nye, "Think Again, Soft Power," <http://foreignpolicy.com/2006/02/23/think-again-soft-power/> (accessed on January 31, 2019).

² Joseph Nye, "The Rise of China's Soft Power", *Wall Street Journal Asia*, December 29, 2005.

³ Joshua Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power Is Transforming the World*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, pp.33-35.

soft power⁴. There are some who argue that even with economic growth, delayed political reform in China is an obstacle to China increasing its soft power in Southeast Asia⁵.

However, the realities of power politics in the international order have resulted in alterations to China's deployment of public diplomacy even as it increases its soft power, and issues facing China in increasing its soft power are also changing. What form has China's public diplomacy taken in terms of its policies? What is China seeking to serve as a base for its soft power? In order to answer these questions, this paper first considers the policy transitions in China's public diplomacy towards ASEAN countries. Next, we elucidate the characteristics of China's public diplomacy as well as China's methods for carrying out its public diplomacy towards ASEAN countries. Lastly, we discuss issues in China's public diplomacy by considering the dialogue taking place in China.

Here, we define public diplomacy as efforts made primarily by a government regarding mainly education, culture, and dissemination of information.

1. China's Public Diplomacy towards ASEAN Countries

In recent years, there has been a rapid increase in China's presence in Asia. However, China's increase in influence in Asia is a very recent phenomenon.

In the beginning of the 1990s, China has started fully participating in regional organizations by simultaneously demarcating borders with neighboring countries and improving relations with them. China began its relations with ASEAN by sending its foreign minister Qian Qichen to the 24th ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in July 1991 and signing an agreement with ASEAN. In 1994, China attended the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and in 1996 China became a dialogue partner of ASEAN. Through proposals by Japanese Prime Minister Hashimoto, ASEAN+3 (Japan, China, South Korea) was first established in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in December 1997. In this manner, by 1997 China had gradually created a foundation for cooperation with ASEAN.

⁴ Ian Hall and Frank Smith, "The Struggle for Soft Power in Asia: Public Diplomacy and Regional Competition", *Asian Security*, 9:1, 2013, pp.1-18; Jing Sun, *Japan and China as Charm Rivals: Soft Power in Regional Diplomacy*, University of Michigan Press, 2013.

⁵ Chin-Hao Huang, "China's Soft Power in East Asia: A Quest for Status and Influence?," NBR Special Report #42, January 2013, https://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/451/docs/Huang_FINAL_China_Soft_Power_and_Status.pdf (accessed on January 31, 2019).

With such a transition in policy as a backdrop, China's public diplomacy towards ASEAN began to be deployed. China's engagement with ASEAN since 1996 has gone through the following three stages, leading to the present day.

(1) Eliminating Perception of China as Threat: 1996-2002

With the redefinition of the US-Japan Security Treaty in April 1996, fears of China being encircled by the US have increased, and China suddenly became closer to ASEAN countries. During the 1997 Asian financial crisis China did not devalue the yuan, which led to China being seen in an increasingly positive light by Southeast Asian countries. China took this opportunity to begin in earnest its assertive diplomacy towards ASEAN. However, there were several obstacles to China and ASEAN developing ties, including memory of China's history of supporting communist movements throughout the world as well as tensions surrounding territorial waters in the South China Sea.

Immediately after the end of the Cold War, China declared to Southeast Asian countries that it would return to the "spirit of Bandung". When President Yang Shangkun visited Indonesia in June 1991, he emphasized that "China had no intention of seeking political and economic influence through overseas Chinese."⁶ In November 2000, China proposed an ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) at the ASEAN Summit, and at the ASEAN Summit held in November 2001, China and ASEAN agreed to implement the ACFTA by 2020. As a result, ASEAN countries began to see China as "not a threat but an opportunity", and ASEAN countries took a step away from seeing China as a threat and towards taking advantage of China's growth.

Another major obstacle between China and ASEAN is the territorial dispute surrounding the Spratly ("Nansha" in Chinese) Islands and the Paracel ("Xisha" in Chinese) Islands. Although it is by no means easy to solve territorial disputes, efforts to do so have begun since the end of the 1990s. In July 1999, China announced that it would consider a regional code of conduct⁷ in the South China Sea at a meeting in Singapore between ASEAN and China. At the same time, Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan announced that it would be the first signatory among the five nuclear weapon states to the annex of the Southeast Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (SEANWFZ; signed in 1995, effective 1997). Of course, there were major differences in views between China and ASEAN regarding SEANWFZ. China claims that its pledge

⁶ "Beijing does not Seek Influence through Overseas Chinese," *Straits Times*, 6 June 1991.

⁷ The South China Sea code of conduct was drafted by the Philippines and Vietnam but was strongly opposed by Malaysia.

not to attack or threaten signatories to SEANWFZ with nuclear weapons does not apply to its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) or the continental shelf.

In 2000, a working group between China and ASEAN established by working level Senior Officials' Consultations⁸ has met four times and has discussed the draft for the South China Sea code of conduct⁹. Through a series of negotiations after that, in 2002, a "Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC)" between China and ASEAN was announced. As a result of the signing of the South China Sea code of conduct, relations between China and ASEAN countries progressed in a major way. In October 2003, China became the first non-member of ASEAN to sign the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) and forged a strategic partnership for peace and prosperity with ASEAN.

(2) China's Engagement Strategy and Public Diplomacy: 2002-2006

The United States, Japan, and ASEAN countries have made vigorous efforts to incorporate China into the international and regional orders. Meanwhile, since 2000 China has transitioned to a strategy of incorporating Asian countries. At the 16th National Congress of the Communist Party of China held in November 2002, China viewed the first 20 years of the 21st century as a "strategic opportunity" and began placing more importance on neighboring countries as a region. With such a foreign policy strategy, since 2000, China has launched an assertive diplomatic offensive towards ASEAN countries. After the DOC was signed, relations between China and ASEAN countries developed rapidly.

Against this backdrop, educational and cultural exchanges with Southeast Asian nations have been strongly backed by the Chinese government and have seen rapid development. In October 2003, the first Plan of Action (2005-2010) between China and ASEAN was agreed. Plans of Actions are renewed every five years, and include specific policies to reinforce exchanges in culture, education, media, etc.

In November 2004, Premier Wen Jiabao made nine proposals to strengthen political, economic, and cultural relations with ASEAN countries¹⁰. As a result of the

⁸ The first meeting of the working level Senior Officials' Consultations between China and ASEAN was held in 1995 in Hangzhou.

⁹ "External Relations," <http://www.aseansec.org/10370.htm> (accessed on August 8, 2012).

¹⁰ The nine proposals by Premier Wen Jiabao are as follows: (1) Strengthening of the system of cooperation by dialogue at every level including interactions between leaders. (2) Support of the ASEAN initiative. (3) Strengthening of cooperation in areas such as customs and inspections, including FTAs. (4) Creation of a China-ASEAN energy ministerial level dialogue mechanism. (5) Promotion of cooperation in five important areas and steady execution of memorandum of cooperation on traffic. (6) Strengthening of cooperation in non-traditional security areas including

proposal by Premier Wen Jiabao, in 2005 a memorandum on cultural exchanges was signed between China and ASEAN. Meanwhile, the two foreign policy positions of “not using overseas Chinese for political purposes” and “setting aside maritime disputes” have played a major role in eliminating fears towards China by ASEAN countries. The position of multilateralism that has started to emerge in Chinese foreign policy has further strengthened relations with ASEAN countries. Of course, cultural, educational, and media exchanges have occurred on a bilateral basis between China and individual ASEAN countries, but by strengthening relations with ASEAN as a regional organization, cultural exchanges between China and ASEAN countries have been further promoted. Since the 2000s, cultural exchanges have developed between China and ASEAN countries.

(3) Dilemma between Territorial Issues and Strengthening of Relations: since 2006

In the latter half of the 2000s, relations between China and ASEAN countries have passed a turning point. Since 2006, China’s policies towards ASEAN countries have been to take a hard line regarding maritime territorial issues while strengthening political, economic, and cultural relations.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which came into effect in 1994, introduced the new concept of an exclusive economic zone (EEZ), and a deadline of May 12, 2009 was set for each nation to apply for an EEZ. In view of this deadline, around 2006 China added “national sovereignty and security” to its national interests, which already included economic development, and made explicit its intent to protect its maritime interests. As a result, since 2007, tensions surrounding maritime issues have escalated between China and Vietnam, the Philippines, and Japan. This type of maritime policy was inherited by the Xi Jinping administration, and President Xi Jinping stated, “this is an issue regarding our core interests and we will not negotiate”¹¹ during a

maritime security. Signing of agreement between China and ASEAN regarding Southeast Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty as soon as possible. Execution of Declaration of Conduct in the South China Sea and cooperation in the South China Sea as soon as possible. Adherence to the principle of setting aside arguments and engaging in joint development, and proactively studying methods for joint development in disputed waters. (7) Signing of Great Mekong Subregion information memorandum with five Mekong River basin countries. Participation of China as observer in the East ASEAN Growth Area and strengthening cooperation with eastern ASEAN countries. (8) Strengthening cultural and youth exchanges. Signing of cultural cooperation agreement with ASEAN. Implementation of mutual exchanges of youth volunteers, deployment of language studies instruction, medical cooperation, and spreading of agricultural technologies. (9) Implementation of commemoration activities with 2006, the 15th anniversary of the formation of the dialogue partnership, as a “Year of Friendship and Cooperation between China and ASEAN”.

¹¹ *Jiefang Daily*, January 30, 2013.

meeting of the Politburo of the Communist Party of China in January 2013, once again emphasizing China's position of not yielding in matters concerning sovereignty, security, and development interests.

In the South China Sea, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines, and Taiwan have been entangled in territorial disputes. Malaysia and Brunei dispute relatively little of China's positions, and it is claimed that as long as China does not take any actions to compromise the security and national interests of those nations, there would be no sudden shifts in sentiment in those countries towards considering China a threat¹². On the other hand, Vietnam and the Philippines are completely at odds with China and tensions are escalating.

Even amid intense disputes with some Southeast Asian nations regarding maritime issues, China continues to increase its economic, cultural, and military cooperation with ASEAN. In 2006, the China-ASEAN Cultural Forum was established, and cultural exchanges centered on the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region have been promoted. At the China-ASEAN Cultural Forum, exhibitions of publications and joint events were held. In October 2009, a radio broadcast called Voice of Beibu Gulf was started¹³.

China is also putting effort into cultivation of human resources and human exchanges in Southeast Asia in various fields. According to a report from China, approximately 1500 police executives from Southeast Asia received training in China from 2006 to 2011, and the number of people from Southeast Asia receiving training in food production in China is as many as several tens of thousands per session¹⁴. Furthermore, at the China-ASEAN Summit held in October 2010, Premier Wen Jiabao proposed a target of 100,000 foreign students from China to ASEAN countries and from ASEAN countries to China, respectively, by 2020¹⁵.

Since 2011, the US pivot to Asia strategy has begun to be implemented, with military relations with allies in the Asia-Pacific region being reinforced and with the US promoting the TPP. China interpreted this as an attempt to encircle China, which served as an impetus for the "One Belt, One Road" foreign policy. In September 2013,

¹² Cheng-Chwee Kuik, "Making Sense of Malaysia's China Policy: Asymmetry, Proximity, and Elite's Domestic Authority," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, April 2013, pp. 1-39.

¹³ Voice of Beibu Gulf is primarily aimed at Vietnam and Thailand, and is broadcast in the five languages of English, Thai, Vietnamese, Cantonese, and Mandarin.

¹⁴ "Waijiabu Fubuzhang Fu Ying jiu Zhongguo Dongmeng Guanxi Jieshou Xinhuashe Caifang (Vice Foreign Minister Fu Ying Interviewed by Xinhua News Agency in terms of China-ASEAN Relations," http://www.gov.cn/jrzq/2012-08/05/content_2198728.htm (accessed on January 31, 2019).

¹⁵ "Wen Jiabo Zongli Zai Di Shisan Ci Zhongguo Yu Dongmeng Lingdaoren Huiyi Shang de Jiaohua (Premier Wen Jiabao's Speech at the 13st China-ASEAN Summit," http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2010-10/30/c_12718147.htm (accessed on October 30, 2010).

President Xi Jinping announced in Kazakhstan the concept of a Silk Road Economic Belt, and in October, he announced in Indonesia the concept of a 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road. Against this backdrop, at a Peripheral Diplomacy Work Conference held that same October, “peripheral diplomacy” was emphasized, and in November 2014, the Chinese government announced the creation of new Silk Road fund (\$40 billion) at the APEC meeting held in Beijing. In March 2015, the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Commerce jointly announced the One Belt, One Road policy.

With the announcement of the One Belt, One Road strategy, the west and south of China became strategic areas for which various measures have been put in place.

Amid this, China’s diplomatic offensive towards ASEAN countries, which play a vital role in the Maritime Silk Road, has intensified. While China’s basic stance regarding territorial issues in the South China Sea has not changed, it seems to have also compromised slightly with Southeast Asian countries. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi announced a policy in August 2014 in a meeting with ASEAN to resolve the South China Sea issue through dialogue with concerned parties, and to maintain security in the South China Sea with the concerned parties¹⁶. Up to now, China had been strongly pushing for bilateral negotiations regarding territorial issues, but Wang Yi’s announcement marked an acceptance of multilateral negotiations between China and ASEAN¹⁷.

At a China-ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting held in Laos in July 2016, Foreign Minister Wang Yi announced that it would accelerate dialogue regarding a South China Sea code of conduct (COC), which would be legally binding, and complete implementation by the first half of 2017. Foreign Minister Wang also proposed setting up a hotline between China and ASEAN in order to avoid unforeseen situations at sea.

Based on its position that “issues regarding the South China Sea have no effect on the friendship and cooperation between China and ASEAN”¹⁸, China has put effort into strengthening relations with ASEAN. Based on the fact that the One Belt, One Road strategy fosters a strengthening of relations in five areas (Wu Tong): policy, finance,

¹⁶ “Wang Yi: Yi ‘Shuanggui Silu’ Chuli Nanhai Wenti (Wang Yi: ‘Dual-track’ Approach in Resolving the South China Sea Issue),”

<http://www.chinanews.com/gn/2014/08-09/6477091.shtml> (accessed on January 31, 2019).

¹⁷ “Zhongguo Dui Nanhai Wenti ‘Shuanggui Silu’ Chengxian (China’s Emerging ‘Dual-track’ Approach in South China Sea),” <http://m.ftchinese.com/story/001059524> (accessed on January 31, 2019).

¹⁸ “Minami Shina Kai Mondai, Chugoku to ASEAN no Yuko Kyoryoku ni Eikyo se zi = O Gaigo Bucho (Strategic Cooperation between China and ASEAN will not be Influenced by South China Sea Issue, Said Foreign Minister Wang),” http://japanese.china.org.cn/politics/txt/2016-06/15/content_38672949.htm (accessed on January 31, 2019).

trade, infrastructure, and people-to-people exchanges, further promotion of cultural exchanges has become an important policy topic.

In addition to bilateral cooperation so far and the implementation of the action plan with ASEAN, subregion level cooperation has been reinvigorated with the establishment of One Belt, One Road. In March 2016, the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Summit was held for the first time in Sanya, Hainan Province in China. Cultural exchange is the third important pillar along with politics and the economy in the newly created Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Framework. For cultural exchanges, specific policies were raised including culture and arts activities, cooperation in occupational training and exchanges between universities, medical cooperation, promotion of tourism, think tank cooperation, and youth exchanges¹⁹.

Thus, it is only very recently—since entering the 2000s—that we have seen a rapid development in Chinese public diplomacy policies towards ASEAN countries. In recent years, relations between China and ASEAN countries have worsened due to tensions surrounding the increasingly complex maritime territorial dispute. On the other hand, China's policies towards ASEAN countries is based on the principle that “even if there are territorial issues, we can make progress on political, economic, and cultural cooperation.” Thus, China continues to put effort into strengthening its relations with ASEAN countries through the China-ASEAN regional framework that has been established so far, and through subregional cooperation frameworks. Against this backdrop, maritime issues have not stopped exchanges in areas such as culture and arts, media, and education even when such maritime issues have increased the perception in Southeast Asia that China is a threat. There is still potential in some countries for China to continue to increase its presence.

2. China's Defensive, Assertive, and Aggressive²⁰ Public Diplomacy

China's public diplomacy towards ASEAN countries has developed greatly in the past decade or so. Starting from defensive public diplomacy through explaining China, China's public diplomacy has turned to assertive offensive from the late 1990s, and now is aggressively protecting China's “core interests”. The message that China is trying to

¹⁹ “Lancangjiang-Meigonghe Hezuo Zhouci Lingdaiaren Huiyi Sanya Xuanyan (Sanya Declaration of the First Lancang-Mekong Cooperation,” http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/1179_674909/t1350037.shtml (accessed on January 31, 2019).

²⁰ In 1948, the United Kingdom had classified its propaganda into aggressive propaganda, defensive propaganda, and assertive propaganda as ideal types.

convey through public diplomacy has greatly changed since the end of the Cold War, and today, the defensive, assertive, and aggressive elements are entangled together in complex ways.

(1) “Explaining China” - Defensive Public Diplomacy

Since the Tiananmen Square incident, the Chinese government has put further effort into public diplomacy. The international environment surrounding China has become unfavorable as a result of the Tiananmen Square incident and the end of the Cold War. Amid this, the Chinese government has intensified its international public relations activities, and has begun in earnest to create a favorable national image. According to studies by Hongying Wang, throughout the 1990s, the national image that the Chinese government tried to create was that of a “major nation that is an international cooperator and peace-loving.”²¹ Since the 21st century China has gone a step further from the 1990s, and in addition to creating a “national image for China,” has made clear the fact that it seeks to further develop its economy through its international public relations activities.

In order to combat the perception of China as a threat, at the Boao Forum for Asia held in November 2003, Zheng Bijian, Chairman of the China Reform Forum, introduced the concept of a “peaceful rise.” Since the 16th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, “peaceful rise” and “peaceful development” have garnered attention as new national images that China hopes would stick, and various studies pertaining to this have been conducted. However, “peaceful rise” drew unexpected criticism both domestically and internationally. John Mearsheimer, a proponent of the offensive realism theory has asserted that China’s rise cannot be peaceful²².

The idea that the Western media has demonized China and that it is unfair in its coverage of China has been the impetus behind China’s defensive public diplomacy. Following the publication of *Zhongguo Keyi Shuo Bu* [中国可以说不: *Chinese Who Can Say No*], the next major publication *Yaomo Hua Zhongguo de Beihou* [妖魔化中国的背后: Behind a Demonized China], which argues that the US mass media does not cover China objectively and that its coverage is biased, was released in 1997. The publication also indicated a sense of despair among authors who had held hope for the United States, and argues that the US media depicts

²¹ Hongying Wang, “National Image Building and Chinese Foreign Policy,” *China: An International Journal* (Vol. 1), March 2003, p. 52.

²² John Mearsheimer, “Why China’s Rise Will not Be Peaceful,” September 17, 2004, <http://mearsheimer.uchicago.edu/pdfs/A0034b.pdf> (accessed on January 31, 2019).

China as the number one enemy of the United States, that the US media has not only shown China in a negative light but has fully demonized China, and that this image of a “demonized” China is what has been planted in the minds of the American populace. The authors criticized the stance of the US mass media and the image created by this mass media, and as a result became popular. “Demonized” became a popular catchphrase, and has had such a deep impact on the society that it continues to be a popular phrase. During the torch relay for the 2008 Beijing Olympics, what drove Chinese students abroad to action against the Free Tibet movement by cheering on the torch bearers while waving Chinese flags is this dissatisfaction against the Western media’s demonization of China.

The notion that the Western media has demonized China and that it is unfair in its coverage of China is shared by both public and private spheres. Zhao Qizheng, former director of the State Council Information Office, pointed out that 90% or more of the US media’s coverage of China is negative, bringing up the example that images of the young man blocking the tank during the Tiananmen Square incident on June 4, 1989 have continued to be broadcast for more than 20 years. He has criticized the stance of the US media as lacking objectivity, as well as the image of China created by the media of being “authoritarian” and “undemocratic”.

In order to erase this negative image of China created by the Western media, the Chinese government has put effort into information dissemination as well as cultural exchanges. The purpose of this defensive public diplomacy is to “explain China to the world,” in the words of the Chinese government. In other words, this defensive public diplomacy explains China’s policies and development, China’s history, and the “China problem” taken up in international public opinion, and combats “attacks” on China.

It was against this backdrop that the first Confucius Institute was established in 2004. Since then, the number of Confucius Institutes has rapidly increased, and by the end of 2015, there were 500 Confucius Institutes in 135 nations, and 1000 Confucius Classrooms. Additionally, 25 China Culture Centers were established as of February 2015, including in three Southeast Asian countries: Laos, Thailand, and Singapore. The Chinese government has plans to build even more China Culture Centers and aims to increase the number of China Culture Centers to 50 by 2020.

Confucius Institutes teach the Chinese language and the main activities of the China Culture Centers include courses on tai chi, martial arts, traditional Chinese medicine, Chinese cuisine, calligraphy, and ink paintings. It is likely that the aim here is to erase the negative image created by the Western media by bringing people into

contact with Chinese culture and language through the activities of the Confucius Institutes and China Culture Centers.

It is not necessarily true that the Confucius Institutes' activities have been effective in increasing China's soft power. However, it can be seen where the focus of China's public diplomacy is based on the number of Confucius Institutes established, and which countries have taken a flexible stance towards cultural exchanges with China. Thailand has stood out in terms of the degree to which it has taken part in cultural exchanges with China. As shown in table 1, Thailand has the greatest number of Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms, and has the seventh highest number in the world when taking Confucius Institutes alone. China Culture Centers have also been established in Thailand, and there are many foreign students from Thailand in China (table 2).

■ **Table 1 - Number of Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms in Southeast Asian Countries**

Name of Country	Number of Confucius Institutes (2017)	Number of Confucius Classrooms (2017)	Number of Registered Students (2015)
Vietnam	1	0	0
Cambodia	1	3	14180
Laos	1	1	3834
Myanmar	0	3	14509
Thailand	15	20	187831
Singapore	1	2	13727
Philippines	4	3	45409
Indonesia	6	2	10630
Malaysia	2	0	2709
Brunei	1	6	6100

Source: Created by author based on data released by Confucius Institute Headquarters (Hanban)

■ **Table 2 - Number of Foreign Students in China (2010)**

Name of Country	Number of Foreign Students in China
Vietnam	13018
Cambodia	502
Laos	1859
Myanmar	972

Thailand	13177
Singapore	3608
Philippines	2989
Indonesia	9539
Malaysia	3885
Brunei	31
East Timor	27

Source: Created by author based on China's foreign affairs white paper "中国外交 [Chinese diplomacy] (2011) ."

Note: The data was taken by totaling the number of long term and short-term foreign students.

The Philippines and Vietnam are in an intense dispute with China over maritime territorial issues but based on the number of Confucius Institutes and foreign students studying in China, it would be difficult to say that relations are weak.

Lastly, China's public diplomacy is focused on major nations and emerging nations. Countries where the number of Confucius Institutes exceeds ten in 2017 include the United States (110), the United Kingdom (29), South Korea (23), Germany (19), France (17), Russia (17), Thailand (15), Japan (14), Australia (14), Italy (12), Canada (12), and Brazil (10). ASEAN countries do not necessarily take a high priority in China's public diplomacy.

(2) "Telling a Story in China's Own Words" - Assertive Public Diplomacy

Since the end of the Cold War, China's public diplomacy, which had been centered on "explaining China", has seen a major change in the latter half of the 2000s.

While China was unable to find an effective counterargument to the perception of China as a threat, an argument took place within China over "pandas vs. dragons". China has a saying that "the Chinese are the children of dragons," and many Chinese take this as a point of pride. However, in many cases, the perception of dragons among English speakers is influenced by Greek mythology, in which dragons are the symbol of aggression and evil. As a result, one academic argued that the animal symbolizing China should be switched from the aggressive and strong dragon to the gentler panda. As a result of this statement, a major argument ensued over the internet. In the end, the argument for the dragon as the symbol of China won out, but it was decided to change the English term for the mythical animal from "dragon" to "loong". Through such arguments, differences between Chinese and Western cultures were seen close up, and attention began to be paid towards the difficulty in expressing China's arguments in other languages.

Based on political trends in China at the time, it may be seen as inevitable that the dragon, which is an important part of the traditional culture, would win in the argument of “pandas vs. dragons”. In the latter half of the 2000s, the importance of the power to increase China’s voice on the international stage and have an influence on international public opinion came to be understood more clearly and widely in China. Against this backdrop, China’s public diplomacy also switched from engaging in the world order led by Western nations to moving away from Western-centrism. At the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (referred to below as 17th National Congress) held in October 2007, the term “soft power” appeared for the first time in the Party’s official documents, and the National Congress made explicit China’s national policy of promoting the culture industry and emphasizing culture as an important tool for soft power. Since culture came to be incorporated as an aspect of its foreign policy strategy, the policy of “harmonizing but not agreeing” came to the fore, even with regard to its public relations and culture strategy. At the 17th National Congress, President Hu Jintao stated the concept of a “harmonious world (和諧世界)”²³, which is a traditional Chinese saying, and today, “political influence, economic competitiveness, a friendly image, and attractiveness of moral principles” are stated aims of China’s foreign policy. It is said that President Hu Jintao specifically chose “harmony” as the English translation for the Chinese character 和 to be conveyed as a key concept throughout the world in order to match the spirit of the UN Charter and not go against Western values²⁴.

In this manner, the importance of soft power at the Party and governmental level was brought forth in 2007, and in 2009 the concept of public diplomacy was brought forth, and China switched its position to that of assertive public diplomacy. China’s public diplomacy slogans have changed from “peaceful rise” and “peaceful development”, which match Western discourse, to “harmonious world” under the Hu Jintao administration based on Chinese traditional culture, and finally to the “Chinese Dream” under the Xi Jinping administration. In other words, China’s public diplomacy has switched from a more defensive “China is not ...” to a more assertive “China is ...”

The Chinese government, which promoted the strategy of increasing China’s voice on the international stage and influencing international public opinion, has emphasized the following four areas: spreading of media overseas, development of the culture industry, strengthening overseas Chinese diplomacy, and development of think tanks.

²³ The phrase “harmonious world” was first used at the 2005 Asian-African Summit.

²⁴ Zhao Qi-Zheng, “Liyong Gonggong Waijiao Chuanda Zhongguo Shengyin (Delivering China’s Voice by Public Diplomacy,” *Bainianchao* 12th ed. 2012, p. 74.

● Spreading of Media Overseas

In order to realize China-centric information dissemination, the Chinese government first worked to break down the monopoly of the Western media. “Worldwide, there are more than 300 media corporations, but of these, 144 are American. 90% of the international news in the world is covered by four major news agencies (UPI, AP, Reuters, and AFPBB News).”²⁵ “The United States creates 90% of the world’s news and 75% of the world’s TV programs.”²⁶ Underlying such statements is the strong fear towards the monopoly that Western nations, particularly the United States, have on discourse in the form of media and television.

China has started focusing on power over opinion, investing 45 billion RMB in overseas expansions of newspapers, and television and radio programs, as well as creation of advertisements relating to China’s national image. Since the end of 2009, a commercial made by China entitled “Made in China, Made in the World” aired on CNN in North America and Europe, as well as on the internet. Also, the day before President Hu Jintao visited the US in January 2011, a commercial by China played on loop on an electronic billboard in Times Square.

Through increased publicity activities abroad, China Radio International currently broadcasts in 50 languages, and China Internet Information Center, People’s Daily Online, Xinhua News Agency, and CCTV have international content in close to 10 languages. In the 12th five-year plan of the newspaper publication industry in 2012, overseas expansion of newspaper publications was raised as an important goal. In order to support overseas expansion of newspaper publications, the Import-Export Bank of China plans more than 20 billion RMB in foreign currency financing²⁷.

In order to combat the influence of the Western media, the Chinese media plans to expand overseas and particularly to the United States and Africa. With the start of the One Belt, One Road plan, television stations in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region have taken the initiative in media exchanges with Southeast Asian countries. In August 2015, Guangxi Television signed a cooperation agreement with MGTV, which broadcasts in Chinese in 10 ASEAN countries and is headquartered in Bangkok,

²⁵ “Gaosu Duishou: Women de Liliang he Juexin (Let our Opponent Know our Strength and Resolution)”, *Guangming Daily*, December 30, 2013.

²⁶ “Zhongguo Meiti Goujian Guoji Huayuquan de ‘Kun’ he ‘Po’ (Challenges and Choices for Chinese Media to Create Global Discourse)”, <http://www.cri.com.cn/entry/299310de-3917-4acf-91c2-624f571304e8.html> (accessed on May 4, 2014).

²⁷ “Zou Chuqu: Zhongguo Baoye de Lujing ji Celue Fenxi (Going Out: Direction and Strategy for Chinese Newspaper)”, <http://media.people.com.cn/n/2013/0319/c359295-20841439.html> (accessed on January 31, 2019).

Thailand. Guangxi Television considers this cooperative relationship as the first step to expanding to Southeast Asia.

● **Development of the Culture Industry**

Particularly since 2002, the new goal of “leveraging market mechanisms in order to coordinate central areas with outlying areas as well as the government with the private sector in order to improve upon the deficit in cultural trade,”²⁸ has been added to public diplomacy. As a result, whereas when high officials from the government previously visited countries abroad only trade representatives joined them, in recent years cultural representatives have joined them as well.

The movement to reform the cultural system, which started in 2002, was of course a cause for the dramatic increase in importance placed towards international cultural exchanges. In reforming the cultural system, international cultural exchanges have been emphasized as an important aid towards overseas expansions of domestic corporations, and international cultural exchanges have met protection/development and overseas expansion of domestic corporations.

With such policies, China has promoted reform in the cultural system in three stages and has invested a large amount of money towards the culture industry. China aims to improve its technological levels and expand its presence into Europe and the United States in coordination with the Discovery Channel, the US animation company DreamWorks SKG, and others. On the other hand, Southeast Asia has a large Chinese speaking population, which makes it a relatively easy environment for Chinese dramas and animated works to thrive.

● **Strengthening “Overseas Chinese Public Diplomacy”**

In 2011, China’s Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council first proposed the concept of “Overseas Chinese public diplomacy”. Overseas Chinese public diplomacy is a coined phrase and is said to be a combination of diaspora diplomacy and public diplomacy.

In 2008, a riot occurred in Tibet, which triggered demonstrations disrupting the Olympic torch relay abroad. In the face of such disruptions, some overseas Chinese and Chinese students abroad demonstrated their opposition to Tibetan independence and acted to defend the Beijing Olympics. Such offensive and defensive acts towards the

²⁸ “Wenhua Buzhang Zhang Jiazheng: Wenhua Waijiao yao Baozheng Zhongguo Wenhua de Anquan (Minister of Culture Zhang Jiazheng: Culture Diplomacy needs to Ensure the Safety of Culture),” *Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Romania*
<http://www.chinaembassy.org.ro/chn/whjy/t175500.htm> (accessed on December 19, 2004).

Beijing Olympics and the Tibet issue have reinforced the importance of the overseas Chinese in public diplomacy. The importance placed on overseas Chinese public diplomacy was likely inspired in large part by the Israel lobby in the United States.

With the start of the overseas Chinese public diplomacy, the importance of such public diplomacy was pointed out in the *Outline of Overseas Chinese Affairs Development (2011-2015)*, which presents the goal of “transmitting China’s excellent culture and fostering good will” through overseas Chinese public diplomacy. The human affairs system supporting overseas Chinese operations has been strengthened. Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs He Yafei became the vice minister of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council (2012), and Qiu Yuanping, vice minister of the Office of Foreign Affairs of the CPC Central Committee, took office as the director of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council (2013).

Relations between China and ASEAN countries developed rapidly as a result of the adoption of the foreign policy indicating that the overseas Chinese would not be relied upon for political purposes. However, if strengthening of overseas Chinese public diplomacy is proactively pursued even in ASEAN countries, this would likely result in China’s public diplomacy strategy backfiring and an increased perception that China is a threat.

● **Development of Think Tanks**

Since the start of the Xi Jinping administration, restrictions on speech have tightened, but an increased level of importance has been placed in think tanks on public diplomacy.

At a top-level meeting held to discuss peripheral diplomacy held in October 2013, “influence towards the financial world, academia, the media, think tanks, and the like” was raised as an important topic for cultural exchanges that China will take part in in the future, and was officially set forth as a government policy. In the previously mentioned Lancang-Mekong Summit as well, an agreement was made to create a think tank network among the six nations of China, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam.

(3) “Protecting China’s Interests” - Aggressive Public Diplomacy

Following the Japanese government’s nationalization of the Senkaku Islands in 2012, in 2013 the Chinese government announced that it would set its air defense identification zone over a wide area of the East China Sea including the airspace above the Senkaku Islands. As a result, Sino-Japanese relations entered their worst period

since the resumption of diplomatic ties. The battle for public opinion between the two countries regarding the territorial issue started then.

At the current stage, aggressive public diplomacy has been deployed in Europe and the United States. On July 27, 2012, the Tokyo Metropolitan government, which sought to purchase the Senkaku Islands, placed an opinion advertisement in the Wall Street Journal seeking US approval. In response, Chen Guangbiao, a private entrepreneur from Jiangsu Province, placed an advertisement in the New York Times pertaining to the Senkaku Islands on August 31, 2012. Additionally, on December 1, 2012, a group including mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan, which advocate for Chinese sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands, placed an advertisement in the New York Times and the Times.

In December 2013, Prime Minister Abe visited the Yasukuni Shrine, which further escalated the publicity battle between Japan and China. As for moves made by China, from December 26, 2013, the day when Prime Minister Abe visited Yasukuni Shrine, to January 24, 2014, 78 Chinese diplomats stationed abroad were said to have made appearances in overseas media and criticized the visit a total of 120 times²⁹.

From the perspective of China's public diplomacy, this publicity battle between Japan and China can be seen as an implementation by the Chinese government of a public diplomacy that contributes to specific foreign policy, targeting a specific country for the first time since the end of the Cold War. In August 2012, Hu Jintao issued a notification including a statement that "we will promote public diplomacy and cultural exchanges and protect China's legal interests overseas." "Protecting China's overseas interests" was added for the first time to the objectives of public diplomacy, which include "explaining China" and conveying China's principle of a "harmonious world" overseas.

Under the slogan of "protecting China's interests", China launched another intense public diplomacy war in 2016. After the Hague-based Permanent Court Arbitration issued a decision against China on the case filed by Manila in 2013 concerning maritime entitlements and the status of features in the South China Sea, China approached many nations to rally support for Beijing. Cambodia was one of the first to do so³⁰.

²⁹ "Anbei Canbai Jingguo Shenshe, Zhongri Shilun Kaida (Abe's Visit to Yasukuni Shrine Intrigued War of Public Opinion between China and Japan)," <http://v.ifeng.com/news/world/2014002/019a7105-45e0-4ebf-a12c-f5dbc1031a4e.shtml> (accessed on January 31, 2019).

³⁰ "China Using 'Soft Power' to Assert Rights over South China Sea," <http://www.voanews.com/a/china-soft-power-asean/3430297.html> (accessed on January 31, 2019).

As described above, the Chinese government, which aims to emerge from the international isolation resulting from the Tiananmen Square incident, has strengthened its public diplomacy since the end of the Cold War, and is currently simultaneously implementing the defensive, assertive, and aggressive sides to its public diplomacy.

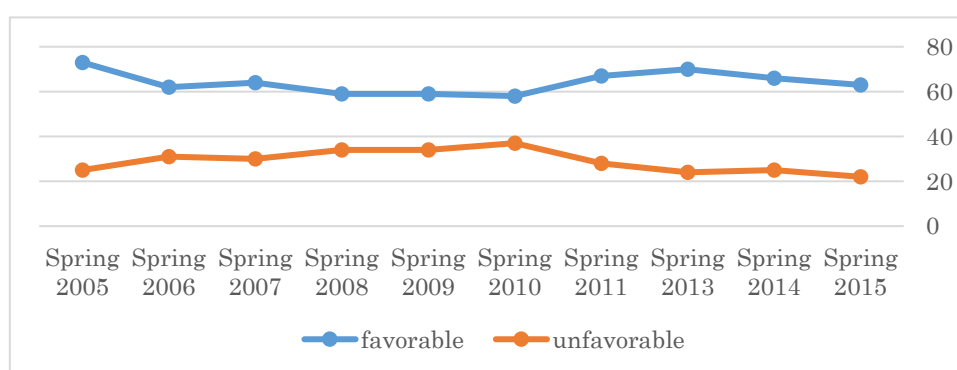
Since the end of the Cold War, China has sought to strengthen its publicity activities abroad and has put forth new policy after policy, which has definitively increased China’s cultural presence on the international stage. The number of Confucius Institutes, Confucius Classrooms, and China Culture Centers has rapidly increased. The Chinese government has promoted cooperation with the media and think tanks abroad and has put effort into establishing cooperative relations with Disney and Hollywood as well.

The primary targets of China’s public diplomacy are the United States and Europe, but China is also engaged in a diplomatic offensive towards Southeast Asian countries as well due to geographical proximity.

3. Major Issue with Public Diplomacy: Lack of Political Philosophy

Although China’s presence in Southeast Asian countries continues to increase, as shown in table 3, it is not necessarily the case that China’s public diplomacy efforts have yielded significant results. The impact of China’s public relations/culture strategy is not necessarily directly proportional to its presence, and China also faces difficult challenges.

■ **Table 3 - Popular Sentiment towards China in Indonesia**



Source: Created by author based on data from Pew Research Center.

Several reasons can be attributed to this limits of China’s soft power. Needless to say, China’s rigid maritime policies have been a major obstacle to its expansion of soft power. Furthermore, views towards the public relations/culture/foreign policy strategy

of China, which is not a democracy, have become increasingly critical in recent years. Research versions of Confucius Institutes have been established at Waseda University in Japan, Stanford University and University of Chicago in the United States, and others, and the Chinese government has invested funds towards the research, but there are many who have raised concerns regarding the independence of research and academic freedom. Also, there have been many instances in recent years of China's freedom of speech being examined up close.

Furthermore, lack of political philosophy has also impaired China's soft power. Regarding the value of liberal democracy, Fu Ying, the chairperson of China's National People's Congress Foreign Affairs Committee has stated three sources of strength for the United States as a superpower: "American values, military alliances, and an international system including the United Nations"³¹. On the other hand, China, which does not necessarily share the same values as democratic nations, has not issued a clear answer as to what the base of values is for China's soft power.

Various ideologies have arisen in an increasingly diverse dialogue space, and issues and challenges surrounding China's development are being debated among these ideologies. Below, the domestic debate concerning China will be considered, and reasons that China, which seeks to be a global superpower, cannot create a foreign policy strategy to which the world could relate will be explored.

(1) Pluralistic Society

Since the end of the Cold War, China has transitioned from a monolithic society to a pluralistic society as the media has undergone market reforms. As Western nations have become idealized and people began yearning for democratization and a market economy, the people's interest has shifted to practical issues such as how China should democratize and undergo market reforms, and how China should overcome its multitude of societal ills.

In the 30 plus years since the Chinese economic reform, Chinese society has greatly changed. Over a 30-year period, China has experienced remarkable economic development with a growth rate averaging in the double digits per year and has overtaken Japan to be the second largest economy in the world after the United States.

However, an examination China's Gini coefficient, which is an index indicating disparities in income and wealth, has shown another face of China. In 1978, China's

³¹ "Fu Ying: G20 Fenghui Qianhou Kan Zhongmei Hezuo Fenqi (Fu Ying: Views on China-US Differences around G20 Summit)" http://www.guancha.cn/fuying/2016_08_31_373003_3.shtml (accessed on January 31, 2019).

Gini coefficient was 0.22, but rose steadily over a decade starting in 2003 to reach 0.44, which is close to the world average, and China's National Bureau of Statistics has revealed that China's Gini coefficient has hovered stably between 0.4 and 0.5. However, the Southwestern University of Finance and Economics published their own study in 2012, which yielded the result that China's Gini coefficient had reached 0.61 by 2010³². While there are questions about the reliability of the figures calculated in the study, there is likely no controversy to the notion that China has transformed from an equal society at the time that its economic reform was first launched to an unequal society.

Now, 30 plus years after the launch of China's economic reform, both benefits and challenges of the economic reform have been exposed. What was the base for China's politics and economy as it sustained an average annual economic growth rate of 10% over the past 30 years? What caused the economic disparity? Public opinion in China regarding challenges that will determine the future of China have become increasingly diverse and polarized.

In Chinese society today, there is a clash of various opinions. Neoliberalism, neo-Marxism, universal values, the New Left, and neo-Confucianism (cultural conservatism) are ideas that emerged in China after the end of the Cold War, and intense debate is taking place among supporters of the respective beliefs in the general public, centered on the intellectuals.

Neo-Marxism takes its ideas from Marxism-Leninism as well as Maoism to try to restore China's equal society. The cultural conservatives including the neo-Confucians have their eyes on ancient Chinese culture and returning China to its traditional roots and not Western democracy or Marxism-Leninism. The New Left share concerns towards excessive market reforms in the economy and call for a big government. On the other hand, views among the New Left regarding political reform are varied, with some among the New Left being sympathetic towards the Cultural Revolution, and some arguing for the importance of political reform. Believers in universal values and neoliberalism argue for the importance of simultaneously undergoing political and economic reforms and point out the dangers of political interference in the market.

In this manner, the discourse in China since the 1990s has developed around the two axes of democratization and market economy. In today's China, ideologies have diversified, various opinions have become polarized, and each of the ideologies has its

³² "Zhongguo Jiating Jini Xishu Da 0.61 Gaoyu Quanjie Pingjun Shuiping (China's Gini Coefficient Reached 0.61, Higher than Global Average)," http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2012-12/10/c_124070295.htm (accessed on January 31, 2019).

own various strata of supporters. This is likely the basis for the notion that “Chinese society is falling apart.”

(2) Myriad Voices Fighting Over “China’s Path”/ “Beijing Consensus”

In the latter half of the 2000s, arguments were made over Beijing Consensus versus Washington Consensus both inside and outside of China. Beijing Consensus is a concept created by Joshua Cooper Ramo in 2004³³.

Various interpretations have been made on what exactly the Beijing Consensus is³⁴, and the general consensus is that there is no “China model” that can be followed by other countries. The Chinese government itself has not publicly confirmed the existence of a Beijing Consensus. Inside China as well, many argue that there is no such thing as the Beijing Consensus, and even former high officials in the Chinese government have stated that “China’s success is the result of having followed the Washington Consensus.”³⁵

Since the global financial crisis triggered by the collapse of Lehman Brothers in September 2008, the environment inside China changed subtly, and debate surrounding the “China model” and “China’s path” suddenly intensified. What triggered this debate were two books that were published in 2009. The first book is *Zhongguo Zhi Lu Yu Zhongguo Moshi(1948-2009)* [*China’s Path and China’s Model (1948-2009)*] published by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and the other is *Zhongguo Zhi Lu: Jiedu Renmin Gongheguo de 60 Nian* [*China’s Path: Analyzing 60 Years of the People’s Republic*], written by Pan Wei, a professor at Peking University who is a proponent of the New Left movement.

China’s Path and China’s Model (1948-2009) states that the China model is “a model that is compatible with China’s conditions, having at its core the development of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Primary themes of the model including modernization, market reform, and globalization, and the model seeks to realize modernization of the Chinese economy and society as well as a great revival of the Chinese people, promoting economic development and systemic change in an incremental manner.”³⁶

³³ Joshua Cooper Ramo’s publication regarding the Beijing Consensus is Joshua Cooper Ramo, *The Beijing Consensus*, London: The Foreign Policy Centre, 2004.

³⁴ Ming Lu Chen & David S. G. Goodman, “The China Model: One Country, Six Authors,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, 21(73), 2012, pp.169-185.

³⁵ “Wanghui: Zhongguo Daolu de Dutexing yu Pubianxing (Wanghui: Universality and Specificity of China’s Path),” <http://gov.finance.sina.com.cn/chanquan/2011-04-19/9785.html> (accessed on December 26, 2014).

³⁶ “Zhongguo Daolu yu Zhongguo Moshi (China’s Path and China Model) (1949~2009),”

Meanwhile, Pan Wei states that the Chinese economy derives its strength from the following three factors: first, that its labor and products are competitive while its land and finances are controlled by the nation; second, that the mixed economy of state-owned corporations and private corporations lends strength to the Chinese economy; and third, that its politics, its system of selecting managers based on merit, its unity, administrative groups emphasizing service, and division of tasks in the government has brought success to China today³⁷.

Both books seek to analyze the China model, and to find the source of success 60 years after the founding of the People's Republic of China and 30 years after the launch of China's economic reform. As mentioned above, 2009 when the books were published happened to be the year when the Chinese government proposed the concept of public diplomacy and was a period when the Chinese government started putting effort into dissemination of information abroad for China's own benefit by "telling the story in China's own words". The Chinese domestic media, reflecting the government's positions, has taken the singular position that China should improve its ability to influence international public opinion.

The China model explained in the two books emphasizes China's uniqueness and does not necessarily take into consideration adaptability to other countries. Thus, these books cannot be considered successful in terms of explaining the China model, but the publication of these two books, which seems to have had the backing of the government, has allowed for an invigorated discussion on the China model.

Zhang Weiyong, a neoliberal, has denied the existence of the China model and states that there is no special advantage to China's development process. He argues that economic reform and promotion of a market economy without political reforms would be difficult, and that privatization of state-owned corporations could resolve injustice, corruption, and lack of morals, and can also provide a political base for the Communist government³⁸.

On the cultural conservative side, some argue for the existence of the China model, but the mainstream including Jiang Qing deny the existence of the China model. Gan Yang, a proponent of Confucian socialism, states that while a path for China exists in

http://www.china.com.cn/news/zhuanti/09dlms/node_7078341.htm (accessed on January 31, 2019).

³⁷ "Panwei: Zhongguo Moshi shi Chuse de Liyi Pinghe Xingshi (Panwei: China's Model is a Remarkable Best Way to Balance Interests)," <http://www.aisixiang.com/data/33137.html> (accessed on January 31, 2019).

³⁸ "Gaijie Bixu Zouch Lixiang Xianjing: Reform must Avoid the Trap of Ideal)", <http://home.ftchinese.com/story/001053841?page=2> (accessed on January 31, 2019).

which “by completely denying Chinese civilization, one would wake up to Chinese civilization and gain confidence in it,” the China model does not exist³⁹.

On the other hand, Zhang Weiwei, author of *Zhongguo Zhenhan* (中国震撼: *The China Wave*) affirms the existence of the China model. He further dismisses the Western notion that democracy and autocracy are at odds with each other and introduces the concept of “good politics” and “bad politics”. He believes that when China is successful, it is because it is engaging in good politics. He also believes that even countries that have adopted democracy face challenges due to bad politics. Zhang Weiwei cites countries that have been strongly impacted by the global financial crisis such as Greece, Ireland, Iceland, and Spain as examples of this.⁴⁰

Wang Hui, an eminent proponent of the New Left, argues that the most major characteristic of the China model is the role of sovereignty and the state. He argues that the Communist Party of China has penetrated every corner of Chinese society, and that China has a unique type of sovereignty in a party-based state system. This unique political system has brought success to China. Wang Hui argues that the largest issue facing China today is how to create national “autonomy” while keeping the country open⁴¹.

As described above, proponents of the various ideologies that have emerged since the 1990s interpret the China model and China’s path according to their own positions, and it is often difficult to find common ground between their arguments.

(3) Vacillating Foreign Policy Philosophy

As can be seen from debates inside China, China’s society has become pluralistic and various ideologies exist within China. Thus, it is difficult to conceptualize the situation inside China in terms of simple dichotomies such as conservative versus reformist, dove versus hawk, or internationalist versus conservative. Against this backdrop, there are various views in China regarding the China model and China’s path, and there is no consensus at this point. In reality, China is still at the stage where it is trying to figure out its own political philosophy.

³⁹ “‘Rujiao Shehui Zhuyi’ Zhongguo Daolu shi Zhongguo Moshi (Confucian Socialism, China’s Path is China Model),” <http://history.sina.com.cn/his/zl/2014-04-21/152888957.shtml> (accessed on January 31, 2019).

⁴⁰ “Zhang Weiwei: Zhongguo Jueqi shi Feichang Bu Rongyi de (Zhang Weiwei: China’s Rise is Incredibly Uneasy),” <http://info.whb.cn/xxd/view/10183> (accessed on December 26, 2014).

⁴¹ “Wang Hui: Zhongguo Gongchandang he Zhongguo Moshi (Chinese Communist Party and China Model),” http://www.guancha.cn/century-tsinghua-chinese-model-international-forum/2011_11_09_61616.shtml (accessed on January 31, 2019).

On the other hand, when taking a broad perspective on the various arguments being made since the 1990s regarding the base of China's soft power, it can be seen that there are three main ideologies coexisting as political bases for China: universal values, Marxism-Leninism, and traditional Chinese thought.

Since the start of the Xi Jinping administration, the idea of universal values has been increasingly seen as a threat. From 1993 to 2004, reasons for the collapse of the former Soviet Union have been systematically studied in China, and some conclusions were drawn from 2004 to 2005. It is also said that from 1996, lessons from the collapse of the former Soviet Union have been analyzed⁴². Based on these lessons, the Xi Jinping administration has kept a particularly watchful eye on the "Peaceful Evolution" theory in order not to have a repeat of the Soviet collapse in China and has increased its vigilance against the idea of universal values.

This is highly important for the Chinese government, which seeks legitimacy based on the Marxist-Leninist ideology. On the other hand, after having introduced a market economy and allowed private property, the Chinese government cannot simply return to the Marxist-Leninist utopia.

Traditional Chinese thought has commonalities in name with the Confucius Institutes and also shares sentiments with a portion of the Chinese public who want to return back to China's traditional roots. However, radicals within the neo-Confucian movement have slogans against both universal values and Marxism-Leninism, and thus, the idea of returning to a traditional society is incompatible in part with the philosophy of the Communist Party of China.

Therefore, China's foreign policy philosophy today includes the three ideologies of universal values, Marxism-Leninism, and Chinese traditional thought, and as a nation that is poised to grow to a global superpower, China cannot depend completely on any one of the three ideologies in its foreign policy philosophy and vacillates between all three.

In terms of actual deployment of China's public diplomacy, China often puts forth "Chinese traditional thought" as its political philosophy, and "harmonious world" and "Chinese Dream" are also based on Chinese traditional thought. However, there is no consensus within China, and China has not always been successful at explaining China's path based on Chinese traditional thought. The fact that China has not put forth a clear message regarding its foreign policy philosophy and its political values is a major obstacle to China increasing its soft power.

⁴² David Shambaugh, *China's Communist Party: Atrophy and Adaptation*, 2008, p.55.

Conclusion

China's public diplomacy has been deployed in a targeted manner to important players in international politics such as developed nations in the West and emerging nations, but since the 2000s, importance has also been placed on public diplomacy towards Southeast Asian countries neighboring China. China's public diplomacy towards ASEAN has the three strategic goals of "explaining China", "disseminating information abroad so as to serve China", and "protecting China's national interests", and these goals combine in a complex fashion.

The most major characteristic of China's engagement with ASEAN is that it seeks to increase the effect of its public diplomacy by not only engaging in bilateral ties but strengthening cooperation with ASEAN as a regional organization. Thus, multilateralism, which started emerging in China's foreign policy, has played a major role in addition to setting aside territorial issues and not relying on the overseas Chinese population for political purposes.

Recently, as a result of China's rigid maritime policies, Southeast Asian countries have increasingly seen China as a threat, which caused a major slowdown in the increase of China's soft power. On the other hand, it is important to note that subregional and regional exchange channels that have been created so far were not stopped as a result of maritime issues, and that new Confucius Institutes and China Culture Centers continue to be built, Chinese media continues to penetrate Southeast Asia, and think tank exchanges continue.

Thus, infrastructure necessary for public diplomacy such as Confucius Institutes, broadcasts abroad, and even development and use of think tanks has been developed in a major way. However, China still has no answers on how to brand itself, and it has not been able to explain in a logical manner to other countries what path it seeks to take. As a result, China's soft power is not necessarily in direct proportion to its presence.

John Ikenberry has the optimistic view that while the era of unipolar dominance by the United States may end, the Western "liberal hegemonic order" will win in the end⁴³. However, China, which aims to be a global superpower, is still considering the base of its own political values and seems not to have decided whether to follow the path of universal values, Marxism-Leninism, or Chinese traditional thought.

⁴³ G. John Ikenberry, "The Rise of China and the Future of the West: Can the Liberal System Survive?," *Foreign Affairs*, No. 23, 2008, pp. 23-37.

Note

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