Soft Power Determinants in the World and Implications for China: A Quantitative Test of Joseph Nye's Theory on Three Soft Power Resources and of the Positive Peace Argument

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Abstract

Statistical tests are here conducted on two explanations of soft power. One is Joseph Nye's argument that political values, foreign policy and cultural appeals shape soft power, and the other is the positive peace argument which suggests a significant influence of the Global Peace Index (GPI) on soft power. Two measures of soft power are employed – the favourability of major powers in global public opinion polls and the Soft Power 30 Index. The latter gauges the magnitude of soft power. When the former measure, which indicates the positiveness of soft power, is adopted the three soft power resources provide less explanatory power than per capita GDP and especially the GPI. When the Soft Power 30 Index is used, only foreign policy independent of the United States contributes positively to soft power. The GPI and non-soft power-related cultural exports (NSPCE) then take on a negative role because a number of nations in the index achieve very high rankings with a relatively poor GPI or small NSPCE. As far as China is concerned, its ranking in 2018 in the Soft Power 30 Index declined due to impressive improvement among other ranked nations and global public scepticism towards its foreign policy and its cultural exports.

Keywords: *soft power, international relations, positive peace, political freedom, foreign policy, cultural exports*

This article aims to undertake a test on two sets of determinants of soft power. The first is political values, foreign policy and cultural appeals proposed by Joseph Nye; the second is the Global Peace Index (GPI) proposed by the positive peace argument. Two measures of soft power are employed – the favourability of major powers in global public opinion polls and the Soft Power 30 Index. The article fills a gap in the existing literature, that is, the lack of a statistical test of Nye's theory on soft power.

Proposed initially in 1990 by Joseph Nye, a Harvard-based professor in politics, soft power has become a widely discussed concept in global politics. Nye further elaborated on this concept in his frequently cited 2004 book entitled *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*.

When Nye (2004a, 2004b, 2008) expounded his theory on soft power, he was engaging with the discourse on the decline in US power and its unsympathetic reception in various parts of the world. Since then the soft power approach has been taken up by scholars in international relations and beyond. In particular, there has been a growing number of case studies on the soft power of major powers in the world in addition to the United States (Parmar and Cox 2010), such as China (Gill and Huang 2006; Kurlantzick 2007; Li 2008) and the European Union (Cross and Melissen 2013), as well as their successes and challenges. These studies have tended to verify Nye's arguments that hard power, comprising mostly military and secondarily economic power, can hardly determine the influence of a nation-state in the contemporary world and that soft power matters. The existing literature also offers insights into how the image of the countries' image can be shaped by the conduct of foreign policy, public diplomacy (Melissen 2005), media, official propaganda, national narratives (Roselle, Miskimmon and O'Loughlin 2014), as well as by psychology and political and religious beliefs.

However, there is a noticeable gap in the literature on soft power. There has not been a statistical test of Nye's theory on the subject, especially regarding the relevance of the resources he proposed for soft power. This hinders the advancement of knowledge in this area. This article aims to fill that gap; it develops a falsifiable hypothesis out of Nye's theory on resources (or determinants) of soft power and conducts a statistical test of the hypothesis. Measures of soft power and these determinants are employed after much consideration, and the explanatory power of these factors in accounting for the soft power of nations is investigated.

The findings of the article are briefly stated as follows. When the measure of the positiveness of soft power is adopted, the GPI best explains soft power of nations, followed by per capita GDP and, to a lesser extent, the three soft power resources proposed by Nye. When soft power is measured by the Soft Power 30 Index, which comprises both subjective and objective indicators and largely reflects the magnitude of soft power, foreign policy independent of the United States plays a positive role and non-soft power-related cultural exports, to a lesser extent the GPI and possibly political freedom take on a negative role.

While China's soft power has become more visible in recent decades, its progress has been hamstrung by the limited appeals of its practice regarding citizens' rights and of its cultural exports and by its limited capability of peaceful governance of external and domestic affairs.

The rest of the article is organized as follows. First, the existing literature on soft power will be outlined. Then Nye's theory of soft power resources will be examined and testable hypotheses will be constructed. The next section is data analysis, comprising a description of the measures of soft power and Nye's soft power resources, a test of Nye's argument, as well as an exploration of other determinants of soft power. Analyses consist of two rounds, first measuring soft power in terms of favourable impression in global public opinion polls and later utilizing the Portland Soft Power 30 Index. The last part of the article consists of a brief reflection on the findings and a detailed exploration of China's performance.

The Existing Literature on Soft Power

The earliest definition of soft power was proposed by Nye (1990) in his 1990 book *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*: 'when one country gets other countries to want what it wants might be called co-optive or soft power in contrast with the hard or command power of ordering others to do what it wants'. He expounded the concept of soft power and its significance for foreign policy and the effective ways to use soft power in a series of publications (Nye 1991, 2004a, 2004b, 2008), most notably in his 2004 book. Since the 2000s the literature on soft power has expanded rapidly and can be categorized into the following types.

(1) Empirical analyses of the soft power of major powers. Inspired by Nye's theory on soft power, scholars apply the concept in the study of the foreign policy of major powers, especially the United States (Parmar and Cox 2010) and China. Soft power of Japan, India, the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany and the European Union has also been examined. Some studies also investigate the effects of concerns with soft power on US foreign policy. While Keohane and Katzenstein (2007) suggested that anti-American views on international issues had no effect on US policies in scores of nations, another quantitative study found that concerns with soft power did affect US foreign policy (Goldsmith and Horiuchi 2012).

(2) Another body of literature explores theoretically what makes up soft power and how it can be best used. Scholars propose that soft

power could have been augmented by proper public diplomacy, effective political communication and national narratives (Melissen 2005; Roselle, Miskimmon and O'Loughlin 2014). Soft power might also interact with hard power (Nye 2004a: 25–30). Some, including Nye (2009) and Wilson (2008), have argued that smart power, interpreted as smart strategies employing the tools of hard and soft power, is required to combine soft and hard power and best advance a nation's overall power.

(3) The third body of literature largely focuses on the role of media, communications, framing and identity in public impressions of other nations, as well as the spread of political values through education and training. These studies thus relate to the advancement and possible management of soft power of a nation. For example, Manheim and Albritton (1984) found that hired professional public relations firms could play a role in shaping the message of influential media outlets and hence the image of nations. However, their effectiveness could be undermined when their efforts were known publicly and when they were countered by ongoing events (Manheim 1994: 147). Some studies investigated the psychology of the perception of nations by individuals such as through integrated schemas and subliminal priming (Castano, Bonacossa and Gries 2016; Kaneva 2011). Another study suggested that religious identity and worldview directly affected favourability ratings of three regional rivals, namely Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia in the Middle East (Ciftci and Tezcur 2016). Similarly, a study on soft power apropos public opinion in Egypt and Iraq suggested that both ethnic and religious identities affected public attitudes towards Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran and the United States (Kose et al. 2016). An empirical study on the visibility of foreign countries on web portals in 57 countries concluded that democracies judged their similarity in terms of shared democratic principles and that authoritarian countries based their affinity on religious culture (Sheafer et al. 2013). Furthermore, the findings of a quantitative study suggested that exchange programmes of military officers and diplomats hosted by the United States helped to spread liberal values and practices in non-democratic countries (Atkinson 2010).

These studies have enriched our understanding of the concepts and components of soft power, as well as other relevant categories of power such as smart power. They also shed light on the possibility of approaching and analysing soft power from other disciplines such as the media, communications and brand management. Nevertheless, the

original hypotheses in Nye's theory of soft power have yet to be subject to meaningful tests. Given the considerable attention from the academic, policy and news media circles to soft power, this gap is glaring. A test can offer insights into the empirical validity of Nye's theoretical arguments, the sources of soft power and practical means to achieve it. By treating Nye's soft power theory as a falsifiable hypothesis and by subjecting it to statistical tests, we can advance studies of soft power and generate valuable insights for practitioners of diplomacy.

Nye's Theory of Soft Power and Its Resources

In his influential book, Nye (2004a: 5, 7) defines soft power as the ability (usually of a nation-state) to get other nations to do what it wants through co-option instead of coercion, such as military force or inducement in the form of payment. This working definition of soft power is adopted in this article. Soft power, as a co-optive power, operates through 'the attractiveness of one's culture and values or the ability to manipulate the agenda of political choices'. He also suggests that the pursuit of soft power includes attraction and agenda setting (Nye 2004a: 7).

Importantly, Nye identifies three resources of soft power: culture, political values and foreign policies (Nye 2004a: 11, 31). In Nye's view culture that could promote soft power contains universal values and it could be perceived to be 'exciting, exotic, rich, powerful, trend-setting' or to have the 'elementary connotations of freedom, casualness, vitality, liberality, modernity and youthfulness'.[1] He also believes that culture could be transmitted through commerce, such as in exchanges of products and services (Nye 2004a: 13, 33–34). He stresses that political values that could enhance a nation's soft power tend to be those domestic values that appeal to the world. The most important ones are democracy and human rights (Nye 2004a: 55–60). Finally, Nye posits that foreign policy includes public, bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. He contends that for the sake of soft power, its substance and style of foreign policy should be seen as legitimate in the world and should also promote democracy and human rights (Nye 2004a: 60–64). The aim of this article is to test Nye's argument that these three main resources or factors – that is, culture, values and foreign policy – determine soft power. The following hypotheses will be derived and tested:

> H1: Culture, political values and foreign policy affect the attractiveness of a nation (a measure of soft power of a nation).

Measures and Data of Soft Power and Its Resources

Even though Nye does not forcefully expound a measure of soft power, he adopts the percentage of citizens in parts of the world holding a favourable opinion of the United States, the Soviet Union and Western Europe as a key measure of the attractiveness of these major powers (Nye 2004a: 37–38, 74–75, 77). A measure of this kind has been employed by the Pew Research Centre and Gallup International Polls, as well as Goldsmith and Horiuchi (2012). This measure is in line with the national image management approach advanced by Manheim (Ji 2017: 78–79).

In this article, the percentage of the global public with a favourable impression of a given nation is adopted as the first measure of soft power for several reasons (the second measure, the Soft Power 30 Index, will be introduced in the next section). First, the article aims to measure and explain the soft power of the most major nations in the world. Public opinion around the world of these powers are a good, useful and readily available and comparable measure of their soft power. Second, as Ji states, public opinion is a cognitive outcome/effect of the soft power of state actors, and it captures the effects of foreign policy and policy-related outcomes of the behaviour of state actors (Ji 2017: 83–84). Third, the more highly a nation is regarded globally, the more likely the stance and proposals of this nation are heeded and taken upon by other nations, and the greater co-optive power this nation would thus possess. Fourth, this measure has also been employed in several studies related to soft power, such as the aforementioned study of the soft power of Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia in the Middle East (Ciftci and Tezcur 2016).

In order to achieve a considerable sample size for meaningful statistical analyses, global public opinion on 12–16 major powers in 2007, 2013–14 and 2016–17 as revealed in GlobeScan surveys will be used. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) used the GlobeScan poll results to indicate the global standing of the major powers. In contrast, PEW (Pew Global Opinion Project 2007) or Gallup (2016) polls only surveyed world public opinions on four countries, which are too few to carry out regression. Table 1 reports the number of nations on which GlobeScan surveyed global opinion, as well as the actual number of nations being selected for regressional analyses. Table 2 displays these nations and the global public views of them in the three surveys.

TABLE 1. Nations on which global public views were polled in GlobeScan surveys and nations that are included in statistical analyses

Date of Survey	Nov. 2006–Jan. 2007		2014 (mostly during Jan.–Feb.; two nations polled in Dec. 2013–Jan. 2014)		2017	
	Survey	This study	Survey	This study	Survey	This study
Country count	12	10	16	14	16	**14**
	Canada	Canada	Canada	Canada	Canada	Canada
	Japan	Japan	Germany	Germany	Germany	Germany
	France	France	Japan	Japan	Japan	Japan
	UK	UK	France	France	France	France
	China	China	UK	UK	UK	UK
	India	India	China	China	China	China
	USA	USA	Brazil	Brazil	Brazil	Brazil
	Russia	Russia	South Korea	South Korea	South Korea	South Korea
	Israel	Israel	India	India	India	India
	Iran	Iran	South Africa	South Africa	South Africa	South Africa
	North Korea		USA	USA	USA	USA
	Venezuela		Russia	Russia	Russia	Russia
			Israel	Israel	Israel	Israel
			Pakistan	Pakistan	Pakistan	Pakistan
			Iran		Iran	
			North Korea		North Korea	
Number of polled countries*	26		20		18	

Notes: 1) In the surveys, citizens in 18–26 countries were polled about their views towards the 12–16 most influential nations in the world. The sole reason for the inclusion of the 10, 14 and 14 influential nations in the statistical analysis for 2006–7, 2014 and 2017, respectively, are due to available data on independent variables. 2) * This number is used in calculating the average of AvFavour% and NAvFavour%. 3) Sources: BBC 2007; GlobeScan 2014, 2017.

TABLE 2. The average percentage of the public across the surveyed nations with a favourable view or net favourable view (percentage of favourable views minus that of unfavourable views) towards the most influential nations in GlobeScan surveys

	Favourable (Favourability Score)	Net Favourable (Net Favourability Score)	Favourable (Favourability Score)	Net Favourable (Net Favourability Score)	Favourable (Favourability Score)	Net Favourable (Net Favourability Score)
Survey Year	2017	2017	2014	2014	2006–7	2006–7
Canada	0.61	0.46	0.57	0.42	0.54	0.4
Germany	0.59	0.38	0.6	0.42		
Japan	0.56	0.32	0.49	0.19	0.54	0.34
France	0.52	0.29	0.5	0.28	0.5	0.29
UK	0.51	0.26	0.56	0.35	0.45	0.17
China	0.41	-0.01	0.42	0	0.42	0.1
Brazil	0.38	0.08	0.45	0.19		
South Korea	0.37	0.01	0.38	0.04		
India	0.37	-0.02	0.38	0.02	0.37	0.11
South Africa	0.36	0.03	0.39	0.08		
USA	0.34	-0.15	0.42	0.03	0.3	-0.21
Russia	0.29	-0.2	0.31	-0.14	0.28	-0.12
Israel	0.25	-0.25	0.24	-0.26	0.17	-0.39
Pakistan	0.18	-0.4	0.16	-0.42		
Iran					0.18	-0.36
	Favourable		Net Favourable			
Total	38		38			
Mean	0.404		0.061			
Standard deviation	0.128		0.255			

Sources: BBC 2007; GlobeScan 2014, 2017.

Notes: Data are expressed in decimal points instead of percentages. Readers can readily convert them into percentages. For example, 0.61 for Canada in the second column in 2017 in the table would be 61 per cent, denoting an average percentage of the public across nations who viewed Canada favourably.

Two dependent variables are derived to measure the soft power of these influential nation-states: 1) the averaged percentage of the public across the surveyed nations that held a favourable view of the mentioned nation-states (AvFavour%); 2) the net percentage of the public across the surveyed nations that had a favourable view of the influential nation-states (NAvFavour%), derived by subtracting the average percentage of the public across the nations with an unfavourable view of the selected nations from that with a favourable view.

Both of these two indicators of soft power will be regressed on indicators of Nye's three resources of soft power. The measures of the three resources of soft power are as follows.

(1) The measure of exports of the creative (cultural) industries, weighted by the size of the economy (gross domestic product, or GDP) of the influential nation (CultureExp). This will be an indicator of the appeal of the culture of the major powers in the world. This measure is inspired by Nye's frequent mention of worldwide appeal and exports of cultural products and services and his citing of the United States as the largest exporter of films, TV programmes and music products in his discussion of the effects of culture on soft power (Nye 2004a: 33–34). Exports of creative industries are a wider category than the exports of cultural services such as films. According to the UNCTAD (2018: 9–10), the main goods from the creative industries include design, fashion and film, and the global sales for creative goods more than doubled from $208 billion to $509 billion during 2002–15. The volume of exports of the creative industries is thus a valuable measure of the global influence and reach of cultural products of one nation. The available data are for the period 2005–14 (UNCTAD 2018). Exports of creative industries capture the parts of cultural exports that could shape the external impression and hence the soft power the exporting nation.

(2) The measure of political values. Political values are measured by the Freedom House rating of political freedom (PolFreedom) (Freedom House, 2019). Since 1972, Freedom House has been publishing annually the political freedom scores of nations and territories worldwide by ranking the state of civil and political rights of nations and territories on a scale from most free (1) to least free (7).

(3) The measure of national stance on key foreign policy issues, reflected by the way the nation voted on key resolutions at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and captured by the percentage of agreement of the nation's votes on key resolutions with the United States at

the UNGA (ForPolStances). The annual reports by the US State Department recorded these data. This indicator measures the agreement or divergence of a nation's foreign policy over issues of vital importance to the United States. This indicator attracts such high attention from the US government that according to US law the United States State Department has been tracking and reporting this indicator on all nations annually to the US Congress (US State Department 2006). Goldsmith and Horiuchi (2012: 570–571) used this measure as an indicator of the foreign policy of nations in their study. This study follows that practice. This indicator gauges the similarities or differences of the key diplomatic stances of these nations, though with reference to the United States. For example, similar scores of two nations (such as Canada and Germany) suggest that they adopted similar positions over key diplomatic issues, whereas their divergent scores would signify contrasting stances on these key issues.

For all the aforementioned three variables, the scores from 2015, 2012 and 2005 are used to explain the global favourability score (or the net favourability score) of the influential nations in 2017, 2014 and 2006–7, respectively. The only exception is the exports of the creative industries. For this variable, data in 2014 – the latest year when data on the variable are available – is used instead of 2015. As the score of these three independent variables (or determinants of soft power) is from a year earlier than the global favourability score (or the net score) in the regression analysis, the effects of determinants of soft power on global favourability of the selected nation will be observed. Table 3 provides the summary statistics of the measures of soft power and of the three resources.

TABLE 3. Summary statistics of the measures of the three soft power resources

Variable	Average	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Favourability	0.404	0.128	0.16	0.61
Net Favourability	0.061	0.255	-0.42	0.46
Foreign Policy Stance	0.652	0.322	0	1
Political Freedom	2.447	1.941	1	6.5
Exports of Creative industries to GDP	0.0058	0.0054	0.00037	0.024
Per Capita GDP in 2010 US$	26401	18868	1007	52099
Global Peace Index	2.101	0.567	1.287	3.106

Note: For political freedom, 1 represents the freest nation and 7 the least free nation; for the GPI, 1.287 was the score of the most peaceful nation and 3.106 the most violent nation recorded.

It is difficult to undertake panel data analysis for a number of reasons: 1) The number of nations on which global views were polled in the three GlobeScan surveys and whose data on independent variables are available is uneven, ranging from 10 to 14; 2) The countries whose data are available for analysis across three years total nine, reducing the number to only 27 cases. Therefore, the 38 nations are pooled together in order to produce an adequate number of observations. This approach is practical and sensible, since the averaged global favourability and net favourability of these 10–14 nations changed considerably in the three surveys, since their resources of soft power changed during the 2006–17 period, and since the primary goal of this study is to uncover the effects of culture, values and foreign policy on a nation's global popularity over a period of six or seven years (2006–7, 2013–14 and 2017).

Analyses

Regression Analyses and Findings

The results of the regression of the favourable percentage in the global polls are reported in Table 4, while those regarding the net favourable percentages in the polls are reported in Table 7 in the Appendix – as the results of the latter resemble the former in many ways. Model 1 in Table 4 corresponds with Model 1b in Table 7. As Model 1 in Table 4 suggests, two of the three soft power resources could help to explain some variation of the first power measures, reflected in the coefficient, the standard error and the level of statistical significance. Specifically, the proxy of political values (the political freedom score) and, to a lesser extent, of cultural attractiveness (measured by the ratio of exports of creative industries to GDP) have some explanatory power. It suggests that greater political freedom (or a higher degree of democracy, as reflected in a lower political freedom score) and a high volume of exports as weighed by GDP can help increase a nation's soft power. In particular, political freedom scores reach the statistical significance of 0.001, whereas the indicator of exports of creative industries achieves significance of 0.05–0.01. However, and surprisingly, the indicator of foreign policy fails to attain statistical significance in Models 1 and 1b. Model 1 is also statistically significant at the 0.001 level. Models 1 and 1b can explain roughly 37 per cent of the variation in these two measures of soft power (Tables 4 and 7). It is a decent but not very strong performance.

Efforts are also made to avoid multicollinearity in the regression. Regression was operated in Stata SE 16.0. It has variance inflation factor (VIF) to detect collinearity. When an independent variable has a VIF value over 5, it suggests serious collinearity. In this case, omission of the variable is necessary. In Table 4 the VIF values of all independent variables in all the models are reported in parentheses for the sake of detecting and remedying collinearity. In Model 1 in Table 4, no independent variables have VIF over 5. Nevertheless, it is possible the measures of soft power could also be influenced by the wealth or the level of economic development of the nations. The higher this level, the greater resources a nation could mobilize in order to cultivate soft power. For this reason, it is necessary to control for the level of economic development. Per capita GDP in US$ (at 2010 constant price) is adopted as a measure in order to ensure that this indicator is comparable across years.

TABLE 4. Regression models explaining favourable percentages in global public opinion and Soft Power 30 Index

Model	1 Favourability score	2 Favourability score	3 Favourability score	4 Favourability score	5 Soft power 30	6 Soft power 30	7 Soft power 30	8 Soft power 30
Political freedom	0.044**** [0.012] (1.79)	-0.0091 [0.0116] (2.47)	-0.00830 [0.00715] (2.57)	-0.0124* [0.0070] (2.29)	5.184** [2.535]	4.955** [2.531]	2.597 [2.634]	2.546 [2.622]
Foreign Policy	-0.012 [0.070] (1.65)	-0.193*** [0.073] (2.63)	-0.130*** [0.044] (2.73)	-0.0830** [0.0364] (1.72)	-19.613**** [1.861]	-18.570**** [2.029]	-17.150**** [2.048]	-17.545**** [1.944]
Creative Services	9.42*** [3.51] (1.20)	9.05*** [2.91] (1.21)	3.360* [1.90] (1.42)	2.77 [1.92] (1.37)	NA	NA	NA	NA
AudioVis-BksExports/GDP	NA	NA	NA	NA	1360.02 [1097.02]	1159.732 [1104.05]	1264.83 [1069.38]	1366.08 [1053.12]
NonAVBCul-Exports/GDP	NA	NA	NA	NA	-1295.99**** [354.18]	-1128.32*** [376.89]	-1330.87**** [374.10]	-1423.31**** [343.26]
Per Capita GDP		5.94E-06**** [1.46E-06] (3.64)	1.79E-06* [1.03E-06] (5.02)+			0.000187 [0.000148]	0.0000943 [0.000148]	
Global Peace Index			-0.178**** [0.023] (2.29)	-0.199**** [0.020] (1.66)			9.591** [3.936]	10.234*** [3.788]
Constant	0.466**** [0.070]	0.368**** [0.063]	0.817**** [0.0694]	0.891**** [0.056]	74.41**** [4.19]	65.41**** [8.25]	57.116**** [8.68]	60.793**** [6.45]
R Square	0.373	0.583	0.854	0.840	Within: 0.688	Within: 0.694	Within: 0.718	Within: 0.716
Adjusted R Square	0.318	0.533	0.832	0.821				
Models 1–4: MS Models 5–8: F	0.076****	0.088****	0.104****	0.128****	40.75****	33.18****	30.51****	36.83****

Notes: 1) ****p≤0.001, ***p≤0.01, **p≤0.05, * p<0.10; standard error in brackets; 2) Models 1–4: VIF in parentheses with + indicating serious collinearity of the variable with others; pooled OLS regressions using 38 observations. 3) Models 5–8: Panel regression fixed-effects models using 104 observations (26 nations in four years); the Hausman test was performed showing a preference for fixed-effects models.

Model 2, which comprises the three soft power resources and per capita GDP, is thus introduced. In Models 2 and 2b, which explain both indicators of soft power, per capita GDP attains statistical significance of 0.001 and 0.01, respectively, suggesting that the level of economic development does enhance soft power of nations. In Model 2 that explains the fact that the favourable percentage of public opinion, foreign policy stance and creative industrial exports both gain statistically significance at the 0.01 level. In Models 2 and 2b, after controlling for per capita GDP, nations could gain a more favourable standing in global public opinion if they have larger exports of creative industries and take stances on international issues different from that of the United States, the sole hegemon in the world at the time (which is reflected in a negative coefficient). In Models 2 and 2b, the R square has improved to 58.3 per cent and 49.6 per cent, respectively, compared to about 37 per cent in Models 1 and 1b. However, per capita GDP might have been the key factor in the gain in explanatory power in Models 2 and 2b. Therefore, while Nye's theory about the effects of the three resources on soft power seems pertinent, it appears to offer only a partial explanation of soft power.

The weak soft power of several democracies warrants our attention. Several influential nations are bestowed with a high degree of political freedom and large exports of creative industries, yet their favourability scores in global public opinion are low. The classical example is Israel in 2005. It had a high 1.5 out of a perfect 1 score of political freedom. Its ratio of exports of the creative industries to GDP, registering 0.37 per cent, was lower than the average in the 2005 sample (at 0.67 per cent), which might have hurt its soft power to some extent, as in Model 2 cultural exports are found to be as important and positive a contributor to soft power as political freedom, after per capita GDP. Per capita GDP in Israel in 2005 was an admirable US$27,500 (in 2010 prices). However, in 2006 only an average 17 per cent of the public in all polled nations viewed Israel positively, whereas an average of 56 per cent saw it negatively. Another example is South Korea. It enjoyed a high political freedom score of 2 in 2015, and a decent ratio of exports of the creative economy to GDP in 2014 (0.43 per cent compared to the average of 0.51 per cent in the dataset for 2014). However, its favourability and net favourability scores in 2017 were 37 per cent and 1 per cent, respectively. The former score was almost the same as India and Brazil and the latter was behind South Africa (3 per cent) and Brazil (8 per cent). One possible explanation is the high agreement of Israel and South Korea with the United States in the key votes at the UNGA, reflected in the former's total agreement

with the United States for that period and the latter's high 89 per cent agreement with the United States on the key votes at UNGA in 2015.

The United States, the most powerful and one of the longest-running democracies, has not fared well either in the three surveys, despite its high political freedom score at a perfect 1 during 2005–15 and its foreign policy stance largely being echoed by other major nations with the highest soft power, especially Canada and Germany. It boasted per capita GDP at US$52,099 (in 2010), the highest in the dataset. Again, its creative industries exports to GDP ratio was lower than the average (0.24 per cent compared to 0.51 per cent), but this factor alone should not have determined the outcome. The US film and TV industries do enjoy robust exports. The US scores in soft power in the three surveys peaked in 2014, being 0.42 and 0.03, respectively. Nevertheless, the United States paled in comparison with other major liberal democracies in 2014, such as Canada, Germany, France, the UK and Japan, whose net favourability scores ranged from 0.19 to 0.42. Among liberal democracies in the GlobeScan survey in 2014, the net favourability score of the United States was only ahead of two countries, namely India (0.02) and aforementioned Israel (-0.26).

Given that the nations which earned abysmal net favourability scores in the 2014 survey, such as Pakistan (-0.42), Russia (-0.14) and Israel (-0.26), and to a lesser extent the United States, tended to be embroiled in conflict, a measure of conflict involvement of nation-states seems a plausible alternative explanatory variable. In the discourse on international affairs, an argument for positive peace has been proposed. According to this line of argument, for the world to be safe and secure nations should endeavour to promote peaceful and good governance of domestic and external affairs. The Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), which promotes this argument, has published the GPI for over a decade in order to capture the performance of nations in peaceful governance of domestic and external affairs since 2007/8 (which was based on data from the previous years) (IEP 2008: 2; IEP 2015: 100). The IEP made the index in consultation with international experts from peace institutes and think tanks (IEP 2008: 2; IEP 2015: 100). The index has been used in articles published in academic journals such as *Political Research Quarterly*, *International Political Science Review* and *World Politics* (Wikipedia 2017). Thus, integrating both the positive peace argument and Nye's theory on soft power, we can derive the following hypothesis.

H2: The GPI, political freedom, foreign policy stances and cultural exports affect the soft power of nations.

By including Nye's three soft power resources as well as the GPI, H2 can be regarded as an integration of Nye's theory and the positive peace theory. As of 2017, the GPI was based on 23 indicators of domestic and external violence and stability of the nation-states (or polities) with a population over 1 million. Examples of these indicators include the number and duration of external (or internal) conflicts, number of deaths from external (or internal) organized conflict, level of perceived criminality in society, political instability, impact of terrorism, political terror, military expenditure as a percentage of GDP and volume of transfers of major conventional weapons. The lower the score, the more internal and external peace the nation enjoys (IEP 2017; Wikipedia 2017).

Due to data availability of the index, the GPIs published in 2008, 2013 and 2015 will be used to explain the favourability and net favourability scores in the three GlobeScan surveys.

The GPI was based on indicators published at least one year or two years earlier. For instance, the GPI in 2008, the earliest GPI available, would presumably be based on the indicators in 2007, 2006 or even earlier, that of 2013 on March 2012–March 2013, and that of 2015 mostly on data from 2013 to 2015. The index ranged from 1.1, the best-performing nation, or the most peaceful nation, to 3.84, the most violent nation on earth (IEP 2008; 2013; 2015).

The GPI is added to variables in Model 2 to produce Model 3 in regressional analyses of both indicators of soft power. The results of Model 3 are reported in Table 4. While the GPI reaches an amazing statistical significance at 0.001, per capita GDP in Models 3 and 3b (for both of these first set of measures of soft power) has VIF over 5, suggesting its serious collinearity with other independent variables. Thus, in new models (Models 4 and 4b), per capita GDP is dropped, and both measures of soft power are regressed on the political freedom score, the foreign policy stance, exports of creative industries and the GPI.

Models 4 and 4b can account for 84 per cent of the variation in the favourable percentage of global polls, and Model 4b nearly 82 per cent of that of the net favourable percentage (Tables 4 and 7). Compared to Models 1 and 1b, the addition of the GPI would help the models to explain an additional 47 per cent variation of these measures of soft power. This gain in explanatory power surpasses the original combined explanatory power of the three soft power determinants according to Nye (which stand at 37–38 per cent). Models 4 and 4b have a statistical significance of 0.001. Furthermore, no independent variables have serious collinearity with others in the model, as revealed in their VIF.

Importantly, the GPI reaches a statistical significance of 0.001 and assumes a negative sign, as expected in H2. It suggests that a nation with a better performance of domestic and external peaceful governance (hence a smaller value of the GPI) would fare far better in both measures of soft power. Exports of creative industries are no longer statistically significant, whereas the political freedom score and the foreign policy stance are still so, though the latter's statistical significance stays at the range of 0.1–0.05, which paled in comparison to that of the GPI. Thus, a lower political freedom score (hence a greater degree of democracy) and foreign policy stance more independent of the United States (hence a negative coefficient for the foreign policy stance) would help a nation to perform better in the two measures of soft power.

Panel Analysis Using Soft Power 30 Index of 2015–18

Another well-known measure of soft power is the Soft Power 30 compiled by Portland, a consultancy firm. Since 2015, Portland has been publishing an index of the 30 nations with the greatest soft power. This index is based on both objective and subjective data. The objective data cover enterprises, culture, digital, government, engagement and education, while subjective data are collected from surveys of 7,250 people from 20 nations in major regions regarding cuisine, tech products, friendliness, culture, luxury goods, foreign policy and liveability of nations in the world (Portland 2015: 19–22). The indexes on the 30 nations across four years can enable us to run panel regression on determinants of soft power.

Four nations are deleted from the dataset due to missing data on their soft power rankings or independent variables in one or more of these four years. So, 26 nations are retained for the four year period 2015–18. In order to ensure the right causation direction, soft power rankings of a given year will be regressed on independent variables from a year before. The independent variables that have been used in the previous regression analyses are also adopted – the political freedom score, the proxy of foreign policy stance, the GPI and per capita GDP. Finally, two indicators are used to capture the effects of cultural exports. The data sources on cultural exports, available for the period of 2011–17, are from the UNESCO data website.[2] The first is the ratio of exports of audiovisual, interactive media, books and press goods to GDP (Au-

dioVisBksExp/GDP in short), which measures the type of cultural exports such as films, TV programmes, multimedia formats, newspapers, magazines and books – that is, cultural exports most directly related to soft power as Nye perceived. The other is the ratio of the remainder of cultural exports to GDP (NonAVBExp/GDP), such as visual arts and crafts, designs and so forth. The breakdown of cultural exports could not have been applied in the early regression analysis using global opinion polls, as it requires data on 2006 or earlier (which is unavailable). The descriptive statistics of these variables are reported in Table 5.

TABLE 5. Summary statistics of variables in the panel regression using Soft Power 30 data

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Soft Power Ranking	63.1	9.8	40.9	80.6
Political Freedom	1.47	1.20	1.00	6.50
Foreign Policy Stance	0.79	0.19	0.11	1.00
GPI	1.59	0.29	1.15	2.30
Per Capita GDP	43183	19739	6096	91451
GDP	2.22E+12	3.57E+12	2.14E+11	1.73E+13
Per Capita GDP*GDP	8.77E+16	1.71E+17	4.36E+15	9.26E+17
AudioVisBksExp/GDP	0.00069	0.00074	0.00001	0.00353
NonAVBExp/GDP	0.00338	0.00446	0.00010	0.02085
Total observations	104			
Breakdown				
Units	26			
Time periods	4			

Random-effects and fixed-effects panel regression is performed in Stata SE 16.0.[3] The Hausman test is also performed regarding the relative strengths of the fixed-effects versus random-effects models, and the results suggest a preference for the former. Thus, the results of the fixed-effects panel regression are reported as Models 5–8 in Table 4, corresponding to Models 1–4, respectively.

We can first examine the variables that are found to have a statistically significant impact on soft power rankings, as indicated in the preferred fixed-effects model. Soft power rankings of a nation will be boosted by: 1) a foreign policy stance different from the United States (indicated by a lower overlap with the United States in its votes on key issues at the

UN General Assembly – significant at the 0.001 level); 2) a smaller ratio of cultural exports excluding audiovisual, interactive media, books and press goods to GDP (implying that smaller non-soft power-related cultural exports could enhance soft power – significant at the 0.001 level); 3) a higher GPI (which represents less peaceful domestic and external governance – significant at the 0.05–0.01 level). The constant is also highly statistically significant. The fixed-effects model can explain a great deal (68.8–71.8 per cent) of the variation within the units. Surprisingly, the ratio of exports of audiovisual, interactive media, books and press goods to GDP does not reach statistical significance, though its impact on soft power rankings is positive. The same goes for per capita GDP in Models 6–7. Overall, the biggest surprises from the findings would be the negative correlation between the soft power index on the one hand, and peaceful governance and non-soft-power-related cultural exports on the other.

Possible explanations of the findings can be as follows. First, among the 26 nations in the dataset those with a relatively worse GPI (a higher GPI value), such as the United States, the United Kingdom and France, attained greater soft power. This might have caused the GPI to correlate positively with soft power indexes. Second, exports of too many cultural products that are not related to soft power could end up hurting the soft power of a nation, perhaps by crowding out the effects of cultural exports most inductive to soft power.

Conclusion and the Case of China

Summary of Findings
The aim of this study is to provide a much-needed statistical exploration of the three crucial determinants of soft power as suggested by Nye, namely, attractive culture, political values and foreign policy, and of the GPI, as proposed by the positive peace argument. The study has utilized two types of soft power measures, namely, the favourability in global public opinion and the Soft Power 30 Index. When one is more concerned with the magnitude of soft power, namely, the extent and multiple areas where a nation influences others, which the Soft Power 30 Index captures, foreign policy independent of the United States seems to have a significant and positive impact, while the peaceful domestic and external governance, non-soft power-related cultural exports and political freedom (in Models 5–6) exert a negative impact. These negative effects may be due to the fact that among the 30 nations being ranked, the three

highest-ranked ones during 2015–18 (consistently among top four or top five), namely, the United Kingdom, France and the United States, tended to have a GPI in all of surveyed years and a political freedom score in some of the years worse than the nations obviously ranked below them in the Soft Power 30 Index, such as Canada, Japan, Denmark, Australia, Sweden and Switzerland. In addition, a good number of nations, such as Australia, Canada, the United States and Germany, obtained a very high soft power index even when their non-soft power-related cultural exports to GDP ratio was far below the average.

However, if one is more concerned with the positiveness of soft power, or the reputation of a given nation, which the favourability in global public opinion would gauge, then peaceful governance of domestic and external affairs, and to a lesser extent, political freedom, foreign policy independent of the United States and cultural exports matter positively.

Returning to the two hypotheses: overall, H2 seems to receive somewhat greater support than H1 in the two rounds of regression analyses. In the regression analysis of soft power measured by global public opinions, H2 has largely proved to be valid and, as stated above, the GPI and, to a much lesser extent, political freedom and foreign policy stance (three out of the four variables in H2) can help to explain most of the variation in soft power of key nations in world politics. In contrast, only two of the three soft power resources in H1 can offer modest explanatory power. In the second round of regression analysis (when the magnitude of soft power measured by the Soft Power 30 Index is employed), foreign policy independent of the United States seems to have a significant and positive impact, while non-soft power-related cultural exports and, to a lesser extent (as judged by the statistical significance level), the GPI play a negative role. There neither H1 nor H2 receive strong support, though H1 performs slightly better than H2 due to the wrong sign of the GPI.

Discussion of the Case of China

Finally, a discussion on China is worthwhile. China is one of the major powers that is included in the aforementioned data analysis across the three years. It is one of the most frequently explored nations in the literature on soft power. Chinese leaders and scholars have also paid a great deal of attention to soft power.

The existing studies take note of a range of initiatives undertaken by China to advance its soft power. For example, Li (2009) explored the official discourse, practice and strategy of soft power, and the role of

education, culture and developmental paradigm in China's expression of that same. Another volume (Lai and Lu 2012) probed the theoretical concept of soft power and surveyed China's soft power endeavours through official diplomatic strategies, official formulations, public and cultural diplomacy and media. The Confucius Institute has been widely noted as a vehicle for China's cultural diplomacy (Lo and Pan 2014), while media, such as the use of cultural and traditional symbols in the Beijing Olympic Games Opening Ceremony (Chen et al. 2012), has attracted considerable attention. Another set of studies investigated China's soft power efforts in major regions. Kurlantzick (2007) reported vividly on China's proactive initiatives to woo Southeast Asian nations. Fijalkowski (2011), on the other hand, surveyed China's possible gain in soft power in Africa through making a growing presence and utilizing their common values. Finally, a stream of literature evaluates the progress and limits in China's efforts to promote its soft power. While acknowledging China's ambitions and considerable inputs, they clearly highlight the limits and shortfalls in this area (Gill and Huang 2006; Li 2008; Lai and Lu 2012; Shambaugh 2015).

This segment will be devoted to China's performance of soft power in terms of the aforementioned findings. To facilitate the discussion, the measures of China's soft power and its determinants, as well as the average of the nations included in the statistical analyses in Models 1–4, are presented in Table 6. The two measures (favourability and net favourability in global public opinion surveys) point to a similar pattern of China's soft power: During 2006–7, China was well ahead of the average of the nations in the dataset (42 per cent versus 37.5 per cent and 10 per cent versus 3.3 per cent). However, by 2014 China was near the average favourability (42 per cent versus 41.9 per cent) and fell sharply behind the average net favourability (0 versus 8.6 per cent). In 2017, China earned the same score as the average favourability, but noticeably lagged behind the average net favourability (-1 per cent versus 5.7 per cent). Despite the fact that China's favourability held steady at around 41–42 per cent during 2006–17, there was a steady decline in net favourability from 10 per cent down to -1 per cent, which is a more critical indicator of soft power than the former.

Next, we can examine China's soft power determinants compared to the average in the dataset. First, China continues to score much lower than the average in the dataset in terms of foreign policy stance, as it continues to vote very differently from the United States over critical matters at the UNGA.

In terms of exports of cultural products, reflected in the ratio of exports of creative services to GDP, China's ratio had been very high during the period, ranging from 2.4 per cent during 2005, to 1.76 per cent in 2012 and 1.83 per cent in 2017. These scores were much higher than the average in the dataset (which was 0.67 per cent, 0.59 per cent and 0.51 per cent, respectively). China has apparently experienced rapid expansion in exports of its cultural products and hugely outdone many nations in the dataset. Among the two other determinants of soft power, China fared rather poorly in political freedom. In 2005, its political freedom score was only 6.5, with 7 representing the most unfree nations, while Canada, the United Kingdom, France and the United States enjoyed a perfect score of 1, being the freest nations. China's score was more than twice as much as the average of the dataset (2.75). In 2012 and 2015, China's political freedom score stayed at 6.5, almost as 2.8 times as much as the average of the dataset (2.32 and 2.36, respectively).

As far as the most important determinant of soft power, namely the GPI, is concerned (with higher scores representing greater domestic and external conflict), China's score was 1.981 in 2008, moderately better than the average in the dataset (2.11). Its score in 2012 deteriorated to 2.142, very slightly higher (and thus worse) than the dataset average (2.11). In 2015, China's score further deteriorated to 2.267, modestly worse than the dataset average (which was 2.09). This might have helped explain China's deteriorating performance in soft power and lower net favourability score in 2014 and 2017.

Overall, a less than average GPI (which suggested limited ability to peacefully manage the domestic society and external environment) and very unsatisfactory performance in political freedom combined to produce to a slightly less than average score of soft power for China as measured by the favourability in global public opinion. China's soft power was only modestly salvaged by its expanding exports of cultural products.

We can also quickly turn to China's performance based on the Soft Power 30 Index. In 2015, the first year of the launch of the index, China was scored 40.83 and ranked at No. 30, well behind the United Kingdom's (No. 1) score of 75.61 and the United States (No. 3) with a score of 73.68. In 2016, China's score grew to 45.04 and its rank No. 28, reducing slightly its distance from the No. 1 US score of 77.96. In 2017, China's score further improved to 50.50 and its rank to No. 25, modestly narrowing its gap with the No. 1 France's score of 75.75, despite a considerable distance. In 2018 China's score improved to 51.85, yet

TABLE 6. China's soft power performance and possible causes

Year	Favourability in the global opinion surveys	Net favourability in the global opinion surveys	Soft Power 30 Index	Political freedom	Foreign policy stance	Exports of the creative economy to GDP	Non-soft power-related cultural exports to GDP	Global Peace Index
China, 2017	41%	-1%	NA	6.5 (2015)	33% (2015)	1.83% (2015)	NA	2.267 (2015)
China, 2014	42%	0	NA	6.5 (2012)	0 (2012)	1.76% (2012)	NA	2.142 (2012)
China, 2006–7	42%	10%	NA	6.5 (2005)	57.5% (2005)	2.4% (2005)	NA	1.981 (2008)
Dataset average, 2017	41%	5.7%	NA	2.36 (2015)	69.6% (2015)	0.51% (2014)	NA	2.09 (2015)
Average, 2014	41.9%	8.6%	NA	2.32 (2012)	48.6% (2012)	0.59% (2012)	NA	2.11 (2012)
Average, 2006–7	37.5%	3.3%	NA	2.75 (2005)	82.3% (2005)	0.67% (2005)	NA	2.11 (2008)
China, 2018	NA	NA	51.85 (No. 27)	6.5 (2017)	21% (2017)	NA	0.0023 (2017)	2.243 (2017)
China, 2017	NA	NA	50.50 (No. 25)	6.5 (2018)	33% (2016)	NA	0.0027 (2016)	2.242 (2016)
China, 2016	NA	NA	45.04 (No. 28)	6.5 (2015)	33% (2015)	NA	0.0035 (2015)	2.288 (2015)
China, 2015	NA	NA	40.85 (No. 30)	6.5 (2014)	11% (2014)	NA	0.0067 (2014)	2.267 (2014)
Dataset average, 2017	NA	NA	68 (2018)	1.5	61.0%	NA	0.00292	1.63
Average, 2016	NA	NA	64 (2017)	1.5	84.6%	NA	0.00340	1.61
Average, 2015	NA	NA	61 (2016)	1.4	84.6%	NA	0.00349	1.61
Average, 2014	NA	NA	60 (2015)	1.4	84.4%	NA	0.00370	1.51

Note: The year of the data is placed in parentheses when it differs from the year in the far left column.

its rank dropped to No. 27, as the score of the United Kingdom (No. 1) soared to 80.55 (Portland, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018). The average of the top 30 nations in the index had improved consistently since 2014. In 2018, the improvement was the largest (up from 64 in 2017 to 68), whereas China's improvement was much smaller (from 50.5 to 51.85), causing its rank to drop for the first time since 2015. China's other factors, such as political freedom, foreign policy, non-soft power-related cultural exports and the GPI, seem to move in a direction similar to the average in the dataset over the period (Table 6).

The Soft Power 30 Report in 2016 indicated that 'China's best perform-ing metric was the number of UNESCO world heritage sites' and that 'China's Culture score was also helped by its success in the Olympic Games, as well as attracting 55 million international tourists'. However, the report also suggested China's two shortcomings: 'poor performance on polling was particularly acute on perceptions of China's foreign policy' and '[r]espondents to the international polling did not express much confidence in China to "do the right thing in international affairs"' (Portland 2016: 43). The Soft Power 30 Report in 2018 (Portland 2018: 70) summed up the root causes of China's limited soft power as follows: China's 'value system and cultural traditions have yet to be understood by the international community' and 'China's creative and cultural out-puts have not yet captured the attention and imagination of wider global audiences'. The latter seems pertinent as China has become a leading exporter of cultural products, yet this huge economic advantage has not been translated into a cultural and political asset.

China thus faces an uphill battle in narrowing its huge gap with the leading nations as far as soft power is concerned. China needs to con-vince the world it can do the right thing in global affairs, vastly improve political freedom and peacefully manage domestic and external affairs. It also needs to export cultural products and services that embrace the latest and popular technology and find echoes in the hearts and minds of people in other nations.

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APPENDIX

TABLE 7. Regression of the net favourable percentage in global public opinion on three resources and other determinants of soft power

Model	1b	2b	3b	4b
Political freedom	-0.0914**** [0.0238] (1.79)	-0.0543** [0.0255] (2.47)	-0.0304* [0.0159] (2.57)	-0.0301** [0.0148] (2.29)
Foreign policy stance	-0.0461 [0.138] (1.65)	-0.316* [0.159] (2.63)	-0.179* [0.0987] (2.73)	-0.183** [0.0772] (1.72)
Exports of creative services to GDP	17.369** [6.958] (1.20)	16.815** [6.361] (1.21)	4.475 [4.211] (1.42)	4.521 [4.080](1.37)
Per capita GDP		8.87E-06*** [3.19E-06] (3.64)	1.39E-07 [2.28E-06](5.02)+	
Global Peace Index			-0.386**** [0.0513] (2.29)	-0.384**** [0.0430] (1.66)
Constant	0.214 [0.140]	0.068 [0.138] __	1.042**** [0.154]	1.036**** [0.120]
R Square	0.378	0.496	0.818	0.818
Adjusted R Square	0.323	0.434	0.790	0.796
MS	0.304****	0.299****	0.394****	0.493****

Notes*: ****p<=0.001, ***p<=0.01, **p<0.05, * p<0.10; standard error in brackets; VIF in parentheses with + indicating serious collinearity of the variable with others; pooled OLS regression; 38 observations.

NOTES

1 The quotes were made by Nye of Neal Rosendorf and of Rob Kroes. See Nye 2004a: 12, 48.
2 See the UNESCO database on international trade of cultural goods at http://data.

uis.unesco.org/OECDStat_Metadata/ShowMetadata.ashx?Dataset=CTRD_DS&S howOnWeb=true&Lang=en. Accessed 7 August 2019.

3   'Xtreg, re' command is executed. The programme will throw out an independent variable if it is highly correlated with others in the regression.

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