Chapter 1: Introduction

The People’s Republic of China (“China” hereafter) reentered the international community when it joined the United Nations in 1971. After decades of self-imposed isolation and hostility toward the US-led Western powers under the rule of Mao Zedong, China further opened its door to a global environment where existing rules, institutions and even values had been largely shaped by the western powers. The still ongoing transition for China is both external and internal. At home, its economic reforms did not start out without counterforce from the communist hardliners, and increasingly from social forces that demanded economic and even political equality. Outside, a relatively weak China was faced with global competition for power, capital and energy resources.

Once entered that competition, China had to learn to play the game by the rules already in place and largely accepted by other players in the game. The process is, however, a long and bumpy one where China and other states have been making adjustment to the changes that followed China’s emergence. Observers of international politics have since been keeping a keen eye on the multi-dimensional developments in China and on how Beijing responds to internal and external pressures and opportunities. Not surprisingly, their views on China were, and still are, mixed. What China will become and how to deal with its rise have been at the center of debates.

Countries around the world very much depend on their images of China—their perception and understanding of what China really is—when they make China policy. How does the international community perceive China, and what does the Chinese leadership do in response to those perceptions? This thesis seeks to examine China’s global images, how the country came to emphasize its images during the course of
reform, and what it has been doing to improve those images. It would be difficult for this thesis to measure the effect of China’s effort in promoting its global image in quantitative terms. Instead, this thesis will use such sources as the BBC World Service Poll and the Global Attitudes Project conducted by the Pew Research Center to investigate how China is generally viewed globally and percentage changes of views toward China by foreign publics.

1.1. Motivations and Purposes

State image is closely associated with a nation’s power, position and aspirations, which in turn are critically woven into the dynamics of the international order. How a state actor sees itself, how it is perceived by other actors and the interactions between the two views are therefore factors likely to affect the state actor’s foreign-policy behavior. In this regard, state image provides a window for understanding the intentions or aspirations of a state actor. Advancement in modern communication technology has expanded the scope of international competition from actual warfare and traditional diplomacy to include such “soft” means as worldwide marketing of ideas, values, cultures, and state images.

Today, we deal with marketed images on a daily basis as just about everything in our lives becomes marketable products. National image promotion programs by state actors highlight just how well the force of marketing has penetrated into international politics. Political marketing seeks to influence our beliefs and actions the same way product ads and commercials try to affect our spending behaviors. The United States, for instance, has successfully promoted freedom, democracy and human rights to the extent that these ideas have been regarded as “universal values.”

Another example more relevant to the theme of this thesis would be the
widespread dissemination of the China threat theory, largely as an collaborated effort by US scholars, opinion leaders, and politicians who warn against a rising China that could disturb the power structure and stability of current international order. For China, a country aspiring to “rise to power” or “develop into a strong nation,” the negative marketing of its images by other players is to be balanced through multiple means. In addition to continuing its astounding economic growth and modernizing its military capability, China has also engaged in an undertaking of marketing a positive Chinese image internationally, as indicated by its policy moves in recent years. The 2008 Olympics, for instance, marks as Beijing’s flagship project aimed to present a modern, powerful and peaceful China to the world.

The interesting dynamics of Beijing’s new diplomacy prompted me to look into China’s image-making efforts and how they affect its interaction with other state actors in current international system. The main purpose of this study is to look more closely the factors contributing to China’s growing awareness of its international image and the efforts made by the Chinese government to reshape its image abroad, specifically after the 1989 Tienanmen Square crackdown on student protests. It is hoped that the findings provide an insight into China’s foreign policy behavior from the perspective of the manipulation of state image.

1.2. Background and Research Questions

The question of what China will become in current international order and how to deal with its rising power often evoke mixed views. In the United States, for instance, two rival views about U.S. China-policy have since come to the fore:

1 One of the signs revealing China’s aspirations to become a strong nation is the recent release of a television series entitled “Da Guo Jue Qi” (The Rise of Great Nations), where the rise and fall of eight has-been great powers and today’s only super-power, the US, are thoroughly studied as lessons and models for China. It is worth to note that this documentary series was produced by the China Central Television, the largest state-run TV station in China.
strategic containment and active engagement. Proponents of the strategic containment
approach represent a school of thought deeming China as a threat, believing that the
growing power and the oppressive nature of the Chinese communist regime would
eventually seek to overturn the international order.2 Those in favor of the engagement
approach see China’s economic agenda as an opportunity where China’s involvement
in international organizations would gradually lead to its acceptance of current
international norms and institutions and eventually transform China into something
resembling a capitalist democracy.3

The “China threat” argument reached its height when China, disregarding
pressures from outside, ordered a brutal crackdown on unarmed student protesters at
the Tienanman Square in June 1989. The world was shocked by the move while
Beijing was startled to realize only later that the crackdown, which it deemed as
domestic affair, would lead to consequences far beyond its calculation. Not only the
incident ended the honeymoon between Beijing and the Western countries since the
late 1970s, but the West also reacted by issuing sanctions and imposing an arm
embargo against China. These harsh reactions by the West seriously alerted the
Chinese government to the fact that the brutal crackdown not only severely damaged
its reputation and image, but also substantiated the “China threat” argument and
pushed away other powers—and hence capital, business know-how, and technologies
so critical for its economic development.

It would take much longer time and more efforts to repair a country’s global
image than to put a dent on it. The following chapters aim to show that Beijing

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2 American conservatives or neoconservatives tend to support this school of thought. See for instance,
Charles Krauthammer, “Why We Must Contain China,” Time, Vol. 146, Iss. 5, available online at
http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,983245,00.html.
3 See for instance, Elizabeth Economy, “Don’t Break the Engagement,” Foreign Affairs, Vol. 83, No. 3,
May/June 2004. Official statements by the U.S. government diplomatically call for further engagement
with China. See for instance, “East Asian and Pacific Affairs,” in U.S. Foreign Policy in the 21st
Century, September 2006, by Christopher R. Hill, Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Asian and
learned the lesson the hard way and began to adopt measures to repair the damage. Chinese leaders have since touted its “peaceful” rise, stressing the peaceful nature of its political agenda in a hope to defuse the “China threat” theory and dilute its image as a violent, repressive regime in the wake of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre.

In 1995, China saw an opportunity to ride with a more positive tide when then U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick enunciated the “need to urge China to become a responsible stakeholder” in the world.⁴ Whereas a defensive manner marked China’s early response to international politics, since 2001 a more confident Beijing government has come to believe that it should act like a great power. Chinese leaders began to use explicit rhetoric to express its willingness to share global responsibilities.⁵

China’s resolution to better incorporate with the world system was evident in its participation in international organizations. As of 1995, China participated in 49 intergovernmental organizations and more than 1,000 international nongovernmental organizations.⁶ In recent years, Beijing has obviously stepped up its effort to present itself as a cooperative member to the world. It has been mending its relations with other nations, settling territorial disputes with its neighbors—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Russia, Tajikistan, and Vietnam⁷—and developing strategic partnership wherever possible. It has also actively participated in global affairs, joining more global and regional organizations, engaging in global affairs forums, and even

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⁷ China’s seeking to improve its relations with its neighbors may carry more security significance than image concern; however, the move contributes positively to its image-making scheme. In resolving the long-term territorial disputes, China has even demonstrated goodwill by accepting less of the contested territories in such case as the Pamir Mountains bordering Tajikistan.
dispatching more troops to serve UN peace-keeping operations.

China’s behavioral shift helped introduce changes in the perceptions and images of China held by the international community at large. In fact, China has strenuously sought to reshape its global image and honed its skills in carrying out public diplomacy since the late 1990s. Used to believe that national security rests solely on its hard power, Chinese government now talks about building up comprehensive national power. The word “comprehensive” clearly incorporates the concept of “soft” power, which has even enticed the communist regime to re-embrace and to market traditional Chinese culture. These interesting developments lead to some questions this thesis seeks to answer:

1. Why would China attach so much importance to its global image?
2. What has China been doing to reshape its global image?
3. What are the effects of China’s image-promotion efforts?

To answer these questions, this thesis looks at the following variables: changing national interests of China from ideological confrontation to economic development, international environment vis-a-vis China’s foreign policy agenda, resources available for China to advance its agenda, global views of China versus Chinese self-perceptions, and impact of Western ideas on Chinese thinking. Domestically, factors in focus are the softening of the Chinese regime type from a rigid authoritarian regime to collective leadership and from ideologically to economically driven. Internationally, this thesis focuses on global perceptions of China, Western influence on the country and pressure from global economic competition.

Moreover, this thesis believes that China increasingly relies on public diplomacy strategies bolstered by soft power resources to better its global image. The strategies include staging high-level official visits, actively participating in international forums, and hosting the Beijing Olympics and the Shanghai World Exposition. Furthermore,
by looking at cross-country opinion polls, this thesis finds that China’s global image promotion has reaped various degree of success in different regions.

1.3. Literature Review

1.3.1. Images of States

What is an image? A simple definition in the dictionary would be: an iconic mental representation of a person or an object. Jungian psychology defines image as a personal façade that one presents to the world. Jarol B. Manheim and Robert B. Albritton cite Nimmo and Savage’s definition of image as “a human construct imposed on an array of perceived attributes projected by an object, event, or person”\(^8\). Manheim and Albritton note that image “is subject to influence by messages issued by some external factors.”\(^9\) This definition indicates an interesting dynamic between the two sides of an image, namely, presenter and receiver interacting under the influence of their subjective perceptions of the self, the other, and their surroundings, respectively.

It is the close connection between image, perception, and behavior that this thesis intends to study because image and perception are determinants of human behavior. As Boulding points out, “It is what we think the world is like, not what it is really like, that determines our behavior…it is always the image, not the truth, that immediately determines behavior”\(^10\). In Boulding’s view, image is how the world is perceived and it is “always in some sense a product of messages received in the

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\(^9\) See Manheim and Albritton, p. 645.

past...a highly structured piece of information-capital." This perspective largely explains how information is processed and developed into a set of perceptions of others in relation to the self.

By extension, a state image is an iconic representation of a state. An international image of a state reflects how the state sees its place and wants to be seen in the international society; at the same time, it also mirrors how other members perceive the iconic representation of the state. Both the presenter and the receiver of an international image go through a process of information structuring, where misinterpretation, distortion, and information discrepancies are likely to introduce misunderstandings and conflicts between them.

Image is also taken as “belief system” in the study of the relationship between belief system, perceptions, and decision-making. Holsti notes that the belief system organizes perceptions into a “meaningful guide” for behavior and establishes goals and the ordering of preferences. Denoting national image as a subpart of the belief system, Holsti points out that decision-makers act upon their image of the situation rather than upon objective reality. Further, they rely on their images of states—others and their own—to define the situation they face. As such, Holsti notes, it has been suggested that international conflicts are often between distorted images of states, rather than between states.

Holsti’s viewpoint can be illustrated by the fact that leaders of modern-day states often seek to communicate with their counterparts through televised speeches and open statements expounding their goals and interests in an effort to reduce

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11 Boulding defines image as how an individual or a group of individual perceive the world and that individual or collective perception of “image of the outside world” is handed over from generation to generation. In this sense, Boulding’s definition of “image” differs from earlier mentioning of the word.
misunderstandings and distorted images. In this sense, a state’s world view and the kind of image it seeks to project internationally bears on its decision-making and foreign-policy behavior. This connection gives meaning to the study of state-image promotion, and in the case of this thesis, China’s image promotion and its foreign policy behavior.

In examining China’s image building project, Hongying Wang suggests four possible types of the image-behavior relationship of China: first, a big gap in between; second, images as means to justify behavior without creating a causal effect between the two; third, the government conducts foreign policy according to its projected images; and last, images not only shape the government’s foreign policy but also reflect the leadership’s conceptions of China’s place internationally. In the latter two scenarios projected images can have causal impact on foreign policy behaviors. “If a projected image is strategic,” Wang notes, “it can have a constraining effect on behavior. If a projected image is internalized, it is likely to have a constitutive effect.”

This thesis finds that China’s present global-image project exerts more constraining than constitutive effect on its foreign policy. With sustained economic development became the bedrock of legitimacy for the CCP, China saw the need of a stable, peaceful international environment to sustain its economic development and to deliver the fruits of reform to the Chinese masses. Chinese leaders came to see the necessity of dispelling the image of China as a threat to other states and began to look to Western experiences to reshape its image abroad. Ample evidence can be placed where the Chinese government modifies its positions and strategies in order to project China as a peace-loving nation and a responsible stake-holder. Essentially, however,

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China remains an authoritarian regime with a similar set of interests at the core of its foreign policy agenda.

1.3.2 China’s Images

In terms of China’s international images, Hongying Wang notes that there have been changes and continuities in the PRC government’s image-building project. It has “consistently pursued the images of China as a peace-loving nation, a victim of foreign aggression, an opponent of hegemony, and a developing country.” On the other hand, the emphasis on Chinese images as a socialist nation and supporter of revolution in the Maoist era has faded into the background. Since the reform period, Wang notes, Beijing has instead promulgated the images of China as “an international cooperator and a major power”15.

Wang argues the Chinese images projected with consistency through time and across audiences are likely internalized and hence have a constitutive effect on the Beijing government’s policy behavior. As such, Wang maintains that the four images of China promoted consistently—a peace-loving nation, victim, anti-hegemony force, and developing country “reflects the leadership’s strongly held self-images of China.”16 Wang further states that a strategic image can develop into a self-image to produce a constitutive effect on behavior, the invention of certain psychological mechanisms that remold belief sets. Wang’s arguments beautifully establish a reasonable link between projected state-image and foreign policy, thereby providing new insights into the study of foreign policy behavior.

Faced with the spread of the “China threat” theory internationally by Western scholars and policy makers, the PRC government has repeatedly trumpeted the

“peaceful rise” theory proposed by Chinese intellectual Zheng Bijian in 2004.\textsuperscript{17} The PRC leaders were cautious enough to have replaced the word “rise” with “development” to tone down any sense of aggressiveness that may be associated with “rise.” However, Joshua Cooper Ramo sees it as an urgent task for China to address the huge discrepancy between the image it tries to project and the one that is perceived by the international society.

Ramo claims that China’s national image has become its greatest strategic threat. “How China is perceived by other nations—and the underlying reality that perception reflects—will determine the future of Chinese development and reform”\textsuperscript{18}. Ramo believes that China’s national-image presentation departs far from achieving positive results and suggests that China present its image for what it really is, that is, a rapidly and constantly changing society confronting serious social issues. This thesis agrees with Ramo that China’s national image is critical for China’s success worldwide and that a discrepancy between China’s self image and its perceived image exists as a challenge, but it disagrees that China’s image-promotion strategies have failed seriously.

Instead, this thesis finds that China has succeeded in creating a positive Chinese image in some parts of the world, particularly in Africa and certain parts of the Middle East and Asia. Meanwhile, this thesis believes that China’s global image today still carries leftovers from its communist days and continues to face obstacles brought by its political system, human rights record, restricted freedom of speech, and product safety issues in a globalized world. Moreover, possibly due to a rising nationalism and relatively successful domestic propaganda, the Chinese people in general hold highly positive views about their country and wrongly believe that

\textsuperscript{17} Joshua Cooper Ramo, “Brand China,” London: Foreign Policy Center, Feb. 2007, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{18} Ramo, p.12.
people in other countries hold the same view. The gap between how China sees itself and how it is seen in the world poses another challenge for the shaping its global image.

1.3.3 International Socialization

In social sciences, political socialization has been a well-studied issue area generating substantial scholarship in social sciences. Political socialization generally refers to the process by which political culture is transmitted in a given society at both the individual and group level. The process extends beyond the acquisition of political culture to encompassing the learning of more sophisticated political ideas and orientations. The agents for political socialization includes family, media, peers, teachers (education), gender, age, race, and cultural background such as religions, traditions, institutions, and country origins. In international relations theories, however, the concept of socialization is underdeveloped.19

Kenneth Waltz touched upon socialization in expounding the concept of structure of the international system and noted that socialization refers to a process through which actors’ behaviors are limited and molded. How can one determine when and how state socialization works? Kenneth Waltz suggested that socialization occurs through emulation of heroes and leaders, praise for conformable behaviors, and ridicule of deviant behavior.20 The social constructivist literature has provided some informed answers: in sum, social influence through punishments and rewards, normative persuasion, and social learning.

Richard Rosecrance notes that at the individual level, socialization denotes the

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process and outcomes of the induction of individuals into the political culture. By the same token, nation-states may engage in a “political socialization” at the international level. Kai Alderson defines state socialization as “the process by which states internationalize norms arising elsewhere in the international system” and maintains that it “takes on an altogether more encompassing meaning referring to ongoing and ubiquitous cognitive and social process by which international interaction constitutes state identities and interests. More specifically, state socialization “refers to normative internalization rather than behavioral compliance.”

Alastair Iain Johnston defines socializations “a process by which social interaction leads novices to endorse expected ways of thinking, feeling, and acting.” Novices can mean new states and their rulers, and the act of endorsement means to internalize “values, roles, and understandings held by a group that constitutes the society of which the actor becomes a member” to the extent that they become taken for granted. States and leaders do so under social influences. Social influence is generally denoted as promoting pro-norm behavior through the use of social rewards and punishments.

Johnston maintains that, “the most important microprocess of social influence is the desire to maximize status, honor, prestige—diffuse reputation or image—and the desire to avoid a loss of status, shaming, humiliation or other social sanctions.” Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink view state socialization as a primary mechanism promoting “norm cascade,” which comes between norm emergence and

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22 Johnston, p. 495.
24 Johnston, p. 500.
norm internationalization in what they deemed as a three-stage norm “life cycle.”\textsuperscript{25} They believe that norms emerges when a number of “norm entrepreneurs” seek to persuade a “critical mass of states” to embrace new norms.\textsuperscript{26} The process, they maintain, is followed by norm leaders engaging in socializing other states to become norm followers, who over time internationalize the norms until the norms are taken for granted. They further suggest diplomatic praise or censure that is reinforced by material sanctions and incentives as socialization agents.\textsuperscript{27}

As such, scholars generally agree that state socialization denotes a process by which states learn to observe prevailing norms and values, at some point change their interests and identities, and eventually internalize the prevailing norms and values. Attitude change, or normative internationalization, may be induced by belief change of elitist individuals and political pressure from domestic norm advocates. Changing attitudes may occur when normative persuasion, without the use of rewards and punishments, succeeds in inducing norm compliance and internalization.\textsuperscript{28} Trine Flockhart argues that successful normative persuasion relies on the socializee’s “positively identifying with the social group to which the norm promoter belongs and has a desire for inclusion in that group.”\textsuperscript{29}

Hegemonic power may also serve as an agent for socialization. G. John Ikenberry and Charles A. Kupchan believe that socialization may occur as a hegemon uses its power to achieve desired outcomes, through such mechanisms as normative persuasion, external inducement, and internal reconstruction. The status of hegemony enables a hegemon to “secure the compliance of secondary states without resorting to material sanctions and inducements.” Instead, the hegemon can rely on “ideological

\textsuperscript{26} Finnemore & Sikkink, p. 901
\textsuperscript{27} Finnemore & Sikkink, p. 902.
\textsuperscript{28} Alderson, p. 417.
\textsuperscript{29} Flockhart, p. 97.
persuasion and transnational learning through various forms of direct contact with elites in these states, including contact via diplomatic channels, cultural exchanges, and foreign study.”\(^30\)

In terms of learning, this thesis focuses on complex, or social, rather than simple, or informational, learning. Simple learning involves adapting behavior temporarily to situations at hand. Jeffrey T. Checkel notes that rationalist scholars define simple learning as “actors acquire new information as a result of interaction and then use the information to alter strategies, but not preferences.” Complex social learning, on the other hand, indicates “a process whereby agent interests and identities are shaped through and during interaction.”\(^31\) Joseph Nye states that “leaning occurs internationally when ‘new knowledge is used to redefine the content of the national interests. Awareness of newly understood causes of unwanted effects often results in the adoption of different, and more effective, means to attain one’s ends.”\(^32\)

A case in point is the lesson China learned after its crackdown on student protest at Beijing’s Tiananmen Square. The consequences of the incident alert China to take into consideration foreign reactions to what it deemed as domestic affairs. Jack S. Levy defines learning as experiential and involves changes in beliefs or “the development of new beliefs, skills, or procedures as a result of the observation and interpretation of experience.”\(^33\) Levy argues that learning is an active process and an analytical construction where historical experience is interpreted “through the lens of their analytical assumptions and worldviews.”\(^34\)


\(^{34}\) Levy, p.283.
The foresaid concepts of social influence, normative persuasion, and social learning can only take place through dynamic interactions. Alexander Wendt argues that, “systemic processes, rising interdependence and the emergence of a ‘common other,’ some times affect only the price of behavior, but they also change identities and interests.”35 Wendt proposes that, “the social world is constituted by shared meanings and signification, which are manipulable by rhetoric practices, that is, efforts to change others’ perceptions of their interests.”36 The concepts discussed will serve to illustrate some changes in China’s behavior as well as in its national interests and rhetoric-image practices.

The concepts of social learning and international socialization are useful for answering the questions raised this thesis: why would China attach so much importance to its global image and what has China been doing to reshape its global image? When China opened its door in 1979, the global environment had been dominated by rules, institutions, and values largely shaped by western countries. As a latecomer faced with fierce global competition for resource and power, China had to learn to play the game by the rules already in place and largely recognized by other players. The process is a long and bumpy one where China and other states have since been adapting to the changes that followed China’s reemergence.

As sustained economic development increasingly became the bedrock of power legitimacy for the CCP, China saw the need of a stable, peaceful international environment to sustain its economic development and to deliver the fruits of reform to the Chinese masses. Consequently, Chinese leaders came to see the necessity of dispelling the image of China as a threat to other states and began to look to Western experiences to reshape its image abroad. In the process, the Chinese government not

36 Wendt, p. 391.
only modifies its positions, but also seeks to transform its diplomatic strategies by adopting the concept of soft power and upgrade its public diplomacy skills. Moreover, China has since actively participated in various international organizations and forums, venues that may help China’s further international socialization. China has proceeded so far as to create multi-nation forums with itself at the center, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Boao Forum for Asia, which may also be seen as a signal of China’s socialization process. Venues as such have become opportunities for China to project a friendly image to the world.

1.3.4 Soft Power and Public Diplomacy

When the decline of America’s international images began to raise concerns, Joseph Nye expounded the concept of “soft power” calling for the U.S. government to pay due attention to its weakening images and reputation abroad. Nye defines soft power as such:

Soft power is not merely the same as influence. After all, influence can also rest on the hard power of threats or payments. And soft power is more than just persuasion or the ability to move people by argument, though it is an important part of it. It is also the ability to attract, and attraction often leads to acquiescence. Simply, put, in behavioral terms soft power is attractive power. In terms of resources, soft power resources are the assets that produce such attraction. 37

Nye relates hard power to command power and soft power to co-optive power. Command power seeks to change others’ behavior by means of coercion or inducement. Co-optive power works to shape others’ behavior with “the

attractiveness of one’s culture and values or the ability to manipulate the agenda of political choices in a manner that makes others fail to express some preferences because they seem to be too unrealistic.” In Nye’s view, the resources of a country’s soft power rest on its institutions, values, policies, and culture. He further defines the spectrum of behavior and resources employed by hard and soft power as follows:38

Figure 1. Comparison between Hard and Soft power

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hard</th>
<th>Soft</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spectrum of behaviors</td>
<td>Coercion inducement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Command</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most likely resources</td>
<td>force sanctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>payments bribes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


A country may shape other states’ behavior by attracting them to learn from or assimilate to its institutions, values, policies and culture. It follows that a country enjoying such soft power also enjoys a largely positive image abroad. For instance, Nye notes, a French foreign minister observed that Americans enjoy great power because they can inspire the dreams and desires of others, thanks to its mastery of global images through film and television and its ability to attract large influx of foreign students to study in the United States. Nye believes that China and India are likely future great powers, and that they are working to expand their soft-power resources.

To make a country’s soft power work toward its policy goals, the government must invest in its soft-power resources, most notably in strengthening its public

diplomacy. Nye observes that “promoting positive images of ones’ country is not new, but the conditions for projecting soft power have transformed dramatically in recent years…Information is power, and today a much larger part of the world’s population has access to that power.”\(^{39}\) The statement implies that, first, a country’s positive images rely heavily on its soft power, and second, the information age has made it more competitive for countries to project their soft power.

A country with plenty of soft-power resources must rely on effective public diplomacy to create positive international images that project its soft power. Nye notes that Edward R. Murrow, former director of America’s public diplomacy apparatus until its abolishment in 1999—United States Information Agency (USIA), defined public diplomacy in 1963 “as interactions aimed not only at foreign governments but primarily with non-governmental individuals and organizations, and often presented a variety of private views in addition to government views.”

Edmund A. Gullion, former dean of the Fletcher School at Tufts University, defined public diplomacy in 1965 as encompassing “dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with those of another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as between diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of inter-cultural communications.”\(^{40}\)

Nye notes that Public diplomacy goes beyond public relations of conveying information and selling a positive image to involve building a lasting relationship that creates an enabling environment for government policies. He further expounds the dimension of public diplomacy and names three areas. The first and immediate


\(^{40}\) See http://fletcher.tufts.edu/murrow/public-diplomacy.html.
dimension entails daily communications aimed to explain the context of domestic and foreign policy decisions most critically to the foreign press corps. The second dimension is strategic communication in which a set of simple themes is developed and campaigned to advance a particular government policy. The third dimension involves the development of lasting relationships with key individuals over many years through such venues as scholarships, exchanges, training, seminars, conferences and access to media channels.

In separating public diplomacy from propaganda, British expert Mark Leonard observed that simple propaganda lacks credibility and is counterproductive as public diplomacy. Public diplomacy, or new diplomacy, also came to known as “a government’s process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation’s ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and current policies.” Manheim names several forms of public diplomacy: head of State visits, hosting of mega events, and management of national images. The management of national images, on the other hand, is closely related to the management of international public relations, which is connected to mediation of foreign policy.

The discussions on soft power and public diplomacy are critical to this thesis in illustrating China’s growing awareness of its global image and its efforts deliver positive images to the world over. Ingrid d’Hooghe believes that “China has certainly developed a remarkable array of activities that together form a consistent and quite effective public diplomacy policy. Perceptions and the behavior of both China’s domestic and international publics are having a growing impact on China’s foreign

policy." The Beijing government did not begin to pay attention to its public diplomacy until quite recently, particularly to attract a wider public support than its previous focus on Mao’s “third world” countries. To mend its international image, China established its first public relations department—the State Council Information Office—in 1990. This thesis will dedicate one chapter to the discussion of China’s public diplomacy efforts to improve its images abroad and to create an amiable environment for furthering its economic development.

1.4. Scopes and Limitations

This study aims to investigate why China attaches much importance to its image abroad and how it employs soft power and public diplomacy to reshape its state-image internationally in it course to redefine its position in the international arena. The following chapters focus on factors prompting China to improve its international image and how, under the force of international socialization, it seeks to use soft power to transform global perceptions about China by means of public diplomacy. This thesis does not seek to provide a decisive evaluation of China’s effort and degree of success in quantitative terms. Rather, it uses relevant literature and chronic analysis to give a general picture of China’s international-image awareness and its image-polishing efforts.

Moreover, although China affairs have drawn considerable academic interests leading to a considerable body of scholarship, it seems that China’s image-making efforts rarely occupy central attention in the discussion of Chinese foreign diplomacy. Systematic analysis on China’s international image promotion, and its relationship to the country’s international socialization and foreign policy behavior, seems scant

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compared with other China research areas. This thesis hopes to provide a preliminary study on the subject and point out that if the international system resembles a social environment, then the marketing of international image by states should help shape their foreign policy behavior.

It has become clear that state actors are becoming more skilled in state-image presentation, while technological advancement and globalization not only help intensify such image competitions but also incline these players to interact more closely. Many signs indicate that China has chosen ride with the trend. This thesis focuses on the case of China where the government’s image-making efforts illustrate the country’s aspirations within the context of interplaying domestic and foreign forces. While this study looks on the context, factors and efforts surrounding China’s international image, future research may investigate further into the effects and China’s image-reshaping and how they impact the current international system.

1.5 Method and Framework

To answer the thesis questions raised in section two, page six, one must look at China’s domestic developments and its global agenda. Above all, even though China repeatedly states its objection to the domination of hegemonic power—the United States today, it nevertheless aspires to become a strong and wealthy great power with greater say in a multi-polar world through continued economic reforms and increased international involvement. In order to create an external environment advantageous to its economic development and modernization programs, Beijing must re-anchor its state image as a good citizen of the international society and adjust its foreign-policy behavior accordingly to substantiate that image. Beijing must play by the rules of the global society in order to be deemed as a socially agreeable member.
This change of mindset constitutes an important part of the framework for this thesis. Beijing’s foreign policy behavior has evolved from the interplay of many factors: regime type, leadership change and ideological transformation, evolving national interests, and effects of international socialization. China’s economic reforms started from a leadership changeover, yet they further placed the Chinese polity and society under immense international influence that Chinese leaders first sought to restrain, if not resist, and later came to terms with. Once China put reform programs in motion, it also triggered the formation of a new international dynamic with itself at the center of focus. Chapter two will discuss in greater depths the foresaid factors driving Beijing’s attention to its foreign policy behavior and global image.

As much as Beijing hopes to pursue a more independent foreign policy with the kind of freedom it believes the Western countries enjoy, it has nevertheless come to realize that consequences may follow any disregard of opinions abroad. China still upholds the “non-interference” principle at the core of its foreign policy, much to the dismay of the Western powers in such cases where they pursue concerted international effort to end genocide in Darfur and brutal crackdowns on protests by the Myanmar junta. While China’s connections with those governments continue to incur criticisms, this thesis argues that China has progressed elsewhere by wielding its soft power, mending its image, and diversifying its diplomatic strategies with increasingly sophisticated finesse.

low but notes its promising future. Nye penned the book aiming to alert the U.S. government to the importance of soft power in relation to American global image, but the concept has been adopted by Chinese scholars and officials and therefore constitutes another important part of the philosophical framework for this thesis to explore China’s new-found interests in why and how its images abroad must be managed.

Scholarly debates about Chinese soft power have spread in the Chinese academia, and Chinese officials have publicly emphasized on enriching Chinese soft power and extending that power abroad. In August 2006, for instance, Chinese top leaders convened the Central Foreign Affairs Work Conference with the participation of the Politburo, government ministers, Chinese ambassadors, provincial governors, party secretaries, officials from state-own enterprises, and senior military officials. The meeting marked the largest in recent decades, and the discussions focused on how the behavior of Chinese companies abroad affected state image, the need to devise a more coherent grand strategy, and how to strengthen China’s soft power.

This thesis seeks to look into China’s inclination to exploiting its soft power resources by means of public diplomacy. The study of Chinese public diplomacy in this thesis will also indicate that China has been engaging in an international-socialization process where Chinese leaders have placed themselves under Western influence as they adapt to the international environment. The idea of soft power, for instance, is by no means strange to the Chinese. The fact that it entered the rhetoric of the Communist elites implies implicit acceptance of western

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ideas. Western practices of public diplomacy now also increasingly characterize Beijing’s public diplomacy strategies.

This thesis employs chronicle-analysis method to examine how Beijing utilizes its soft power and public diplomacy to promote its global image for the goal of advancing its interests. To support the research, this thesis relies on secondary sources for reference, including journal articles, news stories and published books, speeches, and cross-country surveys available online or in the libraries. The major issues covered by the sources center around China’s global image, factors contributing to its image concerns, Chinese soft power, and its public-diplomacy practice. It is hoped that the state-image perspective helps explain some of China’s foreign policy decision-making and behavioral transformation.

The following chapters begin with a more detailed discussion on state image, its importance in international society, and factors contributing to China’s resolution to reshape its global image. Chapter three looks into the concept of soft power, Chinese perceptions of soft power, and the substances of Chinese soft power. This chapter explores Chinese soft power on three fronts: culture, political values and institutions, and style of diplomacy. China has dug into its rich cultural past and identified its language, philosophy such as Confucianism, and its maritime achievement represented by Admiral Zheng He as sources of Chinese soft power. More significantly, China’s phenomenal economic growth for the past decade has convinced some Chinese scholars and a number of other countries to see it as a model, so much so that Joshua Cooper Ramo has named Chinese development model “Beijing Consensus” as opposed to the “Washington Consensus.”

China has also pour resources into training its diplomatic personnel to shape a new Chinese diplomatic style. Chapter four gives an overview of China’s improved skills in public diplomacy with a goal to manage it global image. This includes
ever-increased frequency and sophistication in communicating with foreign audiences through various channels: staging of head-of-state visits to target countries, international forums highlighting frequent high-level official exchanges worldwide, hosting of mega events such as the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2010 Shanghai Expo. The last chapter will be conclusion and review of how successful China’s image-making project is worldwide.