

# China's Public Diplomacy Philosophy

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## Introduction

Modern-day China has incredible global influence and power with a rate of growth that can only be described as unprecedented. It is even more impressive considering the country's growth came during the period of globalization, where individual countries that were not necessarily in the same region or of a similar culture were becoming more connected. As China's sphere of influence grew and evolved, so did its bonds with other countries.

Public diplomacy is a country's foreign relations and interactions with outside citizens and cultures. China's public diplomacy is not straightforward, as its foreign interactions seem inconsistent and dissonant. The extent of this study looks at China from the end of the Chinese Civil War (1949) to the present.

## Research Question and Purpose

Research Question: What is China's current public diplomacy philosophy?

According to the CPC and the country's foreign ministers, China's official diplomacy philosophy is to promote and protect its national interests; however, this is not a satisfactory answer. Surely every country's approach is a [Insert country here]-first philosophy. Connecting China's actions to a central theory helps to better understand China's public diplomacy beyond the official diplomatic answer.

The purpose of this study is not to create a theory or bring new data about China's diplomacy to light. This is a derivative project; it does not seek to create new knowledge. Instead, it connects the dots of existing knowledge in ways that illuminate China's geopolitics.

## Research Design

This study focuses on four primary topics to understand China's public diplomacy philosophy compiled into a textual analysis. The topics are as follows:

### 1. China's history since the Chinese Civil War

Understanding how China came to be and the events that led to its explosive growth in the twentieth century provides context for the current events researched.

### 2. Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

The BRI is a massive economic foreign policy that has become the official agenda for China's future trade and investment markets.

### 3. South China Sea conflict

A territorial dispute between China, Southeast Asian countries, and their allies.

### 4. Uyghur imprisonment and Hong Kong takeover

These events do not fall under the conventional definition of diplomacy, as they are internal rather than external, but the distinction is blurred.

Uyghurs are ethnically, religiously, and geographically separated from the rest of China. China has started to treat Uyghurs as hostile foreign entities.

Hong Kong is part of China but has a complex quasi-independent government and relationship with the rest of the mainland.

## Analysis

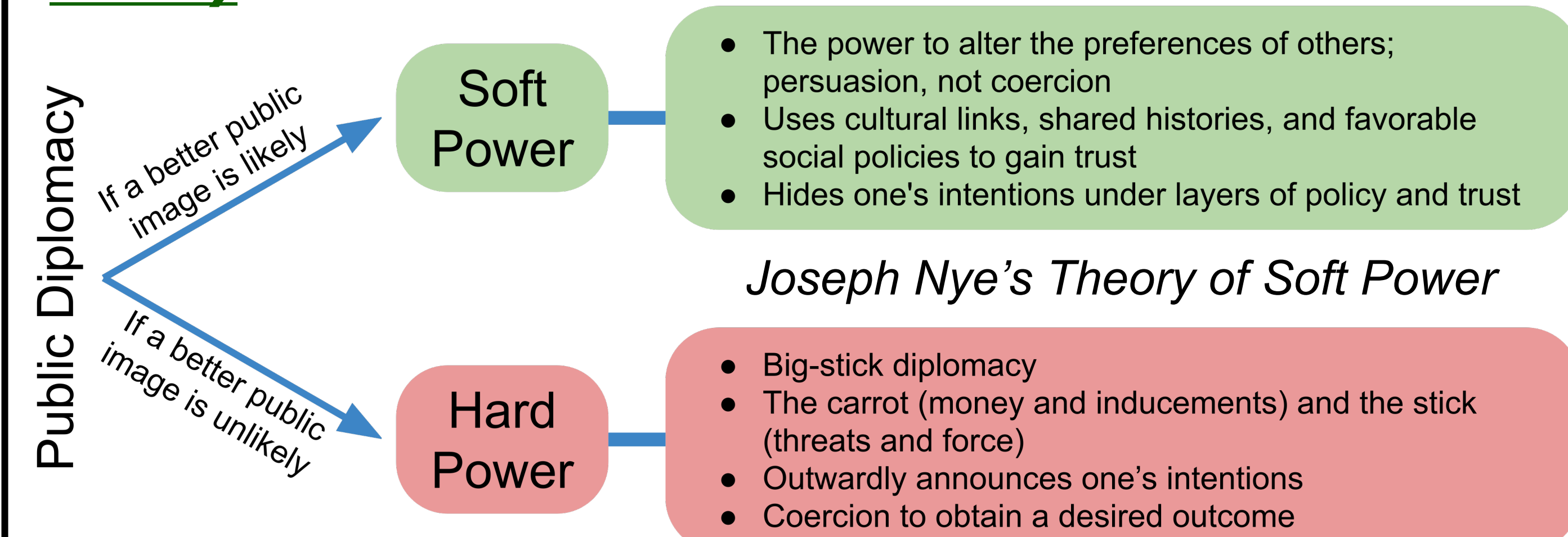


## South China Sea



- China's claim to the South China Sea is absolute – the country believes the entire Sea and its islands belong to it.
- The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are other countries that have claims in the Sea that have banded together to fight China on their claim.
- The US has supported ASEAN in the dispute and maintained a presence in the Sea
- China has not been open to compromise and is unwavering in its claims.
- Recently, China has opened talks with Vietnam, the country with the weakest connection to the US

## Theory



## Discussion

Hard power and soft power precisely describe China's actions, with the topics analyzed being able to fit into either hard or soft power.

### Belt and Road Initiative

A clear example of soft power at play: China uses its sphere of influence and marketing to gradually persuade countries that it can be trusted and join the program.

### South China Sea conflict

Textbook hard power: Military presence and a lack of diplomatic compromise when China saw that other countries could not be persuaded since their goals directly conflicted with China's claims.

### Uyghur imprisonment

Internal and quiet hard power: After acknowledging that the Uyghur population would not be persuaded or subdued, they became an enemy; China has tried to keep the situation secret to save face for its soft power relationships.

### Hong Kong takeover

Switch from soft to hard power: After two decades, China saw no benefit in keeping its previous promises of soft power, as the city was still not interested in becoming part of the mainland. As a result, hard power mechanisms like a government takeover, silencing protests, and an increased military presence were carried out.

## Conclusions and Future Work

The idea of China utilizing hard and soft power as its public diplomacy philosophy is understandable. Wanting to have the most control and influence it can is the goal of most countries, and China seems to be in a prime position to use all its available tools and achieve a high status in the globalized world.

For future research, looking at the extent to which China uses neocolonialism to control its sphere of influence would be a natural extension of the findings and connections made in this study.

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