

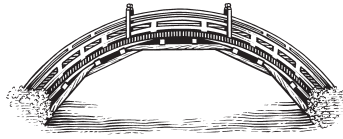
BOOK REVIEW ROUNDTABLE

Jing Sun

Japan and China as Charm Rivals: Soft Power in Regional Diplomacy

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Jing Sun

Who's the Most Charming in Asian Regional Diplomacy?

Andrew L. Oros

Hello Kitty and Prince Pickles versus the dragon and the panda. Both sets of national symbols have their charms, but can there be any doubt that it is the golden retriever and the eagle that are ascendant in East Asia today?¹ Not the mythical Chinese golden retriever that Jing Sun humorously refers to in his introduction to *Japan and China as Charm Rivals: Soft Power in Regional Diplomacy* (p. 1), but the traditional version from the traditional dominant soft and hard power in the region—the United States. With his new book, Sun has usefully added to the growing list of recent titles that focus on the China-Japan relationship²—a relationship that U.S. scholars and policymakers had paid insufficient attention to until recently. However, in doing so, he has made the mistake that most others in this genre have made: failing to systematically consider the critical role of the United States in East Asian regional relations. The “charm rivals” for dominance in the region are not just China and Japan but China, Japan, and the United States—and at the moment, the United States appears ascendant.

Still, Sun's book makes several valuable contributions to the growing literature on China-Japan relations, on broader regional relations, and on the topic of so-called soft-power diplomacy. The most important benefit is the framing of interstate relationships in the region as inherently interconnected rather than following the more traditional approach of considering strategic dyads in isolation. As Sun rightly draws attention to, China's relationships with South Korea, Taiwan, and Southeast Asian states have much to do with Japan's relationships with those countries, as well as with China's relationship with Japan. Sun makes a valuable contribution by framing this interconnectedness theoretically and also providing a history and account of these dynamic

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¹ It should be noted that according to her marketing bio, Hello Kitty, aka Kitty White, is actually English. Prince Pickles is the Japan Self-Defense Forces' mascot.

² Several titles of particular merit are Akio Takahara, *Nicchu Kankeishi, 1972–2012* [A History of Japan-China Relations, 1972–2012] (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 2012); James Reilly, *Strong Society, Smart State: The Rise of Public Opinion in China's Japan Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Claude Meyer, *China or Japan: Which Will Lead Asia?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); and Richard Bush, *Perils of Proximity: China-Japan Security Relations* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2010).

relationships that draws on existing scholarship, interviews, and archival research in multiple languages from all of these places.

Not only is Sun able to integrate Chinese-, Japanese-, and English-language materials, but he also writes in an engaging, direct, and at times even playful style that is refreshing in a serious scholarly work. I especially like his descriptive yet fun headings, such as “People-to-People Confrontation: Learning to Love Sushi but Hate Koizumi” (p. 50) and “Cultural Exchanges: Increasingly Vibrant, Increasingly Irrelevant” (p. 102). His analysis of the soft-power diplomacy of China and Japan also shows a deep understanding of both Chinese and Japanese domestic politics, including Japan’s complicated, annual leadership transitions over the past eight years. The fact that Shinzo Abe is likely to be prime minister again at the time this review appears makes Sun’s discussion of Abe’s and his successor Taro Aso’s “values-based diplomacy” especially pertinent. This is the sort of framing that will appeal to readers of *Asia Policy* as well as undergraduate students and general readers. The book deserves a broad readership.

Japan and China as Charm Rivals is strongest in the core chapters that focus on the soft-power rivalry between China and Japan vis-à-vis their Asian neighbors in Southeast Asia (ch. 2), South Korea (ch. 3), and Taiwan (ch. 4). Although the book’s narrative largely stops with mid-2010, those interested in the latest developments in regional relations can interpret recent events through the useful lens Sun provides. Sun’s important takeaway point is that the so-called soft-power initiatives of both China and Japan are clearly motivated by hard-power concerns, and in particular are directed at each other through their relationships with these third states. These chapters contain several useful figures and charts illustrating the rise of trade with China and the concomitant growing closeness with China in other areas. For example, figure 12 (p. 108) shows that in 2009 about twice as many South Koreans were studying in China as Americans and Japanese combined (despite South Korea having less than 15% of the total population of the United States and Japan). This number sharply increased as South Korea’s trade with China surpassed trade with Japan in 2001 (p. 108, figure 11). Figure 7 (p. 82) shows that total trade between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and major partners such as the United States, the European Union, Japan, and China essentially converged in 2007—a dramatic shift from just five years earlier when the United States’ trade with ASEAN states was nearly fourfold China’s.

On a theoretical front, Sun offers a useful corrective to an overemphasis on the idea of soft power in diplomacy, writing that “scholars need to examine what diplomatic wooing can and cannot do to promote national interests” (p. 173).

He notes, as American scholars and policymakers are well aware, that “people everywhere have shown no tension with loving another country’s food or movies but not admiring that country’s government” (p. 166).³ Sun also focuses his attention on the role of the state in engaging in soft-power diplomacy, rightly arguing that especially in the case of authoritarian states like China, even culture (and certainly media) is often the domain of the state (e.g., p. 12). The book’s conclusion chronicles China’s hard-power use of soft power worldwide, including massive subsidies to China Central Television and the Xinhua News Agency to get out China’s message and blunt the diplomatic ostracism of states who dare challenge its position on Tibet or human rights (such as the recent cases of Norway, France, Australia, and Japan). Sun’s attempts to improve on the theorization of soft-power guru and Harvard scholar Joseph Nye are only modestly successful—as evidenced in the confusing figure 1 (p. 15)—but they do usefully focus attention on the underlying hard-power foundation of many state-led soft-power initiatives, and in particular the critical role of political leadership in this process.

It is in the area of political leadership that Japan faces the greatest challenges in its soft-power competition with China and in its efforts to “charm” China directly. Each of Sun’s country- and region-focused chapters illustrates how Japan operates at a disadvantage when it does not have a long-term strategic leader at the helm. Sun’s overview chapter on the postwar history of China-Japan relations (ch. 1) notes the value of the deeper connections between China’s leaders and long-serving Japanese prime ministers Tanaka (1970s), Nakasone (1980s), and Koizumi (2000s), and conversely, the challenges Japan has faced with its nearly once-a-year prime ministerships of recent years. On page 169 alone, Sun twice repeats the phrase “leaders matter greatly”—and he is right. When Japan is finally able to once again establish long-term political leadership at home, the region may well find Japan’s soft-power resources to be much more formidable internationally than we have seen in recent years. It is too early to count Japan out in this game, though it may be several more years before the Japanese political system produces another long-term leader.

Sun’s conclusion chapter strikes a somewhat different tone, and a somewhat different topic, than the regional soft-power focus of the bulk of the book—a change no doubt caused by the dramatic shift in climate in the region beginning around 2008 with the global economic crisis and the marked rise in tension

³ I was sadly reminded of this point in Beijing in September 2012 when I witnessed numerous newly middle-class Chinese seeking to protect their Japanese-branded cars from anti-Japan mob violence.

between China and its neighbors from 2010 to the present. Sun's final paragraph of *Charm Rivals*, noting "when people of two countries are suspicious and distrustful of each other, governments have much less room to be flexible and moderate" (p. 151), is quite pertinent to the charmless world of power politics that at present seems dominant in East Asia (perhaps in contrast to when Sun began writing the book in 2007). Still, it is useful to be reminded of how quickly China retreated from its "charm offensive" of the early to mid-2000s and began instead to engage in more direct hard-power competition with the United States and Japan, both in the region and globally.

By making his first post-election trip abroad to Asia, President Barack Obama has signaled once again that Asia remains central to future U.S. prosperity and security. In this most recent trip, he also doubled down on his administration's "pivot" or "rebalancing" strategy to Asia. One might usefully apply Sun's framework for understanding the soft-power diplomacy of China and Japan to the case of the United States: the U.S. brand of freer markets, liberal government, and rules-based regimes is a state-led strategy to increase U.S. influence in the region and not something culturally or commercially driven. It also is undergirded by increasing allocation of hard-power resources to the region, and is a product of political leadership.⁴

In sum, Sun is correct to draw our attention to the interactive and dynamic nature of East Asian regional diplomacy; it is not just a series of dyads. But when current buzzwords in the region are phrases like "Trans-Pacific Partnership" and "rebalance," it seems clear that soft-power rivalry in the region is not a contest between China and Japan but rather a three-way China-Japan-U.S. rivalry—and that the United States is looking pretty charming.

⁴ For more on this line of argument, see Andrew L. Oros, "Prospects for Trilateral Security Cooperation," in Gerald Curtis, Ryosei Kokubun, and Jisi Wang, ed., *Getting the Triangle Straight: Managing China-Japan-US Relations* (Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 2010).

Soft Power: Resonating with the Preferences of a Target Country?

Lam Peng Er

Jing Sun's book *Japan and China as Charm Rivals: Soft Power in Regional Diplomacy* is impressive and persuasive on at least two counts. First, it gives an excellent and stimulating analysis of soft power as a concept—one that explains its allure, practice, and limitations in international relations. Unlike most accounts of soft power, which focus on the motivations and the charm of a specific actor, Sun is sensitive to the context and history of the target state and society. He convincingly argues that a country's soft power is most appealing if it resonates with the preferences, values, and interests of that target state.

Second, Sun's decision to focus on Japan and China allows him to tease out the efficacy of soft power in concrete case studies of states with different regime types. To date, his account is the only one to comprehensively apply the concept to Sino-Japanese relations and those two countries' neighborly relations with Southeast Asia, South Korea, and Taiwan. Especially pleasing is his skill in weaving the theory and praxis of soft power with other factors in international relations such as history, geopolitics, political leadership, and economics. In doing so, Sun offers readers a fresh and balanced perspective on international relations in East Asia—the wielding of the iron fist (hard power) in the velvet glove (soft power).

Sun's findings are quite striking. In the case of China, despite its impressive economic growth and the mushrooming of Confucius Institutes abroad, Beijing's charm offensive has been quite limited beyond providing economic aid to states in Northeast and Southeast Asia. As for Japan, despite its colonization of Taiwan, the conquest of Southeast Asia during World War II, and its relative decline after the burst of its bubble economy, the country continues to exude appeal in these localities. Nonetheless, Japanese soft power has been less effective in China and South Korea, beyond popular culture, cuisine, and other commercial spheres. Simply put, charm in a limited consumer sphere does not necessarily translate into political capital.

Implicit in Sun's masterly comparison is the notion that Japan's greater appeal in Southeast Asia is in part due to Tokyo's relative success in articulating

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the Fukuda Doctrine in 1977 as its official blueprint for relations with that region. The doctrine's tenets include rejecting militarism, affirming Japan's equality with and support for members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and fostering a "heart-to-heart" relationship with these countries. Arguably, the Fukuda Doctrine resonated with Southeast Asian preferences. Unfortunately, there is no "heart-to-heart" relationship between Japan and its two Northeast Asian neighbors, China and South Korea. In particular, the emotional chasm between China and Japan (due to the burden of history) appears unbridgeable.

Beijing, for its part, has always affirmed that it supports ASEAN as the driver of East Asian multilateralism, and the Chinese economy is a huge magnet for Southeast Asian trade. However, China's nominally Communist regime (which is still an authoritarian one-party state) and excessive claims to approximately 80% of the South China Sea have severely limited China's charm in Southeast Asia. Though Beijing may be conducting "smile diplomacy," the region is well aware that its giant neighbor has sharp teeth (growing even sharper and longer) and will therefore be wary of all Chinese offensives, hard or soft. Acquiring an aircraft carrier fleet and pressuring Cambodia (the 2012 ASEAN chair) to lean toward Beijing in South China Sea disputes have done little to help China overcome Southeast Asian ambivalence.

My only reservation about Sun's superb book is that China and Japan may not be consciously engaging in soft-power competition with each other in South Korea and Southeast Asia, although this does appear to be the case in Taiwan. Tokyo adopted a softer approach toward Southeast Asia after the violent anti-Japanese demonstrations in Bangkok and Jakarta during Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei's visits in 1974. Japan's strategic shift to a good-neighbor policy had little to do with competition with China. In recent years, Beijing and Tokyo have wooed Southeast Asia with free trade agreements and economic partnerships while jostling to protect their respective interests in the South China Sea. This competition is framed by economics and geopolitics but not necessarily soft power. In this regard, the two countries today may indeed be rivals in Southeast Asia but are not necessarily charming ones.

I conclude by concurring with Sun that understanding soft power must entail not only an examination of the initiating actor and its repertoire of charms but also of the context, history, preferences, values, and interests of the receiving party. Simply put, the receiver must be willing to be seduced, beyond the enticement of economic bribes and the compulsion of force. By making this point so persuasively, the importance of Sun's book extends beyond the allure of China and Japan in international relations. The logic that a target

country is not necessarily a passive recipient of another's assumed and hubristic charm should also serve as a salutary lesson for other great powers, including the United States.

The concept of influence by various means has existed long before Joseph Nye coined the catchy terms soft power and smart power. One wonders what the U.S. foreign policy and military establishments have learned from these insights. President Obama's triumphant visit to Myanmar in November 2012 was a demonstration of soft power in China's Southeast Asian backyard. Indeed, the promotion of democracy and human rights as universal values resonates with many Burmese suffering from decades of oppression by the military junta. But the collateral damage of U.S. drone attacks in Afghanistan (including the deaths of women and children) is certainly not winning hearts and minds after a decade of foreign invasion and intervention. Ironically, in the face of the brutal and often indiscriminate exercise of military power in Afghanistan, the "softer" effort of the United States to woo Afghans may be snuffed out by itself—that is, the smashing iron fist may simply be too powerful for the velvet glove. Sun's argument rings true: in the exercise of soft power, the context and receptivity of the target state (an active actor in its own right) are often critical.

Soft Power and Leadership in East Asia

David C. Kang

Jing Sun's new book *Japan and China as Charm Rivals: Soft Power in Regional Diplomacy* is a welcome addition to the growing body of literature addressing the complex foreign relations of East Asia. Sun explores how China and Japan have sought to utilize "soft power" in their relations with each other and neighboring East Asian countries, and he provides some long-needed clarity and dimensionality to this analytically loose concept. Sun points out, for example, that the key aspect of soft power is "power," and that observers often vastly overestimate the influence of popular culture or commercial products on national attitudes and foreign policies. In chapters detailing Japan's and

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China's wooing of Southeast Asia, South Korea, and Taiwan, Sun delves into the problems and processes of pursuing foreign policy goals through a soft power—or charm offensive—strategy. Ultimately, he concludes that while leaders in both Japan and China see soft power as important, neither country holds “idealistic perceptions” of soft power. The book concludes that soft power is “embedded in international relations realities: states are still competing for limited resources...and threats of the use of force are real” (p. 170).

Sun has performed a valuable task by deeply exploring the concept of soft power and its current utility in explaining Chinese or Japanese foreign policies in the Asia-Pacific region. Given the detailed and careful manner in which he makes his theoretical arguments and the wealth of empirical data brought to bear on this issue, his conclusions appear convincing. Sun shows that soft power does not appear to significantly change states' underlying strategic orientation or their preferences, and that by itself soft power also rarely even changes the perceptions held by other countries. Cultural or commercial success has likewise done little to change underlying perceptions. Sun's careful study of Southeast Asian countries' perceptions of Japan, for example, reveals that “the local desire to see Japan turn its economic might into political capital was lukewarm” (p. 72).

Sun's conclusions lead to a somewhat interesting implication: why should we even study a fuzzy theoretical concept that has little empirical evidence of its existence, much less that it is consequential for international relations? It might be tempting to conclude that only hard power is driving relations between countries. The distribution of capabilities may, in fact, be the fundamental driver of regional relations. But that is not at all clear, and if Sun had explored concepts linked to soft power, he could have widened the impact of his work by addressing theoretical and empirical issues that lie at the heart of the study of East Asian international relations and truly interrogated the way in which the pursuit of hard power interacts with other state goals.

The concept of soft power—intuitively plausible but empirically difficult to measure—actually provides a lever by which to explore a much wider set of concepts that are linked to, but not entirely subsumed by, this concept. Leadership, status, and legitimacy each appear to be central to foreign relations in East Asia. Like soft power, these concepts derive from the values and ideas a country espouses, and like soft power they are linked only imperfectly to the material capabilities of a country.

For example, the concept of leadership necessarily implies that there are followers, as well as that there exists a recognized social rank—order that places leaders above followers. The two are not equal in voice, responsibility, standing, or influence. Leadership—like soft power—can only emerge if there is consensus

on what constitutes leadership and who gets to lead. John Ikenberry and Charles Kupchan argue that, more than being simple military predominance, “the exercise of power—and hence the mechanism through which compliance is achieved—involves the projection by the hegemon of a set of norms and their embrace by leaders in other nations.”¹ That is, leadership is inherently a social phenomenon, and the question of why some states may be willing to follow is as important as that of why other states wish to lead. Leadership thus incorporates soft power but also more widely encompasses ideas about national identity, regional integration, and perceptions of one’s own and other countries’ places in the region.²

There is a widespread belief that Japan and China are competing for leadership of East Asia.³ It is also fairly uncontroversial to observe that the United States has been, and continues to be, the unquestioned leader in Asia. If competition between China and Japan over soft power is not important, does that mean that leadership is also unimportant? And how do we then understand or conceptualize U.S. leadership in Asia and the much-discussed “rebalancing” to the region?

Whether the United States, China, or Japan can lead the Asian century is an open question without a clear answer. But using the concept of soft power could have led Sun into a truly fascinating discussion of these other concepts: difficult to measure, for sure, but also probably central to explaining the drivers of stability or instability in the region. The future of East Asian relations may not depend purely on a military balance of power or how economic relations develop. Rather, whether the region continues to be stable or slides into conflict may depend more on how states sort out regional leadership and on their views of themselves and others.

For example, the United States is naturally viewed as a hegemon not only in Asia but also globally. Although military predominance is an element of this leadership, few would argue that the U.S. pivot to Asia can be successful if it is a purely military strategy. Rather, American leadership is based on a set of clear values that the United States espouses, a vigorous economic agenda, and the belief of other countries that such leadership and authority is in some sense legitimate. To the extent that Washington pursues a multifaceted strategy,

¹ John G. Ikenberry and Charles A. Kupchan, “Socialization and Hegemonic Power,” *International Organization* 44, no. 3 (1990): 283.

² David C. Kang and Leif Eric Easley, “The Role of the United States in the International Relations of East Asia: Still a Leader?” in *Korea and East Asia: The Stony Road to Collective Security*, ed. Rüdiger Frank and John Swenson-Wright (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 90.

³ Christopher M. Dent, *China, Japan and Regional Leadership in East Asia* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2008).

there is likely to be widespread regional acquiescence to a continued robust U.S. economic, diplomatic, and military presence.

By these criteria, then, China has a long way to go to establish itself as a leader. Although China may possess soft power and already be the largest economic and military power in East Asia, it carries no cultural or political legitimacy as a leading state. Aside from the value of economic growth for its citizens, China espouses few other values that other countries wish to emulate or share. In the distant past, China may have been the source of a long-lasting civilization in East Asia, but today it has no more civilizational influence in Asia than does modern Greece in Europe. Few contemporary East Asian states or peoples look to China for cultural innovation, national values, or practical solutions to present problems. Although China promotes its own soft power and leadership, there is a real question as to whether other countries will accept it.⁴

Can Japan lead Asia? Today, there appears to be little evidence to support a positive assessment of that question. As recently as five years ago, one could argue that Japan was mired in a slump from which it would emerge, and that its inherent economic dynamism, democratic values, and close relationship with the United States would make it a natural East Asian leader. But today that appears far from the case. For Japan to compete with China for leadership, it needs to have a national vision for itself as well as a vision for the region. It is important to note, for example, that Taiwan makes the same territorial claims to the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands that China does. Japan's increasingly vigorous claims on these and other disputed territories appear more defensive than proactive, and concerns about a "Galapagos syndrome" of a rich and stable, yet aging and increasingly inward-looking, Japan are more compelling today than they were a decade earlier.

In conclusion, with *Japan and China as Charm Rivals*, Sun has performed an admirable service by deeply exploring the concept of soft power and carefully questioning how such power manifests itself in East Asia. Soft power is often imputed with far more influence than can be shown, and it is surprisingly hard to define. Yet concepts related to soft power, such as leadership, legitimacy, and status, remain central to the way in which scholars and policymakers discuss the goals of East Asian countries. Indeed, the concept of soft power is so resilient precisely because it captures, however poorly, an aspect of international relations that is intuitively plausible: values, ideas, perceptions, and beliefs are as important to foreign relations as is the military balance.

⁴ David C. Kang, *East Asia Before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 169.

China's Charm Offensive—Frustrations and Implications

Robert G. Sutter

In *Japan and China as Charm Rivals: Soft Power in Regional Diplomacy*, Jing Sun sets forth a systematic and insightful assessment of the efforts of China and Japan to develop and exert soft power on one another and in nearby East and Southeast Asia, significantly advancing our understanding of international dynamics in this important part of the world. With clear language, careful use of terminology, and logical presentation, Sun provides an effective definition of the soft power employed by Tokyo and Beijing, viewing the state apparatus as especially important in both countries' efforts at image-building in order to seek diplomatic and other goals. He finds that both governments more often than not have had a hard time achieving their respective goals, even as they sometimes compete with one another for influence in Asia and beyond. Readers will benefit from Sun's treatment of the concept of soft power; the role of the state in image-building, which naturally overlaps with state-directed propaganda and public-diplomacy efforts; and the limited effectiveness—and the reasons for such mediocre results—of Chinese and Japanese efforts to charm one another as well as neighbors in Southeast Asia, South Korea, and Taiwan.

China's Frustration

The volume shows significant frustration emerging among China's leaders in recent years. Chinese authorities have been disappointed by the limited results achieved by their strong efforts in the post-Cold War period to develop and enhance China's soft power through a well-publicized and generously funded "charm offensive" in Asia. This review delves more deeply into Sun's rightful attention to such frustration and its broader implications.

The scope of Sun's study is the relationships among the soft-power efforts of China and Japan and their targets—notably each others' elite and public opinion as well as elite and public opinion in neighboring countries. In the case of China, this reviewer argues that to understand the depth of frustration in China and the broader implications of the mediocre results of its image-building efforts, one needs also to examine the impact of such image-building on China's domestic elite and public opinion. Such an examination

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is deemed particularly important as domestic opinion increasingly influences the contemporary foreign policy decision-making of comparatively weak Chinese leaders, who are far removed from the strongman politics of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping.

Image-building in foreign affairs has featured throughout the history of the People's Republic of China (PRC). It has involved attentive efforts by the foreign ministry; an array of other government, party, and military organizations that deal with foreign affairs; various ostensibly nongovernmental organizations with close ties to the Chinese government, party, and military offices; and the massive publicity or propaganda apparatus of the Chinese administration. The opinions of these officials and nongovernmental representatives and media accounts provide sources used by international journalists, scholars, and officials in assessing Chinese foreign policy. On the whole, these groups endeavor to boost China's international stature while they condition people in China to think positively about their country's foreign relations.

Consistent with Sun's analysis, the effectiveness of such image-building abroad has been limited and often ephemeral, especially given the all-too-frequent and hard-to-predict sharp turns in Chinese behavior involving the use of intimidation, coercion, threats, and violence toward neighbors and other powers (notably, the United States) actively involved along China's periphery. Sun says that China's recent row with Japan and assertive territorial claims in the South China Sea "expose the difficulty of curbing ambition for the sake of placating neighbors" (p. 171). He further notes that "such wrestling is likely to continue, and that with the continued rise of hard power, the balance may tip toward fists rather than smiles," as seen in China's recent behavior toward Japan and Southeast Asian countries that dispute Chinese maritime territorial claims.

In contrast, however, image-building has been effective in shaping domestic Chinese elite and public opinion by conditioning it to repeatedly hear and see, and seemingly believe, the following salient assertions about Chinese foreign policy:

- China's foreign policy is consistent in following principles in dealing with foreign issues that assure a moral position in Chinese foreign relations.
- Abiding by principles and seeking moral positions provide the basis for effective Chinese strategies in world affairs.
- Such strategies ensure that China does not make mistakes in foreign affairs, an exceptional position reinforced by the fact that the PRC

is seen as having avoided publicly acknowledging foreign-policy mistakes or apologizing for its actions in world affairs.¹

The result is a unique sense of Chinese self-righteous exceptionalism in foreign affairs that is widely supported by Chinese elite and public opinion. This exceptionalism exceeds even that of the United States. One reason for this belief is the continuing need for the Chinese Communist Party–led system to sustain its legitimacy partly through an image of correct behavior in foreign affairs that is consistent with Chinese-supported principles. Another reason is that while there have been recent debates on foreign policy in Chinese media, they fail to deal well with the country’s legacy of egregious coercion, intimidation, violence, and other malfeasance. Unlike in the United States, no corrective is provided by elections, free media, or legitimate political opposition.

In sum, the Chinese party-state apparatus, which fosters a positive image of China’s foreign relations with the countries of nearby Asia and elsewhere, strongly influences thinking among the Chinese public and elites. This image is so far from reality that it is very difficult for China to acknowledge the grievances and concerns of neighbors and other involved powers, such as the United States, over past and recent Chinese assertiveness, coercion, violence, and other disruptions. If a problem emerges in China’s relations with a neighboring country over such sensitive issues as competing sovereignty claims or security threats, domestic opinion sees the problem as residing with the other party or with some other circumstance, but certainly not with China. Such myopic thinking comes in tandem with the efforts of the Chinese government to foster a worldview of strong nationalistic resentment and firm resolve against the exploitation of Chinese weaknesses by foreign powers in the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries. This so-called victim mentality is accompanied in turn by other patterns of thinking about international affairs fostered by the state that prompt Chinese elite and public opinion to engage in “worst case” assessments when evaluating U.S. policies and actions, leading them to overreact to perceived foreign actions, notably in the many areas of nearby Asia sensitive to China’s acute patriotism.²

¹ Denny Roy, *China’s Foreign Relations* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), 36–39; Samuel S. Kim, “China’s International Organizational Behaviour,” in *Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, ed. Thomas W. Robinson and David Shambaugh (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 401–5; and Harry Harding, “China’s Changing Role in the Contemporary World,” in *China’s Foreign Relations in the 1980s*, ed. Harry Harding (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 177–79.

² Robert Sutter, “China’s Self-Absorbed Nationalism—It’s Worse Than It Looks,” Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), PacNet, no. 53, August 23, 2012.

The bottom line is that Chinese leaders, with the strong support of elite and public opinion conditioned by the Chinese state's image-building efforts in foreign affairs, are unlikely to accept Sun's detached and comprehensive analysis of why recent costly and strenuous efforts to develop and use soft power in order to influence China's neighbors have achieved such meager results. The Chinese administration, along with elite and public opinion, remains acutely unable to acknowledge foreign-policy mistakes, to understand how China's past and recent assertive and disruptive actions have influenced the perspectives and increased the wariness of neighboring countries and the United States, and to deal realistically with contemporary disputes. Existing circumstances mean that we are more likely to see a continuation and perhaps a strengthening of this tendency to place blame elsewhere for the failure of China's recent charm offensive to achieve good results. Given this widely accepted Chinese worldview, which provides worst-case analysis of actions by the United States when it becomes more involved in issues of concern to China, we should expect Chinese leaders, with the strong support of the thoroughly conditioned Chinese elite and public opinion, to place a large share of blame at the United States' doorstep. Such actions will add to the long list of public Sino-American disputes that undermine the ability of the world's two most important powers to cooperate in supporting order and development in the 21st century.

Same Bed, Different Dreams: China and Japan as Soft-Power Rivals

Weston S. Konishi

Readers of Jing Sun's new book *Japan and China as Charm Rivals: Soft Power in Regional Diplomacy* may expect it to deliver a conclusive verdict on who is winning the image war between China and Japan. That kind of pronouncement, however, is not found here. Rather than producing another treatise on Sino-Japanese competition per se, Sun mostly focuses on the contrasting challenges facing Beijing and Tokyo as they have sought to win the hearts and minds of neighboring countries over the past several decades.

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This is probably the wiser angle to take, given that the very premise of a head-to-head soft-power rivalry between China and Japan is problematic. As Sun rightly points out, China's main soft-power objective has been to reassure neighbors that it is a rising yet unthreatening superpower, while Japan's main objective has been to persuade regional states that it still is in fact a superpower. Given these vastly different goals, a soft-power rivalry between China and Japan, in the strictest sense, seems contrived. It is even more difficult, then, to assess who is winning and losing the competition.

Largely sidestepping this problem, Sun turns his attention to academic themes that may or may not be compelling to a broad readership. Sun argues that the current discourse on soft power has devolved into a conceptually messy hodgepodge of international relations theory and popular culture. He reminds us to refocus attention on the "power" side of the equation, and more specifically on the role of state actors (i.e., governments and their leaders) in crafting diplomatic strategies aimed at wooing countries.

Here is where the contrasts between China's and Japan's soft power come into sharp relief. Sun highlights these differences in chapters that examine the postwar history of China's and Japan's charm strategies toward Southeast Asia, South Korea, and Taiwan. In each case study, Beijing's and Tokyo's approaches to soft power exhibit distinct advantages and disadvantages. Japan can appeal to the democratic values and normative aspirations of target nations. China's value system, by contrast, has been a harder sell, although its ability to lavish resources on recipient nations may give it the upper hand over an increasingly resource-drained and politically flat-footed Japan.

In the case of Southeast Asia, Sun illustrates how neither Japan nor China enjoyed much soft-power capital as the region struggled to emerge from the colonial era and obtain greater independence from dominant outside powers. A turning point occurred in 1977, when Japanese prime minister Takeo Fukuda announced a new diplomatic initiative that would combine economic aid with a renewed emphasis on an "equal partnership" with the region. The Fukuda Doctrine thus appealed to Southeast Asia's normative yearning for equality and provided an attractive non-Western model for economic growth. Although this approach proved largely successful at turning around Japan's postwar image, Sun argues that over the past two decades Japan's soft power in Southeast Asia has faded along with its economic prowess.

China, on the other hand, took longer to develop an effective charm offensive toward Southeast Asia. The Asian financial crisis in 1997, however, provided an opportunity for Beijing to score soft-power points in the region by deciding not to devalue its currency (a move it lauded as "self-sacrificing")

and by emphasizing China's respect for many of the principles eventually embodied in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), such as equality, multilateralism, and noninterference in the internal affairs of other states. Meanwhile, China has become the economic engine of growth in the region, leading Sun to conclude that "the momentum is on China's side" as it overtakes Japan for influence in Southeast Asia (p. 81).

History, not surprisingly, is another major handicap for Japan's soft-power ambitions, but Sun asserts that China's own legacy as an imperial hegemon continues to cast a shadow over its contemporary relations in the region. This means that neither country can claim significant soft-power gains with a nation such as South Korea, which warily resists both Chinese and Japanese charm offensives as potential threats to its self-identity and independence. Similarly, in Taiwan, Sun sees Japan as enjoying a soft-power edge over China due to lingering distrust and declining affinity toward the mainland giant. Seen in this light, China does not seem to be the unremitting soft-power juggernaut it appears to be in Joshua Kurlantzick's *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power is Transforming the World*.

Yet not all of Sun's arguments are convincing. Although his book is in part meant to critique popular culture as an effective soft-power tool, I doubt it will be the final word in that debate. It is true that Hello Kitty is a ludicrous ambassador of Japanese soft power and that the proliferation of China's Confucius Institutes has not markedly improved that nation's image in the West. But does popular culture really play a negligible role in the soft-power arena, as Sun suggests? It is possible that the impact of such power is subtle yet not inconsequential.

For one thing, how can one country build popular affinity with another if its culture is completely unknown to the recipient society? Is it not easier for states to propagandize stereotypes of other states (what Sun calls "othering") when exposure to outside cultures is limited? And if popular culture is such an impotent soft-power tool, then why have regimes from the Tokugawa shogunate (*bakufu*) in Japan to the Kim dynasty in North Korea closed themselves off to foreign cultures out of a desperate fear of losing political control and legitimacy? Sun's thesis does not put these questions to rest.

Further, who is to say that the Confucius Institutes that Sun claims are so ineffective today will not prove more successful over the long run? Few would expect these language and culture centers to have an immediate impact. Instead, they might be viewed as investments in the future, with soft-power dividends materializing years or even generations from now.

The most compelling part of this book is its conclusion, where Sun turns away from his "historicization" of regional charm offensives to address more

recent developments. His description of Japan's foray into values diplomacy (*kachikan gaiko*) is one of the most nuanced I have read, although I wish he had devoted more than a few pages at the end of his book to the subject. The story of how Japan tried—and ultimately failed—to promote universal values along an “arc of freedom and prosperity” is one that deserves more attention from scholars of Sun's caliber.

Sun also describes 2008, the year of the Beijing Olympics, as a kind of *annus horribilis* of Chinese soft-power ambitions, as increased international scrutiny of China's human rights record dampened the public relations bounce Beijing hoped to achieve as host of the games. Yet China's heavy-handed approach to recent territorial disputes with Japan and other neighboring nations in the South China Sea has arguably caused even more self-inflicted damage to its reputation, threatening to dismantle the image of “peaceful development” that China has so carefully constructed over the years.

Here, too, more than just a few concluding thoughts are warranted. Sun argues convincingly that domestic pressures at home affect approaches to soft power abroad, and that China's decision to sacrifice its peaceful-development image to assert its territorial claims was domestically driven. But what does that tell us about China's long-term strategic intentions and the ability of its leaders to resist nationalist impulses for the sake of regional and global stability? Sun ominously notes that as China's hard power rises, the country may turn to “fists rather than smiles” in the exercise of its national interests (p. 171).

These are not small themes to end on, and they raise numerous other questions about the nature of soft power and its relation to the projection of hard power, particularly in the context of Asia's evolving strategic dynamics. One key question is whether soft power is an accurate reflection of the trajectory of hard power or merely spin—putting a smiling face on a clenched fist, as perhaps is the case with China, or masking the gradual decline of hard power, as may be the case with Japan. Further, what do the narratives embedded in soft-power messaging tell us about the prospects for regional peace and stability? In other words, how do we ensure that the “China threat” thesis Sun attributes to Japan and the “encirclement” conspiracy espoused by China do not become self-fulfilling prophecies that lead us down the road to inevitable conflict?

Sun does an admirable job examining the evolution of soft power in the Asia Pacific, but *Japan and China as Charm Rivals* leaves us yearning for more analysis of the momentous power shifts—both hard and soft—currently shaping the region. In the introduction, Sun explains that this book is the first step toward a more comprehensive study of soft power that he intends

to undertake. By that, I hope he means to delve deeper into the complex power dynamics rapidly unfolding in what is certain to be the Asian century.

Soft-Power Diplomacy: A New Perspective on the Study of Chinese and Japanese Foreign Policy

Sheng Ding

Since Harvard professor Joseph Nye coined the term “soft power,” this important conceptual approach to understanding and practicing international relations has been increasingly embraced by academics and policymakers in many countries, especially Japan and China. During the last two decades, China, as a rising power on the global stage, has been developing and presenting its evolving foreign strategy. At the same time, Japan has been defining its new statecraft to reinvigorate its stagnant economy and manage often tumultuous relationships with its Asian neighbors. Against this backdrop, the idea of soft power has become an attractive approach to foreign policy for the policymakers in both states. Arguably, no other states have paid more attention to the idea of soft power than Japan and China. Jing Sun’s book *Japan and China as Charm Rivals: Soft Power in Regional Diplomacy* is thus a timely and important addition to the understanding of this concept. The book tells a story of how the governments and leaders of Japan and China seek to protect and enhance their national interests through diplomatic maneuvering such as wooing, persuading, and setting examples. Sun provides insightful analysis and a refreshing perspective on Chinese and Japanese foreign policies as well as the two states’ bilateral relationship.

Most scholars have analyzed soft power by focusing only on either the sources of such power (the structuralist model) or the behaviors of power-wielding (the behaviorist model). In structuralist terms, soft power is thought of as a collection of attributes that make a state attractive or pivotal in the eyes of other states. In behaviorist terms, soft power is thought of as a state’s ability—i.e., its capacity achieved from attraction and agenda-setting—to influence the behavior of others to get the outcomes it wants. Yet a state’s soft-power

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resources will not automatically translate into its desired policy outcomes. Many soft-power analysts fail to answer this important question: how do we know that a change in one state's foreign policy behavior is caused by another state's use of soft power and not by something else? It is thus important to establish a mechanism of power conversion in the study of soft power—that is, how the appeal of a state's values, the legitimacy of its foreign policy, and the attractiveness of its culture result in its desired policy outcomes with another state. To some extent, Sun's analytical approach bridges the gap between the assessment of the source of soft power and the policy outcomes resulting from such power by observing the interactions among three images: an image based on values, a diplomatic image based on the legitimacy of foreign policy, and a popular image based on cultural and commercial products (p. 10).

Foreign policies are formulated and implemented in international and domestic contexts that are essential to a state's policy options and outcomes. A state's sources and uses of soft power must be understood and reconceptualized on their own terms rather than in American terms. Therefore, it is imperative for the scholars of soft power to establish empirical connections between Nye's definition of soft power and their case studies. Unfortunately, many soft-power analysts have superficially applied Nye's analysis of American soft power to their own case studies and neglected to place the concept in the proper international and domestic contexts. Sun's thesis avoids this mistake by introducing the notion of "recipient context" in the introduction. Throughout the book, Sun stresses that the government and leaders of Japan and China have embraced the idea of soft power and conducted soft power-based diplomacy on their own terms. In empirical discussions, Sun spares no effort to emphasize the importance of two variables—historical experience and the domestic agendas of both wooing states and targeted states. If a wooing state has a good grasp of these two intervening factors and contextualizes its diplomatic campaigns, it can achieve more successful policy outcomes from the targeted states.

However, in spite of Sun's persuasive thesis, there are several issues in the book that this reviewer felt could benefit from further analysis. One is that China is either the most important or the second-most important state for Japan's domestic and international agendas, while Japan is the second-most important state for China's foreign relations. In this manner, each has become not only an important recipient state for the other's soft power but also an external factor in how both states wield such power toward other states. Sun rightly points out the interactive nature of these two states' use of soft power in his discussions of their diplomatic campaigns toward three targets—Southeast Asian states, South Korea, and Taiwan. Sun is also correct in arguing that soft

power can be as competitive as hard power. Yet he confuses the fundamental conceptual difference between the two forms of power. If state power is wielded in a confrontational manner, as described by Sun, it has nothing to do with wooing, persuading, and exempling. It is hard power, not soft power.

Furthermore, while the three selected case studies—Southeast Asia, South Korea, and Taiwan—involve very important states in both China's and Japan's soft power-based diplomacy, they are not as important to either country as the United States. Both Japan and China have effortlessly wielded their soft power toward the United States. To his credit, Sun admits the importance of the United States for China and Japan and tries to explain why he did not include it as a case study. According to Sun, neither China nor Japan has comprehensive global political, economic, and military presence. He argues that both states' diplomacy has regional focus in East and Southeast Asia. However, his explanations are not convincing. For example, China has surpassed the United States as a trading partner in much of the world. In 2011, China was the larger trading partner for 124 countries, versus just 76 for the United States.¹ Likewise, since 2004, Hanban, a nonprofit organization funded by the Chinese government, has founded four hundred Confucius Institutes and over five hundred Confucius Classrooms in 108 countries in collaboration with local educational institutions.² Therefore, China does have comprehensive global economic and cultural presence, through which Chinese soft power is in competition with U.S. soft power. Sun's book would have thus benefited from a chapter about Japan's and China's soft power-based diplomacy campaigns toward the United States.

A third area worthy of further deliberation is the role of nonstate actors. The author's conceptual discussions of soft power are based on reasoning in a classical realist paradigm. The author believes that only statist actors such as governments and leaders, not nonstate actors, possess hard power and soft power. However, there are many examples of the Chinese and Japanese governments and leaders being wooed and persuaded as a result of the soft power of nonstate actors. For example, the Chinese government has become increasingly attentive to the impact of its human rights record and foreign policies toward developing countries on China's national image. This change is mainly attributed to the global campaigns that have been launched by many

¹ Joe McDonald and Youkyung Lee, "China Overtaking U.S. as Global Trader," Associated Press, December 3, 2012.

² Qu Yingpu, Zhao Huanxin, and Cheng Yingqi, "Confucius Institutes Go Beyond Borders," *China Daily*, December 3, 2012 ~ http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/life/2012-12/03/content_15979849.htm.

nongovernmental individuals and groups operating across borders and beyond the reach of governments.

A final point in need of further analysis is the division of national image into three separate parts—the state image, the diplomatic image, and the popular image. Sun believes that cultural and commercial products that exemplify a state's popular image are the least effective sources of soft power, whereas values that contribute to the state image and a foreign policy that improves diplomatic image are the most effective. He argues that China's fast-growing global network of cultural institutions, such as the Confucius Institutes, and Japan's popular commercial products offer little help to either state's soft-power diplomacy. However, Sun does not persuasively explain how a state's national image can be divided into three separate parts. The appeal of a state's values, the legitimacy of its foreign policy, and the attractiveness of its culture are inseparable components of soft power, and the three images corresponding to them—state image, diplomatic image, and popular image—should not be disjoined from each other.

Overall, the book answers to a great extent the question of how governments and leaders seek to protect and enhance national interests through diplomatic maneuvering based in soft power. Sun makes a commendable contribution to this subject and provides a useful foundation for future conceptual discussions and empirical studies. Not only is this book a must-read for scholars studying soft power, but it is also particularly useful for those who study Chinese or Japanese foreign policy, Sino-Japanese relations, and international relations in East Asia.

**The Journey Home:
How to House Soft Power in Mainstream IR Scholarship**

Jing Sun

Let me begin my response by thanking *Asia Policy* for featuring this roundtable of my book *Japan and China as Charm Rivals: Soft Power in Regional Diplomacy*. I would also like to thank the six established scholars who took the time to read my book carefully and engage with it critically.

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I am humbled by their kind words of approval and enlightened by their balanced criticisms.

The purpose of this response is to create a conversation. When an author is offered the rare chance to respond to reviews, there is usually a tendency for self-justification. This is not surprising; authors want their arguments to be accurately understood and, better yet, convincing. Inevitably, this response will include activities of this nature. But I want to highlight something else upfront—these reviews indeed make me better realize what I have achieved and have yet to achieve through this project. Despite the tremendous amount of time and efforts invested in the writing of an academic book, an author may not necessarily acquire a commanding view of where his work stands in the field. To accomplish this goal, fellow scholars' critical reflections are crucial. So, in essence, this response is about what I have learned from these stellar colleagues.

My review will have three parts. I will first offer some background information on the book's genesis. In the second part, I will discuss where the six reviewers seem to concur with each other on the book's value. In the third part, I will examine their criticisms and suggestions. In doing so, I will also offer my own thoughts on the future direction of scholarship on soft power. For the second and third parts, instead of addressing the reviews one by one, I will reorganize them by theme.

Background Information: A Book as a Wake-up Call

As a former journalist and a China-born Japan specialist, I follow the politics of these two countries closely. The triggering factor of this book was a news story I read on a Chinese professor who proposed a “dragon ban,” suggesting that the government should ban public displays of dragons because the image would hurt the credibility of China's “peaceful rise.” It did not take long for me to connect this proposal with the concept of “soft power,” for much of the Chinese coverage framed this and similar stories as part of China's effort to enhance its *ruanshili* (soft power). I also noticed that the Japanese fascination with soft power was no less fervent. Be it “cool” or “beautiful,” politicians and pundits all attempted to come up with jazzy adjectives to decorate the word “Japan.” One way or another, they claimed that Japan was still powerful because it was attractive. Apparently, both China and Japan were treating soft power as a new Western panacea to help them either reinterpret realities or meet new challenges. The concept's creator, Harvard professor Joseph Nye, has become a frequent guest of the governments, think tanks, and media outlets in these two countries.

My original intent was to document China's and Japan's rapid conversion to soft power, and to explain the impact this concept has exerted on their diplomacies. As my empirical observation and literature-mining proceeded, a pattern indeed began to emerge. But the pattern brought me uneasiness. Popular discussion of soft power focused on culture—iconic commercial products, food, music, and movies, to name just a few aspects. These were unusual candidates for diplomacy yet undeniably fun. But intuitively I was asking myself, are these the essence of soft power? Do they really matter in diplomacy? As a Chinese person who has called the United States home and lived in Japan for an extended period of time, I knew that Chinese food, traditional medicine, Kung Fu, and pandas were popular. But I also knew that China had serious image problems in these two countries. Simply put, popular understanding of soft power did not match diplomatic realities.

This discrepancy was already beginning to reveal itself, and soft power, still a relatively new concept, was losing relevance in what scholars perceived as serious academic inquiries. This realization made me change the purpose of the book. I still wanted to write about soft power, but now I wanted this book to serve as a wake-up call. Soft-power studies tend to present the concept as something utterly new. But to prove that soft power indeed matters, scholars need to cultivate its connections with conventional concepts in international relations (IR). To put it another way, soft-power studies need to join mainstream IR scholarship by using the latter's vocabulary and analytical framework. Otherwise, the concept will not be able to step out of its fun-filled yet small niche market.

How to Embed Soft Power in Mainstream IR

All six reviews seem to concur that one value of the book is its attempt to build meaningful bridges between soft power and more mature concepts in IR, though reviewers highlighted the interconnectedness differently. Such different emphases may have stemmed not only from varied understandings of my book but also from the scholars' own research agendas. From the receiving end, I perceive all these interpretations to be equally sensible. After all, what I attempted to achieve was to show that there are multiple ways to embed soft power in conventional IR literature.

One linkage was to shift the emphasis from the adjective "soft" to the noun "power," for it is the latter that determines the nature of the concept. Practically, this means we need to understand soft power not as foreign policy pageantry inspired by diplomatic sportsmanship. Soft power is not "nice" power; it has

its darker side. At its core, soft power can be as competitive, calculative, and zero-sum as hard power, as Andrew Oros, Lam Peng Er, and David Kang all observed. To woo effectively entails efforts not only to make oneself attractive but also to ostracize someone else—i.e., the “othering” technique that some reviewers, including Weston Konishi and Lam, took notice of.

Another linkage was to bring the state back in—to recognize that it is statist actors (leaders and governments) and not private enterprises, let alone products or cultural traditions, that are essential to promoting soft power. Indeed, all the reviewers took notice of the book’s statist emphasis. To bring the state back in does not require fundamental restructuring of the soft-power concept. Instead, one only needs to go back to the basics. Nye identified three sources of soft power: political values, legitimacy of foreign policy, and popular culture. But these three sources by themselves are merely capabilities that may or may not become relevant to soft power. More importantly, there has been too much popular attention to the cultural component and insufficient attention to the two statist sources. Yet the very fact that the Chinese people could love sushi but hate Koizumi, or Americans may head to Panda Express in cars with “Free Tibet” bumper stickers, reveals that cultural allure may be the least relevant element of soft power, however entertaining its coverage may be.

Bringing the state back in also means studying statist factors that condition the effectiveness of a country’s charm offensive. For example, one needs to study how domestic politics shape soft-power campaigns. Robert Sutter’s review chose this angle. In succinct language, he summarized and deepened my book’s exploration on how Chinese leaders are constrained by a creature they had created in the first place—rampant nationalism supported by the core beliefs that China has never made mistakes in diplomacy, has never harmed anybody, and has always been the victim of either Western powers’ invasions or conspiracies. These bitter feelings would certainly hamper China’s wooing effort. A resentful China would not go hand in hand with a peace-loving, tolerant one. Unfortunately, it is the former image that is looking increasingly convincing to China’s neighbors.

From the Japanese end, Oros points out that Japan’s most daunting challenge to soft power lies in its dearth of political leadership. With frequent leadership changes—seven prime ministers in five years—Japan would have a hard time convincing even its own citizens, let alone foreign observers, that the country’s leaders know what they are doing. At the time of writing this response, Shinzo Abe has just become prime minister again and thus completed the dizzy leadership change cycle he started in 2007. Shigeru Yoshida was the first postwar politician that returned to premiership. But at this stage, Abe is

not comparable to Yoshida other than this superficial similarity. To this author at least, his lackluster past performance does not offer confidence that Abe 2.0 will bring any fundamental change. A more likely scenario, as Kang envisions, is that Japan will continue to suffer the “Galapagos syndrome”—a rich yet rapidly aging and increasingly stale society. Such an image hardly looks enchanting.

There is one more way of bringing state back in—to examine the targeted state rather than to treat it as a passive, in a sense lifeless, entity that could be wooed easily at the will of the wooing state. Multiple reviewers approved of my effort to examine soft power from the receiving end (see Konishi, Ding, and Lam). This emphasis led me to two insights: first, wooing states need to customize rather than launch one-size-fits-all charm offensives; and second, in certain scenarios there is very limited potential for wooing to work because of emotionally resistant recipients (Taiwan for China, for example, or South Korea for China and Japan).

One more linkage would connect soft power with conventional IR studies is history. Studies of soft power remain largely ahistorical. As a result, they offer a façade that soft power is new as both a concept and a strategy. By exclusively focusing on the contemporary, scholars end up competing with journalists in sensationalizing soft power. Constantly chasing a moving target also gets scholars lost in detecting generalizable patterns. In analyzing my case study of Japan’s and China’s efforts to woo Southeast Asia, Lam Peng Er convincingly showed that charm offensives have a much longer history than the concept of soft power does. This is not to deny soft power’s utility but to add to its strength: we can use the concept to make sense of not just unfolding events but also past ones. Historicizing soft power is a crucial step toward meaningful generalization of any pattern.

Criticisms and Suggestions

The six reviewers also raised criticisms and made suggestions that are equally, if not more, insightful to me. They all endorsed my effort to embed soft-power inquiries in more mature IR scholarship. In fact, their criticisms and suggestions are really an extension of this general endorsement: that is, my attempts to link soft power and more familiar IR concepts, though tantalizing, still left many feeling underfed. Consequently, the reviewers suggested how to make more connections on both scope and depth and provided new inspiration to me. Realizing the limit of one single researcher, I also hope that they will inspire other scholars as well in a joint quest to understand soft power’s place in IR studies.

One limit, as Oros and Ding both suggested, is the book's insufficient analysis of the United States' role in shaping Chinese and Japanese diplomacies. Oros contended that the reality in the region is in fact not a two-way charm game between Japan and China but a three-way one, with the United States being the most charming. Ding approached this from a different perspective, arguing that Beijing is already in a global charm competition with Washington.

I accept the validity of their observation that the United States did not play a central role in this study in the sense that there was no one chapter that exclusively examined interplays among the United States, Japan, and China. My focus was clearly on the latter two states and their interactions with neighbors. I also concur that including such a chapter would have added fresh material and made this inquiry more complete. For interested readers, in the introductory chapter I offered my reasons for not treating the United States in more detail than I did. To briefly reiterate, I felt that to assign Washington a more central role would not significantly alter the book's key findings on the importance of engineering by governments and leaders, recipient context, and the overexaggeration of popular culture's influence on soft power. I was also concerned, as explained in the Taiwan chapter, about the tendency to treat Japan's or China's diplomacy toward other countries as a subpart of their respective U.S. policies. My intent was to show that, without denying the weight of the United States, one could meaningfully examine the two countries' policies toward their neighbors. These policies could acquire lives of their own. But Oros's and Ding's suggestions are sensible and they could lead to potentially exciting findings.

Another strand of criticism is about whether the charm game is real—at least in some cases. For example, Lam argued that Taiwan was the case where a Japan-China charm game looked most convincing. However, he was not equally persuaded about such a competition in Southeast Asia and South Korea. Konishi seconded this doubt for another reason: the very different challenges confronting China's and Japan's soft-power campaigns (values versus leadership) made him wonder whether a charm game seemed contrived.

My belief is that the grand rivalry between Japan and China is real. But this rivalry is new and just beginning to take shape. Lam is absolutely right that insofar as wooing Southeast Asia is concerned, Japan and China had different starting points. But once China woke up and caught up, the pattern of the two states vying for regional leadership and their perceptions that such leadership could emerge, at least partially, by creating a greater distance between their wooing target and their archrival, add credibility to the depiction of these relations as a game. This game is quite comprehensive—competitions

in economics and trade are not just about numbers but also about the values and models that account for different results. It is in the latter field that charm becomes relevant. Konishi's astute observation about Japan's and China's different soft-power challenges, in my view, does not necessarily nullify the charm-game thesis. That Japan and China are on different trajectories does not mean the two could not collide. Both states aspire to regional leadership, and this goal, coupled with their overwhelming weight in the region and mutual bitterness, makes a Sino-Japanese rivalry hard to avoid. The current observation that no one is winning does not mean that neither is trying.

Kang's review captured the love-hate attitude that scholars harbor toward soft power. The concept is intuitively plausible but hard to define. This has led to two opposing tendencies: either to exaggerate soft power's utility or to dismiss it. Which position one takes depends on which aspect of the concept one pays attention to: its plausibility or its indefinability. Is there a middle way? The answer is yes, and Kang raised some exciting possibilities—for example, the study of leadership. To establish leadership is such a comprehensive, encompassing project that it certainly requires employing both hard and soft means of diplomacy. Neither fear nor love alone can sustain leadership; both are needed. A middle-way approach starts from the realization that states need a package of might and charm to stay powerful. It is my hope that this realization will lead to a more realistic assessment of soft power—what it can and cannot do. *Japan and China as Charm Rivals* represents my contribution to this quest. After reading the six reviews, I cannot wait to continue this journey. ◆



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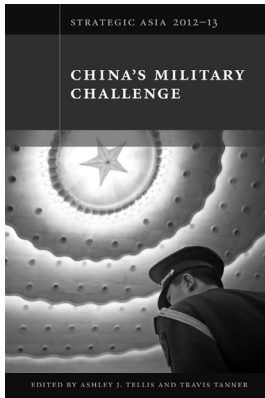
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CHINA'S MILITARY CHALLENGE

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