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**Michael Barr**, *Who's Afraid of China? The Challenge of Chinese Soft Power*. London: Zed Books Ltd, 2011, 154 pp., ISBN 978-1-84813-590-1.

This is a short book about the fear of China's soft power in the West. It is well written and the analysis is easy to follow. The book is comprised of eight chapters. The first chapter examines global reactions to the so-called 'Beijing Consensus', a symbol of Chinese soft power, as a way to introduce the concept of soft power. Chapter 2 describes how the concept is understood within China and explains why China needs soft power. The author then uses the next five chapters to examine specific case studies of Chinese soft power in practice. Chapter 3 analyzes how the Chinese government uses media to promote its international image and reputation. Chapter 4 shows how Confucius, the founder of Confucianism, is branded internationally by the government as a symbol of Chinese culture. Chapters 5 and 6 deal with Chinese political values such as 'harmonious world' and Tianxia ('all-under-heaven') philosophy. Chapter 7 addresses China's domestic and foreign policies on issues such as race, ethnicity and differences. Chapter 8 concludes the book by analyzing the root cause of the fear of China in general.

The book explains the limits of Chinese soft power. For example, the 'Beijing Consensus', a buzzword for the Chinese development model, the author argues, is neither a consensus nor unique to Beijing. According to the author, the basic tenets of the Chinese authoritarian capitalism model were established elsewhere in East Asia before Deng Xiaoping launched the reform and opening policy in 1978. In addition, domestically, the Chinese development model has been under attack for its serious drawbacks including endemic corruption, suppression of freedom of expression and growing income inequality. In fact, many scholars inside China have called for abandoning the so-called Chinese development model.

In China, some scholars argue that culture is the most important source of soft power; the Chinese government supports this view and has recently attached strategic importance to promoting Chinese culture internationally. One of the government's efforts is the establishment of Confucius Institutes (CIs) and Confucius Classrooms (CCs) worldwide. According to the official constitution and by-laws of the CIs, they are non-profit public institutions designed to enhance international understanding of Chinese language and culture and to strengthen educational and cultural exchange between China and other countries. By the end of August 2011, China had established 353 CIs and 473 CCs globally.

Although most CIs have been set up smoothly and without protest, there are some cases of strong resistance and scepticism. For instance, some critics claim that the CIs are linked to Chinese intelligence services. Although no concrete evidence of espionage has been found, the scepticism toward CIs is here to stay. One Swedish parliamentarian wondered how the Chinese government could justify to its own population why it was giving priority to subsidizing Western educational institutions when 'China has 10 million children without a proper school'.

Such limits to Chinese soft power can also be found in other aspects discussed by the author; however, the West still fears Chinese soft power and China's rise in general. Why is this so? The author offers two easy-to-identify reasons. The first is deliberate exaggeration, namely, some politicians will deliberately exaggerate the danger of not taking action in order to boost the legitimacy of the actions they intend to take. It seems this is the case in the allegation of Confucius Institutes engaging in collecting intelligence. In this case, some people are calling for action to stop the establishment of Confucius Institutes in their countries. To legitimate their arguments, they tend to exaggerate the dangers, saying for example, that it will allow the CIs to collect intelligence inside their countries, which may be perceived as dangerous by some people who may then support the actions to be taken.

The second reason is the vehicle fallacy, namely, many China observers in the West tend to equate China's deployment of (soft power) resources with actually getting the desired result (of gaining soft power). This seems true in the case of China's media offensive. In recognition of the dominance of the West in world media, China has committed US\$6.5 billion for the overseas expansion of its main media organization including its Xinhua News Agency, Chinese Central Television, *People's Daily* and China Radio International. One key purpose of this media offensive is to improve China's international image. However, even if such image-building investments do pay off, other actions in China may immediately reduce such a payoff, e.g., when the West saw Chinese top leaders collectively mourn the death of Kim Jong Il.

In addition, the author argues that there is a deeply rooted psychological factor that causes the fear of China, namely, a general perception of a loss of centrality and purpose in the West. This is especially true for those who are preoccupied with maintaining Western hegemony. In the author's view, China has succeeded in many ways in creating the perception at least of something better by combining the Western model with its own; in other words, China offers an alternative that is differ-

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ent from the Western one. Thus, the cause of much threat perception is not just founded on China inventing a new game but rather on China beating the West at its own game. That really unnerves many who are reluctant to do self-examination. In this sense, it may not matter much if China suddenly democratizes, because, even if it did, China would still be seen as a threat. In short, the fear of a rising China reflects the insecurity of the West.

Overall, the book offers a critical and balanced analysis of China's soft power and international reaction to it. After reading this book, both proponents and opponents of the 'China threat theory' will have to rethink their one-sided arguments. China is much more complex than any oversimplified theory can describe and predict. The rise of China will be simultaneously an opportunity and a challenge to the West. To take advantage of the opportunities created by China's rise, China and the West need to cooperate. To deal with the challenge, the West needs a more open attitude to engage China on the one hand, and China needs to make more adjustments in accordance with international norms on the other. By reading this book, one will not become more informed to make predictions about the future relations between China and the West; however, as the author states clearly in the introductory chapter, that is not the aim of the book. The author was wise about the choice for two reasons. For one, China is in transition, albeit a slow one. It is difficult to predict its trajectory. For another, the root cause of the fear of a rising China is the psychology of insecurity in the West that is difficult to change in the short run.

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