THE HARD REALITY OF SOFT POWER

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Abstract. “Soft power,” proposed by Joseph Nye Jr. in 1990, has often been viewed as a concept that presents great opportunities for East Asia internationally, a region often plagued by lingering historically based animosities. Through the use of both quantitative data from the AsiaBarometer 2007 data set, and further qualitative social research of thirty young mainland Chinese and Taiwanese, this research finds that when penetration of Japanese soft power devices are absent, the view of Japan’s influence is predictably negative and based upon hard power factors, such as fears of imperialistic behavior, or increased militarization within East Asia via the US-Japan Alliance. When soft power is shown to penetrate the minds of the Chinese youth, such fears, while not erased, are diluted and poised in a juxtaposed position to common concerns based on historical animosities between China and Japan. Unfortunately, despite the apparent utility of soft power within Japan-China relations, there is a great deal of misunderstanding of soft power in both Japanese and Chinese politics. This misunderstanding, on top of the already vague nature of soft power, leads this paper to present three steps required for appropriate application of soft power within East Asia.

SOFT POWER WITHIN EAST ASIA UNDER THE SHADOWS OF THE PAST

The Nanjing Massacre, comfort women, the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, and the Yasukuni Shrine, each of these issues and others have left scars on the image of Japan within East Asia that have remained even after the end of the Pacific War. Each issue carries with it strong emotions and complex narratives that are portrayed within the respective education systems, news media, and memorials of mainland China, Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan (Emmott, 2008, p. 209-228). These historical and political disagreements extend beyond individuals at odds over their perception of a correct and truthful history, and reach far into international politics and continue to present serious problems for reconciliation within East Asia (Tanaka, 2007, p. 9-10). Views of Japan’s influence naturally vary depending on the country in question and the specific issues which are held as most important within that society. However, there have been numerous instances where large protests have occurred over Japan’s handling of long-standing historical and political issues, especially regarding visits to the Yasukuni Shrine by Japanese politicians, most notably Prime Ministers (Tanaka, 2008, p. 119, 137). Those offended by such visits took part in China-wide protests, and resulted in statements such as those from Peng Zhen to Japanese Diet members that, “if strangled too much by the past issues, we cannot proceed with friendship” (Tanaka, 2008, p. 126). Problematic historical issues are generally grounded in the perception that acts such as a Prime Minister of Japan’s visit to the Yasukuni Shrine, or denials of the Nanjing Massacre or comfort women issue illuminate a dangerous and militaristic Japan on the rise, determined on justifying its past aggression (Tanaka, 2008, p. 129, 133).

On top of historical and political disagreements in East Asia with Japan, the US-Japan Alliance plays a strong role in East Asia as well. In addition to providing Japan with military defense and maintaining a strong US military presence in East Asia for national security reasons, it provides a deterrent against Chinese military action in areas such as Taiwan. In this way “… the alliance systems of the United States have set the political parameters in East Asia” (Tanaka, 2007, p. 2). Yet, at the same time, any change in the US-Japan Alliance would likely create considerable instability and concern within East Asia. If the United States was to reduce military forces and the
alliance with Japan was to weaken, there would be worry over the possible militarization of Japan and a likely increase in Japanese defense forces within the region. On the other hand, a stronger alliance and US involvement would precipitate an increase of US involvement in East Asian political affairs, and an increased US military presence which would draw concern from China (Christensen, 2003, p. 27, 31). Therefore the US-Japan Alliance can be seen either as a form of US hegemony in the region, or as a sensitive stabilizing influence in a still-growing international region.

Holding the above scenario in mind—full of hard power related threats and concerns—it is no surprise that within the past decade the concept of utilizing soft power within East Asian international relations has been an appealing concept to Japan, as well as to mainland China and South Korea. The application of existing entertainment and culture industries for the creation of political clout within a rival nation’s social and political structure with few, if any, strings attached is arguably the holy grail of international relations, and soft power may provide the key to this Golden Fleece. In line with its own interpretation of soft power, the Japanese government in the past has attempted to use its popular culture to promote its own cultural values. This was conducted in environments even where the anti-Japanese war time narratives and historical disagreements are pushed as a strong part of cultural heritage, such as in China where they are propagated and strongly supported by the propaganda department (Shirk, 2007, 140-180). However, in China’s case, soft power appears useful for appealing to the international community for acceptance and ease of its own rise to power, and for this purpose China has put forth a great deal of effort towards image building (Wang, 2003, p. 48-52). In South Korea, a single Korean drama called Winter Sonata broke open a portion of the Japanese media market, which was for a long time uninterested in Korean culture despite existing disagreements over such sensitive historical disagreements such as the comfort women issue (Hayashi & Lee, 2007, p. 4-5). While the concept of soft power is highly alluring, especially in regards to alleviating historical and political disagreements between China, South Korea, and Japan, to view the application of soft power to any region as a course of action without repercussions would by naïve, especially when each country approaches the utilization and interpretation of soft power differently.

Prior to any analysis or theoretical conjecture, it is mandatory that the concept of soft power be clearly defined. Quoting the definition coined by Joseph Nye, soft power specifically is, “...getting others to want the outcomes that you want – co-opts people rather than coerces them.” Nye goes on to state that, “soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others” (Nye, 2002, p. 5). A large portion of this definition of soft power is related to the concept of “shared values,” and that if a nation state exudes values that are shared by other nation states, it can lead to the perception of common understandings and shared goals. Thus, the attraction of a nation’s culture allows for the use of co-optive power, which in theory, would allow for manipulation of agendas and political co-option to a degree akin to using force via hard power devices such as the military threats or economic might, but without the security dilemma repercussions (Nye, 2002). For Nye, the very meaning of the word “culture” is in fact the set of values that a society holds, and soft power in a large part arises from a country’s values (Nye, 2002, p. 11). However, while intriguing, measuring culture and values is not only highly subjective but also arguably impossible in a quantitative manner and makes the study and application of soft power difficult.

Unlike the concept of soft power, hard power is relatively simple to define and measure in comparison to soft power. In the case of hard power, one might analyze and measure each nation state’s military attack capabilities, budget allotments for military buildup, and chart the interplay
over economic or regional concessions in comparison to military threats and attacks. In regards to economic based hard power, examples would include the freezing of bank accounts, or sheer economy wealth being used to buy favor within governments or for funding of opposition groups. Hard power consists of “carrots” and/or “sticks”, or rather inducements and threats (Nye, 2002, p. 5). It is important to understand, however, that using economic might to forcefully inject and dominate a nation state from within, is not soft power. This common misunderstanding of economic pressure falls directly upon the definition of hard power. Economic might put into image creation does not qualify as soft power either, and is more along the lines of classical propaganda. Again, the importance of understanding the definition of soft power is paramount, co-option is not possible if the existing culture is forcefully opposed via economic means, or is simply promoting an image that contains values not shared by other nations.

Yet, the true Achilles heel of the concept of soft power is not so much the task of arguing for its existence via measurement, but its actual utilization and controlled application within international relations. This stems from the fact that because soft power devices are so ubiquitous and abundant, and it is almost overwhelming and nearly impossible to quantify on a national level, let alone to measure the direct effects on other nation states. That is not to say that there is not great potential for soft power within East Asia, as soft power does offer tantalizing opportunities for Japan especially in regards to its relations with a rising China, which has considerable concerns about Japan’s own intentions within the region. In fact, mainland Chinese and Taiwanese views of the influence of Japan by the twenty to twenty-nine year olds appear to correlate with the concept of soft power. When soft power related cultural devices are considered by an individual, their concerns regarding Japanese influence based upon hard power devices, such as security dilemma based issues connected with Japanese and United States military presence in East Asia, are often diluted in severity (Berry, 2010, p. 13).

The following summary of personally conducted research in early 2010 will serve as an example of both the correlative advantages as well as the current explanatory and causal disadvantages of soft power within the context of historical and political disagreements between Japan, mainland China, and Taiwan. It will be followed by an explanation of common misconceptions of soft power and various examples of how Japan, China, and South Korea have approached utilizing soft power. Finally, this research will conclude with three proposed steps that are necessary for moving towards a practical application and utilization of soft power within East Asia. While soft power has utility within East Asia, it is currently not in a state that can be applied effectively at an international level.

**Selection of Mainland China and Taiwan:**

Utilizing data from the AsiaBarometer 2007 data set, mainland China and Taiwan were chosen for research regarding the perceived influence of Japan on these two countries because: 1) their views of Japan’s influence are near opposites; therefore, finding commonalities among this population will allow the results to be explored within the contrast, (See Figure 1) and 2) while maintaining unique and separate modern identities (Brown, 2004), they still share a great deal of cultural heritage, ethnic backgrounds, and a shared language. That is not to say that differences that exist in regards to culture and contact with Japan have not been considered in the analysis; however, the purpose was to find what commonly sways opinion, either to the positive or negative, of Japan’s perceived influence on both regions.
In the above chart (see Figure 1) mainland China contains of largely negative views of Japan’s influence compared to Taiwan. In mainland China, historically based negative images of Japan are connected with events such as the Nanjing Massacre and have been brought to the forefront by recent political actions such as visits to the Yasukuni shrine by Japanese Prime Ministers in tandem with individual denials of both the Nanjing Massacre and Japan’s use of comfort women during the Pacific War (Emmott, 2008). Furthermore, in 1997, when a Chinese newspaper polled what Chinese people associated with Japan, nearly 84 percent of the approximately 100,000 Chinese surveyed replied with the Nanjing Massacre (Yang, 2001). This image combined with visits by Prime Ministers of Japan to the Yasukuni shrine, which is seen an example of Japan’s refusal to acknowledge actions—even though there have been numerous apologies these are not recognized as sincere (Yamazaki, 2006)—has led to protests turned riots in mainland China (Shirk, 2007, p. 142; Tanaka, 2008).

Unlike mainland China, Taiwan’s occupation by Japan was somewhat less tragic. Japan was more focused on construction in Taiwan and built up railways and industry on the island, and was also much less prejudiced against Taiwanese in general compared to other colonized regions (Murphey, 2009). However, while Japan’s occupation of Taiwan was different, Taiwan is by no means removed from historical issues such as the Nanjing Massacre. A sizable number of Taiwanese have visited the Nanjing Massacre Memorial in Nanjing, and the film “The Rape of Nanjing” was financed by a Taiwanese businessman and featured a prominent actor from Taiwan as well (Yang, 2001).

**Questionnaire Methodology**

A secondary questionnaire was designed with two facets of utilization in mind: 1) to match the AsiaBarometer 2007 quantitative questions in order to provide a qualitative understanding of a similar population sample, and 2) to be used both as a rubric for interview style face-to-face interview questions, as well as an email survey. It was important that questioning be conducted in this manner in order to reach participants within both mainland China and Taiwan, rather than those who reside only within Japan. Otherwise results would have been skewed to exclusively opinions of those who have had direct experience living within Japan, which would not represent nor match the AsiaBarometer 2007 dataset. Participants were collected via the snowball method, using previously...
forged contacts made during trips to mainland China and Taiwan as well as contacts in Japan and the United States, to obtain a sample of 30 participants (16 from mainland China, 14 from Taiwan). One subject was dropped from the final results due to incomplete answers, resulting in 29 functionally answered questionnaires. As a result of financial and time restrictions it was unrealistic to travel to either mainland China or Taiwan to obtain participants during the time of collection.

For the sake of this research the sample population was limited to those between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine. The reason for this limit goes beyond comparison to the AsiaBarometer 2007 dataset and was selected for the following reasons: 1) this age group has completed primary education within their respective countries and has been fully exposed to each respective country’s historical narratives, 2) none of this generation was alive during the war with Japan. Each individual has had their views shaped based primarily on external narratives, 3) it is this generation that has grown up witnessing the dramatic economic rise of China and the continuing rise of China’s GDP in their lifetimes (Emmott, 2008) as well as the continued democratization of Taiwan, 4) it is between these ages that college study abroad programs, international internship programs, and obtaining full-time careers abroad exists, 5) finally, while seemingly obvious, this generation is still rather young and has great potential for shaping the future of East Asia in accordance with their held narratives and views towards Japan.

I also received the assistance of one friend from mainland China, Zeng Zixuan, who is a PhD candidate at Yokohama National University and is well versed in both mandarin Chinese and English. She was able to both translate my questionnaire into mandarin Chinese and the received answers into English. This was useful for not only obtaining answers from those who could not speak English, but also clarifying questions that might be difficult for those who preferred to answer in their native language.

The aforementioned questionnaire included replications of AsiaBarometer 2007 dataset questions 26b and 26d, regarding the influence of Japan and the United States on their country, questions 35 1-18 which concerned where the participants obtain their views on social and political issues, and questions 47 a, b, and c which covered protest experience and activity. Each of the above Likert scale AsiaBarometer 2007 questions were followed by further questions requiring the participant to expand on the reasons as to their answers in order to gain and understanding of why this population chose to rate the issues as they did. Due to the sensitive subject material, participants were assured anonymity, and ethical standards were maintained for both the sake of the participants and the validity of the research results. The first page of each questionnaire included a clear statement as to the purpose of research and clarification that anonymity of volunteers would be maintained for ethical reasons. Finally, participants were offered copies of the results of this research on completion if they so desired.

Regression Model

The regression model used for this research was created with the dependent variable question 26b of the AsiaBarometer data: “Do you think the following countries have a good influence or a bad influence on your country? Please select the response closest to your opinion for each country listed.” Independent variables were separated into three distinct groups: 1) views towards influence of the United States, 2) protest activity, 3) sources of social and political views. Regression was
done with populations of mainland China (not including Hong Kong) and Taiwan AsiaBarometer data combined, with ages limited to twenty to twenty-nine (see Figure 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q26a USA influence</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.495</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q27a Singing a Petition</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>.280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q27b Joining a Boycott</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q27c Attending Demo</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>.144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q35_1 TV Programs</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q35_2 TV Ads</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q35_3 Radio Programs</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q35_4 Radio Ads</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>.108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q35_5 Newspaper Articles</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>.776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q35_6 Newspaper Ads</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>.509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q35_7 Magazine Articles</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q35_8 Magazine Ads</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q35_9 Books</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q35_10 Internet/Email</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>.999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q36_11 Talk to Friends</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>.098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q36_12 Talk to Friends</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>.098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q36_13 Contrast with Adverts</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>.787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q36_14 Friends/Neighbors</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>.491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q36_15 Campaigns/Conv</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>.156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q36_16 Meetings/Conv</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q36_18 Don’t Know</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>.081</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Model significance broken down by question

Use of the combined data of mainland China and Taiwan was chosen in order to gain an understanding not of the differences between both regions, but rather what factors affect views of Japan within this selected age group and region. If analyzed separately with the same model, mainland China maintains an r-square of 19.5% and Taiwan 22.1%, both maintaining strong significance at .000 sig. The model is stable in both regions, and as mentioned above, each maintain views of Japan that are near polar opposites of each other, thus by combining these populations it allows greater understanding of the factors that have an effect on views toward Japan.

The most influential and significant factors on the dependant variable were the groups: 1) “views towards influence of the United States,” and 2) “protest activity.” These factors alone supported the questionnaire results with an r-square of approximately 30% maintaining high significance with .000 significance. It is interesting to note that of all countries included in the AsiaBarometer 2007 data, only the United States and South Korea held any significance, with the United States clearly holding the most significance and weight.

As will be explained below via the secondary questionnaire results, the connection between Japan and the United States may be explained due to the view that they are seen as part of the same “team.” Therefore, those that viewed Japan’s influence as negative in turn viewed the United States similarly, and opposite for views of positive influence from the countries. In regards to protest activity, this correlated strongly with protests against Japanese products, the Olympic Torch proceedings, and protests of the Yasukuni shrine visits. Those that did not take part in protests often
listed the reason to be that such protests were self-destructive due to economic and dependence on Japanese products (survey answer result, January, 4-10 2010). Finally, while certain media, such as advertisements and television programs, showed an impact on the view of influence that Japan had on each respective nation, secondary qualitative research contradicted this. It did not seem to matter which source of media was chosen, but instead the importance was what was portrayed on that form of media or its use. Further research required in this area in order to quantify any sort of analysis regarding the effect of certain forms of media for a creditable and explanatory answer.

Overall, these three factors, especially the first two, have a strong effect on views towards Japanese influence and largely correspond to the results of the questionnaire and qualitative research.

Secondary Questionnaire Results:

The US-Japan Alliance

Participants who had a positive view of Japan, also tended to have a positive view of the United States. Those participants with a negative view of Japan tended to have a negative view of the United States. The reason explained for this connection was that these two countries were often stated to be on the same “team” politically. Japan has been assisted by the United States a great deal and was seen as a strong ally, often seen as imitating the behavior of the United States internationally. However, the way in which Japan and the United States were seen within this alliance varied greatly.

Those who saw Japan and the United States in a positive manner viewed the nations as a type of role model for their own nation’s advancement. They would often state positive soft power influences such as US or Japanese franchises within their country, fashion trends, pop culture icons that were popular during their youth, foreign television dramas, and numerous other media related pop culture influences. In this case, Japan and the United States were “example nations.” (survey answer result, January, 4-10 2010).

Hard power based concerns became apparent when looking at the population which held negative views of the United States and Japan. Participants who had negative views of Japan and the United States tended to view the nations as economic and/or political oppressors within East Asia, and whose actions were attempts to prevent the advancement of their own nation. Japan would follow the United States’ imperialistic behavior on an international stage and was viewed to be seeking hegemony over East Asia using the United States’ methodology. While this methodology was not elaborated on, those with negative views of Japan’s influence viewed Japan as “not on their side” (survey answer result, January, 4-10 2010).

Historical Matters

In regards to the Nanjing Massacre issue, the strength of the narratives and opinions held varied between mainland China and Taiwan but existed within both; however, it is important to note that beyond this, the degree at which the topic is covered in the public education system was significantly different. Mainland Chinese often had chapters and full pictures devoted to the Nanjing Massacre in their junior high school textbooks, and there was much talk about the actions of the “evil Japanese.” Some Chinese had sponsored school trips to the Nanjing Massacre Memorial as part of their curriculum. They stated that, “...in some ways we were taught that it was a tradition to dislike the Japanese” (survey answer result, January, 4-10 2010). On the Taiwanese side, there
was much less emphasis placed on the negative of aspects of Japanese actions; however, the Nanjing Massacre was clearly acknowledged. Only a few pages covered the issue, and classes moved on without such heavy rhetoric. Overall, while Japan was seen as the previous colonizer of Taiwan, the occupation of Taiwan was viewed as mostly “a good thing” which helped establish government and social structures that were previously in place during the Japanese system (survey answer result, January, 4-10 2010).

Further shared issues between mainland China and Taiwan regarding Japan included the issue of ownership of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. Yet, despite this often emotional issue of territorial ownership of the islands, those that quoted soft power devices for their view of the influence of Japan would often put these issues aside, while those that had a negative view of Japan consistently ignored any soft power influences from Japan in any answers they gave. They also did not accept nor recognize any of the numerous apologies by Japan concerning wartime transgressions that had been given (Yamazaki, 2006).

**Soft Power vs. Hard Power**

When qualitative survey results are examined specifically based on the correlation of the given answers to hard power and soft power related concepts, a pattern emerged. Each survey was examined and rated individually for both terms and concepts that would be categorized under hard power, and those that would be categorized under soft power. For example, answers related to regional security and military threats related to Japan or the United States would be marked as hard power, and those answers including mention of Japanese cultural influence such as fashion, media, and shared values were marked as soft power related. These were then rated on a scale of 0 to 3, with 0 being that any such content is absent, 1 minimal, 2 noticeable, and 3 as highly pervasive. Using the answers regarding the influence of Japan as the dependant variable, with both measured results of hard power and soft power content set as the independent variable, the resulting r-square was 80% with .000 sig for the hard power and .0938 for soft power. While hard power has a noticeably higher significance than soft power in the combined regression model towards the effect on an individual’s negative view towards Japan’s influence, it is critical to note that soft power is not being argued as the deciding factor in this research, but rather as acting as a limiter for the extent that hard power has on the dependant variable of the perceived influence of Japan.

![Figure 3. Cross-tabulation of hard power (rows) against soft power (columns)](image)

As visible in the above crosstabs chart (Figure 3), when soft power related concepts are mentioned the severity and frequency of hard power related topics wanes. When soft power is absent, hard power based concerns run high and numerous. Soft power appears to have “diluted” the effects of hard power founded concerns in regards to an individual’s view of the influence of Japan. In short, the more importance put on hard power related sources for the basis of individual opinions, the
more negative the view of Japan’s influence, but the more soft power related sources, the more neutralized the effect of hard power on such views.

**Soft Power: Limitations, Misunderstandings, and Roadblocks**

While initially promising with soft power appears correlated to the dilution of hard power and thus neutralizing the negative view of Japan’s influence in East Asia between Japan and Taiwan, and Japan and mainland China, this research is on-going and far from complete. A significantly wider population sample is needed to draw more accurate conclusions as well as further questions directly focused on expanding information regarding the affects of soft power. Extensive research specifically into education and media regarding the portrayal of Japan and how information is perceived by each individual is required for a concrete understanding of how individuals initially form their view of the influence of Japan.

Currently, the direct explanatory link between the effect on individuals in China and the link between the actions of governments such as Japan cannot be argued due to a lack of connection between the individual affects and reception of soft power, and decisions and policies of governments. This is a critical weakness and an incomplete aspect of soft power. In addition to the lack of a connection between the effect on soft power on individuals and direct actions taken by governments, there also exist vast differences between nations’ opinions regarding how the concept of soft power might be applied, each arguably misinterpreting the original definition coined by Nye as either simply economic based culture production, or image creation. Furthermore, there is the possibility that soft power devices, such as cultural goods and media, can create a strong oppositional movement and result in nationalist opposition to what is viewed as a foreign culture invasion. In fact, the attempted exploitation of soft power by Japan, China and South Korea are examples of such reoccurring misunderstandings and oversights.

*Japan: Economic Based Mass Culture and Naivety*

While originally seen as an insular nation that was sitting on untapped potential for massive soft power, Japan has now spread its mass culture throughout the world and has become a strong example of soft power creation in East Asia (McGray, 2002). Previously touted for its fast economic development, Japan is now viewed again within the flying geese model for soft power propagation, as an example for other less developing lesser nation states within the region to follow in step (Nye, 2002, p. 84).

However, the most glaring difficultly in regards to understanding the production of soft power from the cultural level is the shear scope of culture in general, let alone the variance of culture within the entire world. Furthermore, popular culture can lead to conflict and contradictions within other foreign cultures. By no means is soft power a concept that can be uniformly applied to any situation via cultural production without consideration to the cultural context in which it exists in tandem (Nye, 2002, p. 11-12, 52). There can also be nearly insurmountable difficultly if the media based culture of one nation is thrust into the market of another that may be structured entirely differently. Linguistic terms, cultural norms, meta-narratives, or any ingrained message of cultural media is often inescapable or critical for translation and consumption. Even the dissemination of some media may prove to be ultimately impossible to introduce without significant efforts on localization due to cultural aspects which do not exist or exist in a similar form in the receiving
nation. Furthermore, other some governments, such as China may ultimately block or limit media from other nations for political purposes. (Iwabuchi, 2002, p. 108).

Japanese video games, *manga* (Japanese comic books), and fashion might transfer with the appropriate marketing techniques, but whether dating simulator games, adult pornographic *manga*, and other highly localized markets will transfer over is entirely another issue. Furthermore, certain images may be illegal in other nations, the best example is Japan’s *lolicon manga*, which depicts child-like characters in erotic situations and would constitute child pornography by numerous foreign laws. While soft power has been portrayed often as a positive tool to create soft power, there has been very little considered in regards to the negative effects of the Japanese culture industry when imagery and media are strongly rejected and create a value-based opposition to the disseminating nation state. Such cultural products may in fact reinforce any negative imagery of Japan.

Furthermore there exists the issue of historical disagreements which remain constantly looming over any dealing between Japan and East Asia, especially with regards to China. Marketing cultural products to a population that has a great distaste for Japan within large sectors of its population is a questionable investment of massive wealth and effort without knowing the direct political effects prior to further investment.

**China: Image Creation for Legitimacy**

China’s goals are different and much grander than Japan’s. While power transition theory states the likely hood of conflict rises as one nation state over takes the leading super power, China would not benefit from conflict since the legitimacy of the government depends on a steady GDP increase of approximately 10% which is directly linked to foreign markets and investment that would be likely lost in the case of a large scale war (Shirk, 2007, p. 19-25).

China’s case is unique in that the government holds a great deal of control over the media and other cultural inlets and outlets between the domestic population and other nation states. There are specific regulations even limiting the number of hours for foreign television programs and movies that may enter mainland China, organized by country (Yasushi & McConnell, 2008). Yet despite these limitations, soft power devices still seep through uncontrolled via the internet (Shirk, 2007, p. 25). While historical narratives taught in schools may prove to be strong counter-measures to extranational soft power influence, as stated above, the interplay between nationalist narratives concerning history and soft power media influence is still widely unknown.

Ironically, at the same time, while filtering of incoming soft power influence may be almost impossible to manage by governments, their control over the flow of soft power is sketchy at best. They commonly maintain only indirect control via financing of institutions, corporate producers, or educational exchanges. For China, soft power is a tool to play down the worries of the international community during its rise to power. China is under the belief that if it can maintain steady growth while avoiding any major conflicts prior to 2025, when its population will begin aging and its workforce dwindling, then a peaceful rise to the status of a superpower can take place (Shirk, 2007, p. 20-21).

China is often observed as a state focused on matters from a realist perspective. Yet, if this was truly the case, then investing in anything related to soft power or image creation would simply be seen as ludicrous and exceptionally wasteful. Yet, China’s heavy involvement in international
organizations shows a strong commitment to a rather international liberalist agenda. It is through involvement in such international organizations that will likely provide China with the soft power it seeks. China wishes to present to the international community the image of a peaceful rise to power, and for this purpose it has invested a great deal towards projecting an image in line with this goal (Wang, 2003, p. 48-52).

Again, however, Nye’s definition of soft power is important to remember, as it does not concern image creation or propaganda. Image creation, is nothing new for China and its Propaganda Department which has been extremely active towards Japan in modern years pushing images of Japanese brutality on to the airwaves (Shirk, 2007, p. 171). It is not a surprise that China would take a similarly image based approach towards soft power. What is critical for such images, though, is not one of a powerful and peaceful China, but a China that shares other nations’ values. It is not only through an attractive image, but one within the realm of shared cultural values that soft power exists (Nye, 2002, p. 11).

South Korea: Niche Marketing, and Nationalist Backlash

In the case of South Korea the “Korean Wave” is the epitome of Korean soft power influence. The analysis given to the Korean Wave is an example of group effect analysis on soft power, and in fact, may be the best way to analyze the effect and application of soft power on an individual level. Unfortunately, even research of soft power at a very narrow level provides ambiguous and results in regards to the interplay of higher level politics (Hayashi & Lee, 2007).

On the positive side, the Korean Wave had a highly connective effect on middle aged women in Japan who later explored Korean culture after watching Winter Sonata on NHK (Hayashi & Lee, 2007, p. 15-17). While a broad audience is almost always preferable, “narrowcasting” to specific groups who are receptive can be an extremely beneficial path to soft power creation (Nye, 2002, p. 111). Based on surveys by the Kyodo News Agency, there was a slight improvement in sentiment towards South Korea from Japan during the period of the Korean Wave, and Japanese and South Koreans are more engaged with each other than ever before in both a positive and sometimes negative manner (Hayashi & Lee, 2007, p. 17).

Even with the arguable success of Korean dramas in Japan, there was a nationalistic backlash which occurred, most notably with the publication of manga titled Ken-kanryuu 1 and 2 respectively which vilified the Korean Wave as a sly conspiracy using a collection of anti-Korean rhetoric. The sudden encounter with Korean dramas within Japanese society in fact had triggered a wave of distrust towards even the media companies within Japan promoting Korean dramas (Hayashi & Lee, 2007, p. 11-12). Soft power had brought forth latent nationalist sentiment, which raises the question as to the role of Japanese soft power in both China and South Korea among narratives of war time historical atrocities.

Improving relations and understanding between Japanese and South Koreans within small niche groups is certainly positive. However, even if the negative nationalist backlash is ignored, the actual direct effect of the Korean Wave at the state level remains ultimately a mystery. Therefore, analysis of the actual effect of soft power is impossible due to the highly localized level of the Korean Wave.

Preliminary Conclusion: Practical Application of Soft Power From Here Forward
The concept of soft power shows great promise as a concept in the initial stages as being practical to international politics within East Asia; however, in order for soft power to be effectively quantified and utilized by nation states at the international level and the findings of research to be explored and applied effectively, there are three steps that must be taken. These steps are based on a foundation that the core concept of soft power as defined by Joseph Nye is understood and not misrepresented as the economic might of a culture industry or pure image creation, but rather including shared culture and values. There must also be recognition that there exists the possibility for a nationalist backlash to what may be perceived as an invasion of foreign culture and values, as was the case with the example of Korean wave.

The following is a proposal for the next steps necessary for expanding these gaps in existing work on soft power.

**Step One**
Various studies based around local and niche groups connected to culture based products must be conducted. Hayashi and Lee’s article on the Korean Wave is an example of a starting point, but further studies must be done on niche groups in order to compare and quantify the effects of soft power on local populations in order to produce predicable and reproducible data.

**Step Two**
The next step is to connect the quantified data of the effect of soft power on the state level. Constructivist theory and structuration by Anthony Giddens may prove the most useful in connecting the understanding how actors would work within the structure and confines created by the presence of soft power (Sorensen & Jackson, 2007). The correlation between the behavior of the niche group and the state must be clearly understood for there to a political connection. For example, how did Japanese women who were fans of Korean drama’s vote during regular elections and what was their political attitude compared to Japanese women not exposed or compliant with the Korean Wave?

**Step Three**
Finally, after building an understanding of the niche groups through which soft power flows, and of the direct correlations between these groups at the state level, research would then need to explore how the state’s soft power influenced choices effect the international realm, as well as show how international actors may control, even resist, the application of soft power.

**Summary**
The existence of soft power is rarely called into question. Unfortunately, its use and application to international relations is still rather questionable due to a lack of basic understanding of the connections between the local and the global levels. If the proposed three steps are taken, the wielding of soft power and its application within international relations along with its inclusion as a theory within the realm of institutional liberalism is a possibility. However promising soft power may appear regarding the dilution of hard power bases concerns within East Asia, if there is no direct connection to the actions of the state and international politics, and a lack of comprehension of the core concept itself by the respective governments, there is little hope for taking advantage of what soft power may offer the future of East Asia.

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NOTES

1. This research was originally conducted during January, 2010 for the sake of building a model to interpret the effects of media and understand the minds of international students arriving in Japan to study in university programs from China. Many problems were encountered due to numerous undeveloped aspects of soft power which eventually led to the creation of this article later.

2. AsiaBarometer is a project started in 2003 to create a large dataset for understanding the dynamics primarily of Asia and the general population. It consists of dozens of questions about general aspects of life, to political, cultural, religious backgrounds.

3. While not in the format for most submissions, I always feel it mandatory to thank those who have helped significantly with any research or project. I would not be where I am without the help of many, and it would be poor citation if I were not to thank these individuals for their assistance and efforts.

REFERENCES


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