

THE ROLE OF SOFT POWER IN CHINA'S SECURITY STRATEGY:  
CASE STUDIES ON THE SOUTH CHINA SEA  
AND TAIWAN

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by

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## ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF SOFT POWER IN CHINA'S SECURITY STRATEGY: CASE STUDIES ON THE SOUTH CHINA SEA AND TAIWAN, by MAJ Mikail Kalimuddin, 96 pages.

The concept of “soft power” came to prominence in Chinese political and academic discourse in the mid-2000s, and is now arguably a deliberate and integral part of Chinese foreign policy, facilitating China's rise by shaping the external environment. Examples of Chinese soft power include economic diplomacy with the global South, the “Beijing Consensus,” public diplomacy initiatives like Confucius Institutes, and even tourism. This study expands on the existing body of scholarly literature on Chinese soft power by exploring its integration with China's security strategy. Two cases are examined: (1) Cross-Strait relations, and (2) the territorial disputes in the South China Sea. The study demonstrates that soft power is integrated into China's security strategy, and involves a wide range of sources of power. The study also shows that the interplay between soft and hard power varies significantly depending on the context.

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## ACRONYMS

ADMM+	ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
ARATS	Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CCTV	China Central Television
CICSCSS	Collaborative Innovation Center for South China Sea Studies
COC	ASEAN-China South China Sea Code of Conduct
CPC	Communist Party of China
CUES	Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea
DOC	Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea
ECFA	Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement
ECS	East China Sea
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
FONOP	Freedom of Navigation Operation
HADR	Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief
ICAS	Institute of China-American Studies
IMJC	International Maritime Judicial Center
JIDD	Jakarta International Defence Dialogue
KMT	Kuomintang
MAC	Mainland Affairs Council
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NGO	Non-governmental Organization

NISCSS	National Institute for South China Sea Studies
PCA	Permanent Court of Arbitration
PLA	People's Liberation Army
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
SCS	South China Sea
SEA	Southeast Asia
SEF	Straits Exchange Foundation
SLD	Shangri-La Dialogue
TAO	Taiwan Affairs Office
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
WPNS	Western Pacific Naval Symposium

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The history of mankind tells us that problems are not to be feared. What should concern us is refusing to face up to problems and not knowing what to do about them. In the face of both opportunities and challenges of economic globalization, the right thing to do is to seize every opportunity, jointly meet challenges and chart the right course for economic globalization.

— Xi Jinping, World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2017

In what was the single most headline-grabbing moment of the World Economic Forum’s 2017 annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, the President of the People’s Republic of China, Xi Jinping, spoke at the opening plenary in defense of economic globalization. This took place against the backdrop of the recently concluded US presidential elections, and growing concern about the incoming Trump administration’s apparent willingness to embrace trade protectionism and isolationism. Whether merely an honest attempt to safeguard one of the critical requirements for China’s continued economic growth, or a deliberate masterstroke in strategic communications, the impact of Xi’s comments on the narrative surrounding China’s role in the international system was both immediate and profound. Many media outlets were quick to declare China, in some form or other, what *Newsweek* termed “the linchpin of global economic stability”—a title that would almost certainly have been reserved for the US from the end of the Second World War up till that very moment.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bessma Momani, “Xi Jinping’s Davos Speech Showed the World has Turned Upside Down,” *Newsweek*, January 18, 2017, accessed February 19, 2017, <http://www.newsweek.com/davos-2017-xi-jinping-economy-globalization-protectionism-donald-trump-543993>.

Ostensibly, Xi's speech had not changed anything of material significance. Neither China's economy nor its military had increased in strength as a consequence of the speech. Yet China, at least according to the mainstream media, appeared to have assumed a new mantle of some importance. Clearly then, some element of the relative power of actors in the international system had changed, but not in a manner that would be captured in any measurement of gross domestic product, troop numbers, nuclear missiles, or other metrics of that nature. What the meeting participants listening to Xi in Davos had witnessed firsthand, whether they had realized it or not, was a palpable increase in Chinese soft power.

#### Purpose of the Research

“Soft power,” a term coined by the American political scientist Joseph Nye in 1990, refers to sources of state power that are complementary to traditional sources of power, or “hard power.” Underpinning Nye's theoretical framework is the notion that any analysis of states that limits itself to traditional sources of power is fundamentally incomplete. Consequently, the purpose of this research is to add to the existing body of work analyzing Chinese foreign policy by applying the lens of soft power to China's security strategy—a subject that has received comparably less attention from soft power theorists. The existence of this gap in the literature is unsurprising when one considers that security is generally viewed as the domain of traditional sources of power. This research aims to build a more informed case as to whether soft power in the realm of China's security strategy deserves greater attention.

The primary question that this research aims to answer is: What is the role of soft power in China's security strategy? Secondary research questions are:

1. What are the forms of soft power that are present in China's security strategy?
2. How are these different forms of soft power employed by China to meet its security goals?

### Importance of the Subject

By many estimates, major powers such as the US, the UK, Germany, France, and Japan currently enjoy a commanding lead over China in soft power terms.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, intellectuals and policy makers who focus solely on the role of hard power in state-to-state relations must recognize that their analysis is premised on the existence of this soft power disparity. While this may continue to be the case in the short term, China's continued development could result in this gap gradually being closed, if not at least narrowed. This will have a natural impact on any assessment of China's role in the world and ability to further its national interests. If one considers China's security strategy a topic worthy of study, then the role of soft power in China's security strategy surely deserves some attention.

As will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, the accumulation and exercise of soft power has become a deliberate component of Chinese foreign policy. The paramount leaders of the Chinese political establishment have spoken and continue to speak on this subject. Then-Chinese President Hu Jintao made reference to soft power, or

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<sup>2</sup> Examples of well-established soft power indices are the *Pew Research Center Global Attitude Survey*, Portland's *The Soft Power 30*, and Monocle's *Soft Power Survey*.

软力量 (ruan li liang), while addressing the Chinese Central Foreign Affairs Leadership Group in 2006.<sup>3</sup> This emphasis on soft power has continued a decade on into Xi's tenure, and is viewed as one of the elements necessary to realize the "Chinese Dream"—the revitalization of Chinese society and achievement of national glory.<sup>4</sup> The concept of soft power is also prevalent in Chinese academic discourse, with works by Chinese intellectuals forming a large part of the body of literature on Chinese soft power.

Regardless of the extent to which Chinese politicians and intellectuals speak and write about it, the real world is rife with examples of Chinese soft power at work. Confucius Institutes—nodes of Chinese culture and language—number in the hundreds and are present on six continents. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), a Chinese initiative that came to fruition at the tail-end of 2015, has a membership of 50 states and half as much capital as the World Bank. More importantly, China controls over a quarter of the votes in the AIIB. The list of soft power tools at China's disposal is long and growing, the significance of which actors in the international system can ill afford to ignore.

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<sup>3</sup> Mingjiang Li, "Soft Power in Chinese Discourse: Popularity and Prospect," in *Soft Power: China's Emerging Strategy in International Politics*, ed. Mingjiang Li (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2009), 23.

<sup>4</sup> Xuequan Mu, "Xi: China to Promote Cultural Soft Power," *Xinhua*, January 1, 2014, accessed December 9, 2016, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/201401/01/c\\_125941955.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/201401/01/c_125941955.htm).

### Defining the Key Concepts

This section defines the key concepts that will be referenced throughout the thesis. For the purposes of this research, “soft power” is defined as the “ability to obtain desired outcomes through attraction rather than coercion or payment,” i.e. it is a function of the manner in which sources of power are utilized.<sup>5</sup> The characteristic feature of soft power is that it enables a country to “structure a situation so that other countries develop preferences or define their interests in ways consistent with its own.”<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that this is not the only established definition of soft power, nor is it purported to be an unequivocally superior definition of soft power. Rather, this definition has been selected for its utility in shedding light on the co-optive elements of China’s security strategy, and hence best serves the objectives of this research. Narrower definitions generally define soft power according to the type of power involved rather than how the power is used. Particularly in the security domain, where certain types of power predominate, a restrictive definition would severely limit the number and variety of instances of soft power in the cases being studied and unnecessarily constrain the research. Broader definitions of soft power, on the other hand, blur the line between instances of power that are soft and those that are not. Without this distinction, the primary question this research seeks to answer becomes invalid. A detailed treatment of the different conceptions of soft power is found in chapter 2.

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<sup>5</sup> Joseph S. Nye, *Understanding International Conflicts: An Introduction to Theory and History*, 6th ed. (New York, NY: Pearson Longman, 2007), 289.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph S. Nye, “Soft power,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 80 (Autumn 1990): 168.

The complement to soft power is “hard power,” which is defined as the use of power by a country to coerce or induce other countries to take certain actions or adopt particular positions.<sup>7</sup> Whereas soft power is about “shaping what others want,” hard power “changes what others do.”<sup>8</sup>

“Sources of power” or “sources” are the domains countries draw upon to exercise hard or soft power. Examples of sources of power include the economic, military, institutional, and cultural domains. Sources of power are neither hard nor soft when considered in isolation, as they do not prescribe the manner in which power is utilized.

“Tools of power” or “tools” refer to the specific forms in which sources of power manifest. For example, a financial loan is a tool, as is an art exhibition. A financial loan is likely to be derived from the economic domain; an art exhibition from the cultural domain. Tools need not be physical in nature. A speech by a political figure espousing a particular position is also a tool. Like sources of power, tools of power are also neither hard nor soft.

“Modes of power” or “modes” refer to the ways in which tools of power are utilized. A mode comprises a multitude of factors, though it is described primarily by the intent of the actor exercising power, and the audience that perceives the exercise of power. The mode of power is essentially the intended effect of a tool, and therefore determines whether a tool of power is ultimately soft or hard.

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<sup>7</sup> Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York, NY: PublicAffairs, 2004), 5.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

### Assumptions

The research assumes that power is observable and can be ascribed to discrete actions in a specific context. It is on this pretext that instances of soft and hard power are to be disentangled from each other and meaningfully analyzed as playing differentiated roles in China's security strategy.

### Limitations and Delimitations

The research has three limitations. The first deals with access to primary sources. China is relatively opaque about its strategic goals and thinking, which means that analysis of its strategic intentions is principally based on its actions and third-party interpretations by academics, think-tanks, and foreign governments. Compared to Western governments, the Communist Party of China (CPC) publishes few official documents explaining its strategies and goals. Even when documents are made available, they tend to be broadly worded and short on detail. In addition, access to archives of official records on national security matters is tightly controlled.

The two other limitations pertain to the output of the research. Case study research is inherently constrained in its ability to answer questions of gradation—a characteristic of all small-N studies.<sup>9</sup> This means that, while meaningful conclusions may be drawn about whether soft power plays a role in Chinese security strategy and what these roles may be, conclusions about how much of a role soft power or elements thereof

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<sup>9</sup> Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 25-30. "N" refers to the sample size of the study.

have in Chinese security strategy will be tentative at best. A second limitation of small-N studies is the lack of representativeness.<sup>10</sup> Generalizations about the role of soft power in Chinese security strategy will necessarily be limited to the sub-class of events represented by the cases studied.

The research is delimited in two ways. First, both cases studied are bounded by time and will only analyze events from the beginning of 2010 onwards. The purpose of this is to facilitate depth in the construction of the cases while focusing on the most current evolution of Chinese security strategy. Second, the research does not deal with the effectiveness of soft power in supporting Chinese security strategy; it merely considers its intended role. Determining effectiveness would involve the identification of metrics of effectiveness and measurement according to those metrics. This would result in research objectives significantly in excess of the resources available for this study.

### Plan of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter has outlined the purpose and importance of the research, provided definitions of key concepts that will be referenced in the thesis, and discussed the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the research.

The second chapter will include a review of the academic literature on Chinese soft power. The review is conducted in four parts: First, a survey of the different schools of thought on the concept of soft power, and how the theory has been adjusted to suit the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 30-32.

Chinese context is conducted. Second, views on the role of soft power in Chinese foreign policy are presented. Third, assessments of China's effectiveness in applying soft power to support its foreign policy are discussed. Fourth, the extent of academic literature on Chinese soft power in the context of external security is presented.

The third chapter addresses the research methodology. It explains the rationale for the selection of the case study method, the typology and specific type of case study that will be conducted, the rationale for the selection of the territorial disputes in the South China Sea (SCS) and China's handling of Cross-Strait relations as the two cases to be studied, the type of data being collected, and the way data will be coded to support analysis.

The fourth and fifth chapters will contain analysis of the two cases—the South China Sea and Taiwan respectively. Both chapters begin with a brief outline of the current situation and key developments over the past six years, followed by a discussion of the hard power elements present in both cases. This provides the necessary context within which analysis of Chinese soft power is done. The bulk of each chapter is devoted to presenting a sources-tools-modes matrix that aims to comprehensively describe how China employs soft power in each case. The chapters conclude with a discussion of the interplay between soft power and hard power.

The sixth and final chapter presents generalized observations about the role of soft power in China's security strategy, and identifies the immediate and future implications of these observations for policymakers. Lastly, recommendations for further research are discussed.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The state of academic discourse on Chinese soft power, while expansive, is not one of consensus. This chapter presents a summary of the main schools of academic thought on the subject, and does so by addressing three questions: First, specific to the Chinese context, how is soft power conceptualized? Three conceptions of soft power are discussed, each representing a point along a definitional spectrum that ranges from narrow to broad. Second, what is the role of soft power in Chinese foreign policy? The emergence of soft power theory in Chinese discourse is examined, along with academic opinion on the goals and manifestations of Chinese soft power. Third, how effectively does soft power support China's foreign policy goals? Two camps of academic opinion are presented, essentially positive and negative assessments, along with the reasons put forth by each camp as to why it is or is not effective. Finally, the general lack of academic literature on soft power in the context of China's external security challenges is discussed.

#### Conceptions of Soft Power and Use in the Chinese Context

In his seminal essay *Soft Power*, published in 1990, Nye argues that a "general diffusion of power" is occurring in world politics. In his view, this phenomenon is driven by five trends: (1) economic interdependence, (2) transnational actors, (3) nationalism in weak states, (4) the spread of technology, and (5) changing political issues. These trends have given rise to a new type of power that can provide a country with the ability to

“structure a situation so that other countries develop preferences or define their interests in ways consistent with its own.”<sup>11</sup> This “soft power,” as Nye termed it, is co-optive. In contrast, traditional sources of power, or “hard power,” like military might and economic heft, are coercive. Nye initially identifies three sources of soft power: culture, ideology, and institutions. This is subsequently refined to: culture, political values and foreign policies.<sup>12</sup> Nye qualifies that the magnitude of soft power that is derived from these sources is situationally dependent. For example, political values are a source of soft power only if they are consistently applied both domestically and abroad, thus avoiding the perception of hypocrisy or a double standard. In the same vein, culture can be attractive to certain populations, but unattractive to others. The biggest benefit of soft power is that it is relatively inexpensive to exercise when compared with hard power. Whereas the application of military forces involves significant national expense, Hollywood movies about the American Dream are essentially free advertising for the US from the perspective of the American taxpayer.

Nye’s conception of soft power is relatively restrictive, drawing a clear distinction between sources of hard and soft power. On the other extreme are those who argue for a much broader interpretation of soft power.<sup>13</sup> In *Charm Offensive*, Kurlantzick argues that

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<sup>11</sup> Nye, “Soft Power,” 155-68.

<sup>12</sup> Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, 11.

<sup>13</sup> See Jean-Marc F. Blanchard and Fujia Lu, “Thinking Hard about Soft Power: A Review and Critique of the Literature on China and Soft Power,” *Asian Perspective* 36, no. 4 (2012): 568-69, for references to groups of authors who adopt narrow and broad interpretations of soft power.

“for the Chinese, soft power means anything outside of the military and security realm,” to include coercive means of a non-military nature, such as economic carrots and sticks.<sup>14</sup> Regardless of whether this is in fact an accurate reflection of the Chinese perspective on soft power, the obvious issue is that it runs contrary to Nye’s notion that soft power influences how other countries define their preferences and interests. Recognizing this distinction is key: by Nye’s definition, hard power compels countries to act in a certain manner based on their existing national interests; soft power shapes countries’ national interests so that they willingly choose to act in a prescribed manner. Kurlantzick’s broad definition of soft power also negates the ability to characterize a primary benefit of soft power: its “bang for the buck.”

A third conception of soft power lies somewhere between the first two. This is based on the notion that sources of power can be both hard and soft depending on the context. Li contends that Nye’s restrictive definition fails to explain China’s growth in soft power, and proposes a behavioral approach that focuses on how sources of power are used, terming it “soft use of power.”<sup>15</sup> Li highlights that the utility of acknowledging this distinction between resources (source of power) and behavior (use of power) bears out in the existing research. He notes that resource-based examinations generally present a

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<sup>14</sup> Joshua Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive: How China’s Soft Power is Transforming the World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 6.

<sup>15</sup> Mingjiang Li, “Introduction: Soft Power: Nurture not Nature,” in *Soft Power: China’s Emerging Strategy in International Politics*, ed. Mingjiang Li (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2009), 6-7.

bleaker picture of Chinese soft power than behavior-based examinations.<sup>16</sup> An example of this “soft use of power” is the conduct of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) by military forces. Even though the conduct of HADR operations comes with a fiscal cost, one could argue that its attractiveness is disproportionately high because of the strong symbolism associated with coming to the aid of others. Ostensibly, the concept of “soft use of power” adheres to Nye’s argument that soft power is relatively inexpensive to exercise. The concept of “soft use of power” is not exclusive to the Chinese context. As an example, the UK considers “Royal Navy ships’ visits . . . an important way of projecting [its] soft power.”<sup>17</sup>

In their critique of the existing body of literature on Chinese soft power, Blanchard and Lu add further nuance to this middle ground conception. For example, they argue that economic payments to other countries that are “more about image than inducement” could constitute a form of soft power, as could changes in military posture that send a conciliatory tone. Blanchard and Lu also give added emphasis to the importance of context, drawing attention to the target or audience.<sup>18</sup>

Overall, it is clear that conceptions of soft power, particularly when applied to the Chinese context, can run the gamut from highly restrictive to all-encompassing. Any

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>17</sup> UK Government, *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015: A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom* (UK: UK Government, 2015), 49, accessed March 28, 2017, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-security-strategy-and-strategic-defence-and-security-review-2015>.

<sup>18</sup> Blanchard and Lu, 568-69.

analysis of Chinese soft power, therefore, must be explicit about the specific conception of soft power being applied and recognize the degree to which the selected conception can drive conclusions in academic research.

### The Role of Soft Power in Chinese Foreign Policy

The notion of soft power became commonplace in Chinese discourse around the mid-2000s, and has since received “comprehensive and sophisticated” attention from Chinese intellectuals. It was also around this time that the term “soft power” began to appear in statements by high-ranking Chinese officials with some frequency. Surveying Chinese writings on the subject, Li concludes that the predominant interpretation of soft power takes alignment from Nye’s definition of soft power but is generally not as restrictive.<sup>19</sup> Where the Chinese conception of soft power departs markedly from Nye’s is in the application of soft power in a domestic context.<sup>20</sup> However, given the objectives of this study, this particular aspect of Chinese soft power will not be examined.

In the context of Chinese foreign policy, the primary role of soft power is to shape the external environment so that it facilitates China’s continued development. This involves shaping external perceptions of China—for example, dispelling the “Chinese threat” narrative—and is a means to “avoid a collision with the established great powers

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<sup>19</sup> Li, “Soft Power in Chinese Discourse,” 24-25.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 28.

and the international status quo.” China’s accumulation of soft power is also seen as a response to other major powers working to increase their soft power.<sup>21</sup>

Examples of Chinese soft power in action are numerous. Cultural soft power, an inherent strong point for China given its long and illustrious history, manifests in initiatives such as the Confucius Institutes, the large numbers of foreign students and tourists who visit China, and high-profile events such as the 2010 Shanghai Expo and 2008 Beijing Olympics. Chinese soft power is also highly visible in its economic dealings with the Global South, the ideological attractiveness of the Chinese model of economic development, or “Beijing Consensus,” as well as its participation and leadership—as in the case of the formation of the AIIB—in multilateral diplomacy.<sup>22</sup> Taking a more expansive view of soft power, China’s status as a major contributor of troops to UN peacekeeping missions—its troop contribution is the largest among the five permanent members of the UN Security Council—is a notable example of soft power arising from its military strength. There are, however, a number of areas where Chinese soft power appears to fall short: popular culture, the strength and credibility of its domestic

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<sup>21</sup> Li, “Soft Power in Chinese Discourse,” 31-33; Yong Deng, “The New Hard Realities: ‘Soft Power’ and China in Transition,” in *Soft Power: China’s Emerging Strategy in International Politics*, ed. Mingjiang Li (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2009), 64.

<sup>22</sup> Yongjin Zhang, “The Discourse of China’s Soft Power and Its Discontents,” in *Soft Power: China’s Emerging Strategy in International Politics*, ed. Mingjiang Li (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2009), 51; Deng, 69.

institutions, leadership in science and technology, and the quality of its institutes of higher learning, to name just a few.<sup>23</sup>

In short, soft power is undoubtedly a deliberate and integral part of Chinese foreign policy. In addition, the forms that Chinese soft power can take are numerous and varied, but areas of “weakness” persist. The next section explores the effectiveness of Chinese soft power in supporting its foreign policy goals.

### Assessments of Chinese Soft Power

Scholarly opinion is split on the matter of China’s success in accumulating and wielding soft power. One camp of academics points to China’s success in the Global South—specifically on the African continent, in Latin America, and parts of South East Asia (SEA)—as clear evidence of significant growth in Chinese soft power over the past decade. Kurlantzick highlights that China has achieved “significant policy gains” in Africa and maintains a positive image among African states. This extends beyond acts of economic diplomacy to include China’s “ideational leadership in combating poverty.”<sup>24</sup> Among developing countries in SEA, the Beijing Consensus served as the answer to the

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<sup>23</sup> Deng, 71.

<sup>24</sup> Joshua Kurlantzick, “China’s Soft Power in Africa,” in *Soft Power: China’s Emerging Strategy in International Politics*, ed. Mingjiang Li (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2009), 168, 179.

search for a new model of economic development in the aftermath of the Asian Financial Crisis, providing China with significant soft power in the region.<sup>25</sup>

Those who argue that China's successes in soft power are relatively limited propose a number of causes for it. Nye points to China's over reliance on the government as a source of soft power in the sense that "the Chinese Communist Party has not bought into the idea that soft power springs largely from individuals, the private sector, and civil," and instead defaults to "tools of propaganda." A second issue is China's strategy of leveraging nationalism for political legitimacy domestically. This forces China to adopt foreign policy that often puts it at odds with other countries, such as the Philippines or Vietnam in the case of the SCS disputes, undermining its soft power gains.<sup>26</sup> A third issue is what Gill and Huang term as "problems of legitimacy" in China's diplomatic dealings. One source of this illegitimacy is China's willingness to work with political leaders who are seen as "corrupt and even brutal."<sup>27</sup> The results of China's "charm offensives" in various regions of the world are also not entirely positive. In Central Asia for example, the Beijing Consensus sees stiff competition from other regional models of

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<sup>25</sup> Ignatius Wibowo, "China's Soft Power and NeoLiberal Agenda in Southeast Asia," in *Soft Power: China's Emerging Strategy in International Politics*, ed. Mingjiang Li (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2009), 220.

<sup>26</sup> Joseph S. Nye, "The Limits of Chinese Soft Power," Project Syndicate, July 10, 2015, accessed July 2, 2017, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/china-civil-society-nationalism-soft-power-by-joseph-s--nye-2015-07?barrier=accessreg>.

<sup>27</sup> Bates Gill and Yanzhong Huang, "Sources and Limits of Chinese 'Soft Power'," *Survival* 48, no. 2 (2006): 28.

economic development, and “Chinese culture is still intrinsically rejected.”<sup>28</sup> In Africa, there is “anecdotal evidence that China’s earlier appeal may be wearing off”; a pattern that Shambaugh argues is also occurring in Asia and Europe.<sup>29</sup>

While there is no denying that the effectiveness of Chinese soft power is uneven at best, the jury remains out as to whether China has, on balance, made significant strides in growing its soft power. Additionally, negative assessments of Chinese soft power appear to go hand-in-hand with a more restrictive conception of soft power, as do positive assessments and more expansive conceptions.

### Soft Power and China’s External Security

Few academics have approached the subject of China’s soft power from the angle of its national security goals. This is unsurprising, considering that security is traditionally viewed as the playground of hard power—contests of competing national wills and might. Consequently, the majority of scholarly literature on Chinese soft power pertains to “softer” areas like economic and cultural diplomacy. In situations where academic work takes a regional approach to soft power analysis, such as an assessment of Chinese soft power in Africa or the Middle East, implications for China’s external security may be discussed incidentally.

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<sup>28</sup> William Kennedy, “China and the Evolution of Power: What is Motivating China to Adopt Soft Power Strategies and how Effective have these Strategies been?” (Master’s thesis, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2016), 49, 53.

<sup>29</sup> David Shambaugh, *China’s Future* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2016), 166.

The competing conceptions of soft power also contribute to the paucity of literature on the subject. The broadest, “Kurlantzick-esque” conception of soft power, by definition, precludes the domain of security in its entirety. Nye’s narrower conception, because of its restrictive focus on sources of power, limits the scope of soft power in the security realm where military and economic power tend to predominate. While a small number of academic undertakings have attempted to explore the link between soft power and security challenges, their efforts are mostly narrowly focused and idiographic, altogether representing a patchy and piecemeal treatment of the subject. To address this gap in the literature, a comprehensive and theory-oriented approach is required. This research aims to take a first step in the narrowing of this gap, and in doing so, ascertain the value of further work in this area.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the research is to elucidate the role of soft power in China's security strategy. To this end, a heuristic study of two cases is conducted: (1) the territorial disputes in the SCS, and (2) China's handling of Cross-Strait relations. This chapter begins by explaining the rationale for the selection of the case study methodology and the specific design of the case study. Subsequently, the selection of the individual cases is discussed and the issue of the independence of the two cases is considered. Finally, the data requirements and the process by which data is coded for analysis are presented.

#### Case Study Method and Design

In order to answer the primary research question, a "heuristic" or "hypothesis-generating" case study is conducted.<sup>30</sup> This involves the examination of "one or more cases for the purpose of developing more general theoretical propositions, which can then be tested through other methods, including large-N methods."<sup>31</sup> That the theoretical propositions arising from a heuristic case study are, as Levy states, "then tested through

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<sup>30</sup> Arend Lijphart, "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method," *American Political Science Review* 65, no. 3 (September 1971): 682-93; Harry Eckstein, "Case Studies and Theory in Political Science," in *Handbook of Political Science*, eds. Fred Greenstein and Nelson Polsby, vol. 7 (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1975), 79-138.

<sup>31</sup> Jack S. Levy, "Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25, no. 1 (2008): 5-6.

other methods” alludes to a key shortcoming of this method of research: that it serves to “contribute to the *process* of theory construction rather than to theory itself.”<sup>32</sup>

Nonetheless, the case studies represent a necessary first step in the development of theory for this subject. While of secondary importance, the construction of the cases also has value from an idiographic perspective, and may be useful for other theory-building studies on Chinese soft power or China’s security strategy.

The case study method is well-suited to addressing the research question on two counts: First, it allows for a high level of conceptual validity.<sup>33</sup> Instances of soft power, as defined in this research, are difficult to accurately identify using quantitative methods because of the importance of contextual factors in distinguishing between soft and hard power. While quantitative metrics for soft power do exist, their measurements are primarily based on “tools,” like tourism figures or cultural missions, and either ignore or superficially account for context. The case study method, through the in-depth examination of historical events, allows for the “detailed consideration of contextual factors” necessary to maintain conceptual validity.<sup>34</sup>

The second advantage of the case study method is its utility in heuristically identifying new variables and hypotheses.<sup>35</sup> Quantitative methods “in and of themselves . . . lack any clear means of actually identifying new hypotheses” and “have no

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>33</sup> George and Bennett, 19-20.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

unproblematic inductive means of identifying left-out variables.”<sup>36</sup> In comparison, the open-ended nature of the case study method aligns well with the objective of the research, which is the generation of a hypothesis on the role of soft power in China’s security strategy. While there are other advantages to the case study method, they are more applicable to other designs within the typology of theory-oriented case studies, such as theory-testing case studies and plausibility probes.

The case study method is not without its disadvantages. The limitations of the case study method in addressing questions of gradation—“how much” as opposed to “what” and “whether”—and the lack of representativeness have already been discussed in the “Limitations and Delimitations” section of chapter 1 . An additional disadvantage of this method is the high risk of bias in the selection of cases, which is inherent in all small-N studies.<sup>37</sup> However, this is “less critical at the hypothesis-generation stage.”<sup>38</sup> Further research may be conducted to overcome these limitations, and such opportunities will be explored in the final chapter.

### Selection of Cases

The research involves the examination of two cases: (1) the territorial disputes in the SCS, and (2) China’s handling of Cross-Strait relations. A case is “an instance of a class of events”—the class of events in this context being China’s external security

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>38</sup> Levy, 8.

challenges.<sup>39</sup> *China's Military Strategy*, a white paper published by the Chinese government in 2015, identifies the major threats to China's national security, two of which are the developments in the SCS, and the existence of "separatist elements" in Taiwan.<sup>40</sup> Many other security challenges are identified in the white paper, representing additional cases that exist within this class of events, such as: territorial disputes with Japan in the East China Sea (ECS) , territorial disputes along the border with India, the remilitarization of Japan, and instability on the Korean Peninsula, to name just a few. The selection of cases is based on three principal considerations:

1. Maximizing the generalizability of research conclusions across the class of events. This is achieved by selecting cases that together represent a broad subclass of events.
2. Within-case richness. This is achieved by selecting cases that have had significant developments since 2010, allowing for the construction of case that contains numerous and varied instances of soft power.
3. Maintaining high conceptual validity through the detailed examination of contextual factors. This is achieved by limiting the number of cases to be studied based on the resources available to the researcher.

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<sup>39</sup> George and Bennett, 17.

<sup>40</sup> The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, *China's Military Strategy* (2015), accessed March, 11, 2017, [http://www.china.org.cn/china/2015-05/26/content\\_35661433.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/china/2015-05/26/content_35661433.htm).

## Generalizability

The two cases selected achieve an optimal balance among the three factors. The SCS and Taiwan cases represent two sub-classes of events with minimal overlap, thus aiding in generalizability. This can be argued from three perspectives: First, while Cross-Strait relations is primarily a bilateral issue between China and Taiwan, the SCS disputes are multilateral in nature, involving China and four SEA countries with competing claims. Second, the Taiwan issue is fundamentally political, whereas the SCS disputes are territorial. Third, Taiwan is a relatively mature issue that dates back to the 1940s and has involved constant diplomatic maneuvering up till the present. This is quite unlike the SCS disputes, which re-emerged only in the last ten years after decades of dormancy that were interspersed by brief spurts of interest and activity.<sup>41</sup>

## Within-Case Richness

Within-case richness is high for both the SCS and Taiwan. The past six years in the SCS have been characterized by a rapid escalation of tensions, accelerated reclamation and infrastructure development, numerous high profile military and para-military incidents, and unceasing diplomatic overtures. For Taiwan, the 2015 Taiwanese presidential elections resulted in a renewed injection of drama in Cross-Strait relations, especially in light of the transfer of power from a pro-status-quo to a pro-independence Taiwanese national government.

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<sup>41</sup> See Sean Mirski, "The South China Sea Dispute: A Brief History," *Lawfare*, June 8, 2015, accessed January 3, 2017, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/south-china-sea-dispute-brief-history>.

### Conceptual Validity

The small number of cases to be studied facilitates a highly detailed examination of the variables and contextual factors. A large-N study was considered as a means to maximize the generalizability of conclusions from the research across the class of events; however, this would have necessitated a superficial treatment of each case, fatally reducing conceptual validity.

### Independence of Cases

The fact that Taiwan is one of the claimants in the SCS disputes may result in a degree of dependence between the two cases, with negative implications on the validity of the conclusions of the research and the generalizability of the conclusions. However, there are strong reasons to support the argument that this dependence is negligible, given that both China and Taiwan base their SCS claims on the same map “issued in the late 1940s by China’s then-Nationalist government.”<sup>42</sup> Since Taiwan’s claims are based on the same historical evidence as China’s, Taiwan’s claims only serve to lend credibility to China’s. In addition, China believes that the territory of Taiwan will eventually be reunified with the mainland as a single political entity; hence, Taiwan’s claims are not viewed as competing with China’s. Chinese officials have gone as far as to remark that “people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait share responsibility for safeguarding the

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<sup>42</sup> Austin Ramzy, “Taiwan, After Rejecting South China Sea Decision, Sends Patrol Ship,” *The New York Times*, July 13, 2016, accessed March 1, 2017, [https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/14/world/asia/south-china-sea-taiwan.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/14/world/asia/south-china-sea-taiwan.html?_r=0).

country's sovereignty over the South China Sea islands and their adjacent waters.”<sup>43</sup> On this basis, it is unlikely that China's strategy in the SCS has a significant influence its strategy for handling Cross-Strait relations, or vice versa.

### Data Collection and Coding

The research methodology involves the collection of data to answer three questions common to both cases:

1. What sources of power does China draw upon to further its foreign policy goals?
2. What tools of power does China employ to further its foreign policy goals?
3. In each instance where a tool of power is employed by China, what is the mode of power?

A combination of primary and secondary sources is used to meet the data requirements for this research. Primary sources are used in service of all three data requirements, and include news reports from both Chinese and non-Chinese media sources, official Chinese and non-Chinese documents such as white papers, speeches by Chinese officials, and online publications by official and quasi-official Chinese organizations. Secondary sources are used principally to inform inferences about the mode, and include journal articles and books by Chinese and non-Chinese scholars and defense analysts.

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<sup>43</sup> Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC, “Mainland, Taiwan Responsible for S. China Sea Sovereignty: Spokeswoman,” April 25, 2012, accessed March 27, 2017, [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/SpokespersonRemarks/201204/t20120426\\_2493232.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/SpokespersonRemarks/201204/t20120426_2493232.htm).

Data is coded in a progressive three-stage process of open, axial, and selective coding.<sup>44</sup> During open coding, raw data is analyzed for its relevance to the phenomenon of soft power, and grouped to form sub-categories. Open coding is an interpretative process, and it is during this stage that the sub-categories are determined. Subsequently, axial coding relates the subcategories that were identified during open coding to the three predetermined categories of sources, tools, and modes. Finally, as part of selective coding, core concepts—potential aspects of China’s soft power strategy, or “strategic aims”—are identified, abstracted, and synthesized to generate the desired product of this research: a hypothesis about the role of soft power in China’s security strategy. Figure 1 serves as an illustration of this process.

The study, as it has been designed, is but one of many possible approaches to the subject. Nonetheless, it represents a feasible and suitable method for exploring this relatively unstudied aspect of Chinese soft power. The next two chapters will present the results of the research conducted in accordance with the case study design described in this chapter.

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<sup>44</sup> See Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998).

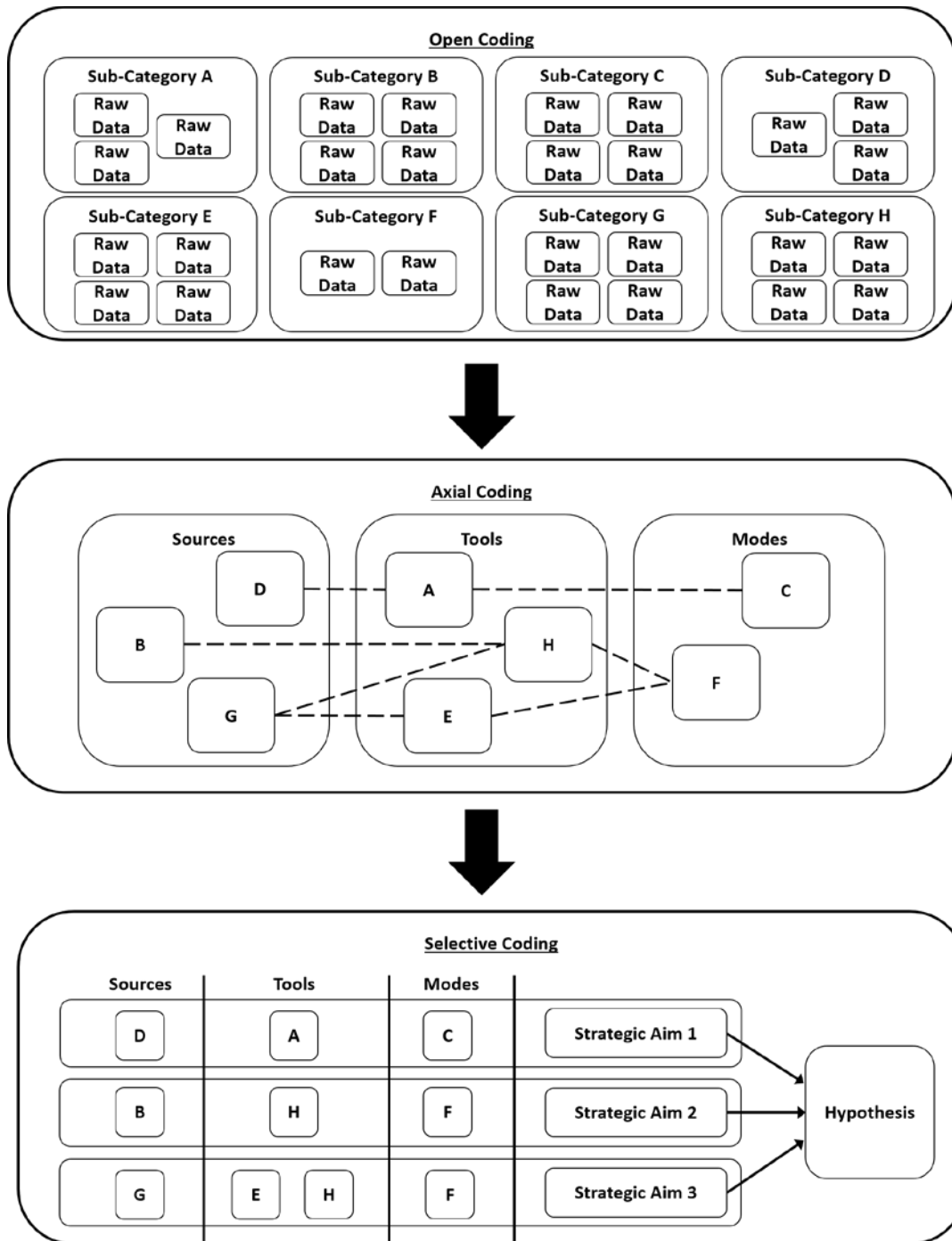


Figure 1. Data Coding Process

Source: Created by author.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS: CASE 1—THE SCS DISPUTES

I am a veteran, and like the people and service personnel of every nation, seeking to win is my mission in life. Protecting the peace is my true dream. I have always firmly believed that shaking hands is better than making a fist, an open heart is better than a cocked gun.

— Admiral Sun Jianguo, IISS Shangri-La Dialogue 2016

The purpose of this research is to determine the role of soft power in China's security strategy. This is achieved through the study of two cases: the territorial disputes in the SCS, in which China is one of the claimants, and China's handling of its relations with Taiwan. The case studies are delimited by time—from the beginning of 2010 onwards—and purpose—the effectiveness of China's employment of soft power will not be examined.

Chapters 4 and 5 respectively present the analysis for each of the two cases being studied. For each case, background is first provided to address basic questions such as who the principal actors are, critical point(s) of contention, and major historical developments. The role that hard power plays is then briefly discussed to provide the necessary context for the analysis of soft power. Next, the output of the three-stage data coding process is presented in the form of the strategic aims that have been identified. The constituent elements of each strategic aim—sources, tools, and modes—and the relationships between these elements are then discussed in detail. Finally, the relation between hard power and soft power in each case is examined.

## Background to the SCS Disputes

The disputes center on unresolved claims by a handful of East Asian countries over a variety of land features in the SCS. Countries are reluctant to concede or agree to compromises in their claims for a few reasons: First, to gain exclusive access to resources in the waters and sea bed surrounding and beneath the features (fisheries, oil, natural gas, etc.). Second, to control major international shipping routes. Third, because of the symbolic significance that is invariably attached to matters of national sovereignty.<sup>45</sup> Resolving these claims is made especially problematic because of the limitations of international maritime law, a sizeable part of which is based on international customary law. Even where countries have committed themselves to international agreements, grey areas remain. For example, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) defines the territorial and economic rights that littoral states have with regard to the different types of land features (archipelagos, islands, reefs, rocks, etc.). However, it does not determine the rightful ownership of territory that is disputed, or the appropriate status of land features in cases where countries disagree. Further complicating such agreements are the numerous caveats and reservations that countries attach to their participation.<sup>46</sup>

The claimants in the SCS disputes are China, Taiwan, Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam. China's extensive claims in the SCS, represented by the Nine-

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<sup>45</sup> Mirski.

<sup>46</sup> See the by-country declarations for UNCLOS listed at [http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention\\_agreements/convention\\_declarations.htm](http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/convention_declarations.htm). As an example, China does not accept any of the dispute resolution mechanisms provided for in the Convention.

Dash Line, overlap with the claims made by all four SEA countries. China and Taiwan's claims are effectively identical, however, as discussed in the "Independence of Cases" section of chapter 3, China views Taiwan's claims in the SCS as complementary to its own, if not simply invalid. Involvement in the disputes is not limited to claimant states. While most non-claimant states have chosen to remain neutral on the merits of the various claims, many have taken actions aimed at maintaining freedom of navigation through the SCS and preventing the escalation of conflict. In particular, extra-regional powers such as the US and Japan have weighed in on the disputes both directly and indirectly through official statements, military action, and the provision of materiel support to certain claimant states.<sup>47</sup>

The intensity of the disputes has risen and fallen repeatedly since the end of the Second World War. The most recent period of re-intensification began in 2009 with a new round of claims submitted by a number of states, including China with its Nine-Dash Line.<sup>48</sup> Since then, tensions in the SCS have continued to escalate steadily as a result of a series of actions and counter-actions by both claimants and non-claimants. China has conducted extensive reclamation and infrastructure development on some of the land features that it controls, and this has been perceived by other parties as an attempt to increase its control of territory in the SCS. The US has asserted its right to operate in the SCS through freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs), which has prompted both

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<sup>47</sup> For example, Japan supplied or agreed to supply the Philippines and Vietnam with maritime patrol vessels in 2016.

<sup>48</sup> Mirski.

military and paramilitary responses from the Chinese. The Philippines unilaterally submitted a case against China to the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), and while the court eventually awarded a decision in favor of the Philippines, China has not budged from its position that the arbitration is illegal and cannot be recognized. All parties have called for the de-escalation of the situation, and some efforts to establish stabilizing mechanisms in the SCS have made progress. Nonetheless, the current level of tension is significantly raised from where it was just prior to 2009, and destabilizing actions in the SCS continue to run the gamut from diplomatic and legal battles, to low-intensity military conflict.

#### An Overview of Chinese Hard Power in the SCS

Hard power undoubtedly plays a large role in China's handling of the SCS disputes and manifests in a variety of forms. China's considerable economic resources have been directed at land reclamation in various parts of the SCS on a scale that vastly outpaces similar efforts by other claimants. This has allowed China to develop both civilian and dual-use infrastructure, such as airfields and radars, that enables it to maintain an increased civilian and military presence throughout the SCS. China's heavy investment in and generous financial loans to SEA countries have also provided it with economic leverage to drive a wedge among members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on the issue of the SCS.<sup>49</sup> Economic activities have also been

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<sup>49</sup> Steve Miller, "China Using 'Soft Power' to Assert Rights over South China Sea," *VOA*, July 22, 2016, accessed January 31, 2017, <http://www.voanews.com/a/china-soft-power-asean/3430297.html>.

used as a direct means to assert China's claims, such as with the 2014 Haiyang Shiyou 981 standoff, which was named after the Chinese state-owned oil platform that conducted drilling work near the Paracel Islands, in waters also claimed by Vietnam.

In terms of military power, China has responded to US FONOPs in the SCS with "close encounters" and shadowing by its military aircraft and vessels. Chinese Coast Guard forces have also been involved in numerous clashes with vessels from other countries in attempts to assert China's sovereignty in the disputed waters.<sup>50</sup> Chinese fishing fleets have been provided with training and subsidies by the Chinese government to serve as a maritime militia, augmenting the capabilities of the Chinese navy and maritime law enforcement agencies, while also adding an additional layer of complexity to the rules of engagement that foreign military vessels are bound by.<sup>51</sup> Additional Chinese military forces, including fighter aircraft and surface-to-air missiles, have also been deployed on some of the islands in recent years to strengthen China's defensive posture in the SCS.

Another aspect of China's hard power strategy in the SCS is its diplomatic actions. Chinese officials have voiced strong opposition to statements and actions by other states that appear to criticize China's activities in the SCS. Diplomatic maneuvers have also been used to support a "divide-and-conquer strategy to disrupt cohesion and

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<sup>50</sup> Greg Torode, "Chinese Coast Guard Involved in Most South China Sea Clashes: Research," *Reuters*, September 7, 2016, accessed March 19, 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-china-coastguard-idUSKCN11C2LA>.

<sup>51</sup> Megha Rajagopalan, "China Trains 'Fishing Militia' to Sail into Disputed Waters," *Reuters*, April 30, 2016, accessed, March 19, 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-china-fishingboats-idUSKCN0XS0RS>.

atomize resistance” within ASEAN and “[exploit] the internal divides of claimant states.”<sup>52</sup> China has insisted that non-claimant states should not get involved in the SCS disputes, and that resolution of the disputes must be done through bilateral negotiations between claimant states, as opposed to multilateral solutions or referrals to third-party dispute resolution bodies.

Overall, China’s employment of hard power in the SCS is indicative of three components in its overarching strategy: (1) aggressively asserting its claims while reshaping the status quo to its advantage; (2) countering and fragmenting opposition to its claims; and (3) pushing for resolution mechanisms that provide it with the greatest leverage.

#### Chinese Soft Power in the SCS

The research indicates that China’s use of soft power in its handling of the SCS disputes has three strategic aims:

1. Control the terms of discussion. China’s goal is to strengthen the legitimacy of its claims in the SCS. This is done by redefining the legal basis upon which maritime boundary delimitation occurs, establishing the history of its claims, and controlling the manner in which disputes are managed and resolved.

Controlling the terms of discussion allows China to increase the likelihood that the disputes will ultimately be resolved in its favor.

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<sup>52</sup> Stratfor, “The Limits of Soft Power in the South China Sea,” November 18, 2015, accessed January 31, 2017, <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/limits-soft-power-south-china-sea>.

2. Make China a preferred partner. By increasing its value to countries in the region, particularly among claimant states, and projecting an image of constructive participation in regional affairs, China hopes to soften the opposition by other states to its activities in the SCS, and encourage claimant states to work with China in resolving the disputes in a manner that it deems appropriate.
3. Prevent interference. By reducing the extent to which non-claimant states influence developments in the SCS, China increases its leverage over claimant states. This pertains especially to the US, which possess the economic, military, and political heft to both counter China unilaterally and maintain a tacit coalition of states that are able to work together to oppose China in the SCS. It also ensures that China is able to isolate other claimant states through bilateral negotiations.

These strategic aims are inferred based on the observed application of sources, tools, and modes by China in its handling of the SCS disputes. The subsequent sections present the components of soft power that support each strategic aim, as well as the links between the various components.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> See appendix A for a graphical depiction of China's overall soft power strategy in the SCS disputes.

## Soft Power Strategic Aim 1: Control the Terms of Discussion

China's first strategic aim is to control the terms of discussion, and by doing so increase the likelihood that the SCS disputes are managed and eventually resolved in its favor. This strategic aim draws on informational, institutional, and diplomatic sources of power to achieve two effects: (1) establish China's version of the facts, and (2) redefine the rules to China's advantage (see figure 2).

### Establish the Facts

China's efforts in establishing the facts serve its goal of influencing what the facts are. Through a combination of official statements, products from official Chinese media, and participation by Chinese academics in the ongoing intellectual discourse on developments in the SCS, China seeks to convince the global public of the historical basis of its claims in the SCS. It argues that "the Chinese people [were] the first to discover, name, develop and administer the Islands in the South China, and that the Chinese government was the first to peacefully and effectively exercise continuous sovereign jurisdiction on South China Sea Islands," citing both occidental and oriental historical maps as corroborating evidence.<sup>54</sup>

China has left no stone unturned in its efforts to "educate" the world. In 2016, China ran a video advertisement in Times Square, New York City, providing evidence for the validity of its claims in the SCS. The three-minute-long video ran 120 times a day

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<sup>54</sup> Bingguo Dai (speech, China-US Dialogue on South China Sea Between Chinese and US Think Tanks, Washington, DC, July 5, 2016), accessed March 11, 2017, [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/t1377747.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1377747.shtml).

for a period of 10 days, and included soundbites from both Chinese and non-Chinese government officials.<sup>55</sup> Official Chinese media outlets like China Central Television (CCTV) and Xinhua have established dedicated online sites in English that reiterate China's position on what the facts are.<sup>56</sup> These sites supplement the official online repository maintained by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) that details the Chinese's governments position on all SCS-related matters.<sup>57</sup> CCTV has also produced online videos that convey similar information, but use an animated format that is likely to have greater appeal among online viewers.<sup>58</sup>

China's attempts at shaping intellectual discourse on the SCS go beyond the efforts of individual Chinese policymakers and academics. At the institutional level, China has established think tanks and institutions with a sole focus on the SCS. Among them are the Collaborative Innovation Center for South China Sea Studies (CICSCSS) established in 2012, and the National Institute for South China Sea Studies (NISCSS) established in 2013 as the successor to the Hainan Research Institute for the South China Sea. The NISCSS in turn sponsors the Institute of China-American Studies (ICAS) which

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<sup>55</sup> Angela Doland, "Watch the Chinese Propaganda Ad Playing 120 Times a Day in Times Square," *AdvertisingAge*, July 27, 2016, accessed December 10, 2017, <http://adage.com/article/global-news/a-mind-numbing-chinese-propaganda-ad-playing-times-square-120-times-a-day/305198/>.

<sup>56</sup> See <http://english.cctv.com/special/southchinasea/>, and <http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/special/SouthChinaSea/index.htm>.

<sup>57</sup> See <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/nanghai/eng/>.

<sup>58</sup> An example can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PH7sOSmyalQ>.

is based in Washington, DC. ICAS “has a relatively low profile in Washington but has become [a] frequent contributor to American events discussing the South China Sea disputes.”<sup>59</sup> These institutions provide China with the means to promulgate its version of the facts to non-Chinese academics and policymakers without drawing as much attention to China’s underlying agenda.

### Redefine the Rules

China also seeks to redefine the rules by influencing which facts are relevant, and how disputes should be resolved. By determining which facts are relevant, China hopes to redefine the legal basis by which international maritime boundaries are delimited, and “shape international opinion in favor of a distorted interpretation of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.”<sup>60</sup> Here again, official statements frequently point to China’s historical claim to territory in the SCS and reference “traditional fishing areas” as the basis on which China claims economic rights in various parts of the SCS. In terms of the manner in which disputes should be resolved, Chinese officials reference China’s past

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<sup>59</sup> Bill Hayton, “Is China Getting Better at Charming Southeast Asia on the South China Sea?” *The Diplomat*, November 17, 2016, accessed February 1, 2017, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/11/is-china-getting-better-at-charming-southeast-asia-on-the-south-china-sea/>.

<sup>60</sup> US Department of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People’s Republic of China 2007* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2007), accessed February 1, 2017, <http://archive.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/070523-China-Military-Power-final.pdf>.

successes in resolving boundary issues with its neighbors as an indication that bilateral negotiations are the best way forward in the SCS.<sup>61</sup>

Institutions like the CICSCSS, NISCSS, and ICAS serve the dual purposes of providing China with a platform to share its interpretation of the rules among experts in the field, and a means by which to grow its own cadre of researchers and academic experts to bolster its institutional capacity to inform the intellectual discourse.

While China can easily establish think tanks and academic institutions to enhance its intellectual soft power, growing its influence in the area of maritime law poses a much greater challenge. Legal institutions, particularly those that function in the realm of international law, draw their legitimacy from the body of states that recognize their authority. This has not stopped China from trying to establish its own alternative legal institutions. In 2016, the chief justice of the Supreme People's Court announced that China would unilaterally establish an International Maritime Judicial Center (IMJC) that will adjudicate on maritime disputes.<sup>62</sup> By publicizing its judgements and judicial views, China hopes that the IMJC will enable it to reshape legal norms in maritime disputes to its advantage—an approach informally termed by observers as “lawfare.”

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<sup>61</sup> See Dai; Jianguo Sun, “Strengthening Regional Order in the Asia-Pacific,” (speech, IISS Shangri-La Dialogue 2015 Fourth Plenary Session, Singapore, May 30, 2015), accessed March 11, 2017, <http://www.iiss.org/en/events/shangri-la-dialogue/archive/shangri-la-dialogue-2015-862b/plenary4-b8e3/sun-0dfc>.

<sup>62</sup> Qiang Zhou, “Work Report of the Supreme People's Court (最高人民法院工作报告)” (speech, fourth session of the 12th National People's Congress (第十二届全国人民代表大会第四次会议), March 13, 2016), accessed February 1, 2017, <http://www.chinacourt.org/article/detail/2016/03/id/1825026.shtml>.

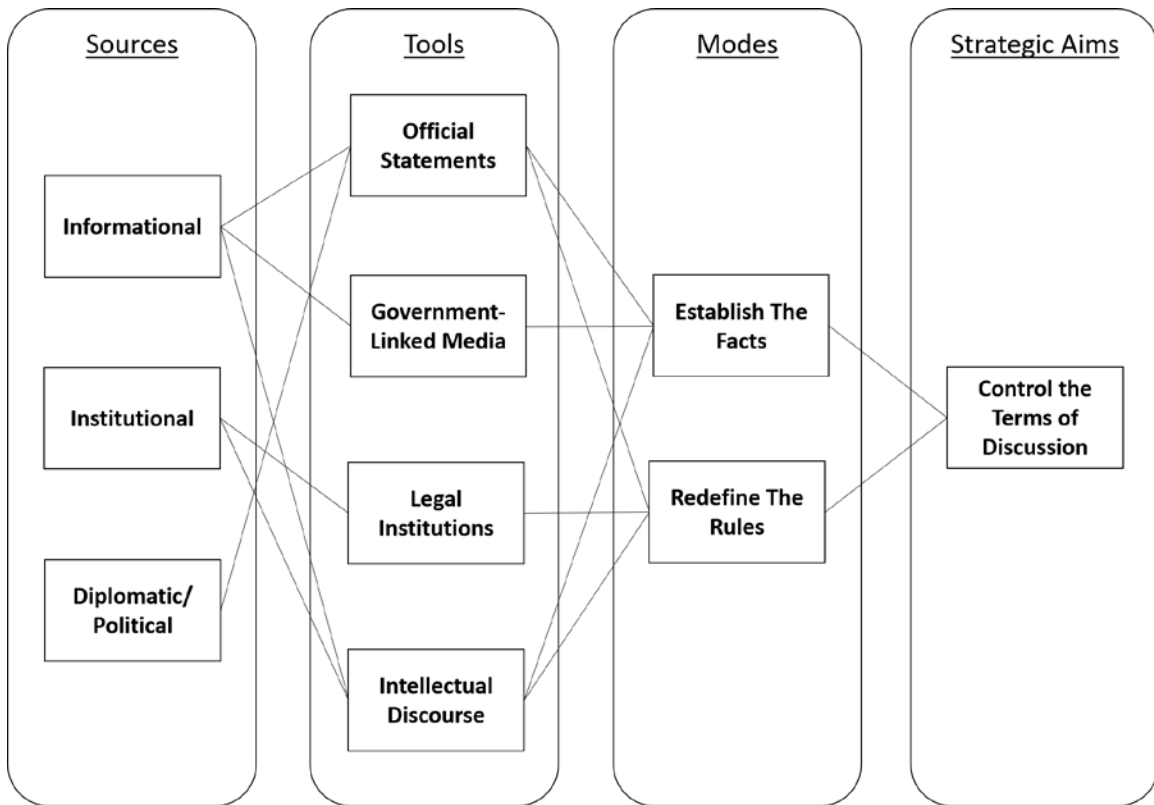


Figure 2. Strategic Aim 1: Control the Terms of Discussion

Source: Created by author.

**Soft Power Strategic Aim 2:  
Make China a Preferred Partner**

China's second strategic aim is to present itself as a preferred partner to the member states of ASEAN, and by doing so soften their opposition to China's activities in the SCS and increase their receptivity to China's espoused approach to resolving the territorial disputes. This strategic aim draws on informational, institutional, diplomatic, military, and economic sources of power to achieve two effects: (1) conveying China's strategic intent, and (2) elevating China's role in the region (see figure 3).

## Convey Strategic Intent

China seeks to communicate a version of its strategic intent that will allay the fears of ASEAN member states and convince them of China's desire to work towards outcomes that are beneficial to all parties. At every opportunity, Chinese officials have reiterated their government's commitment to "rules and mechanisms for management and control of differences of opinion," "realizing mutual benefits through cooperation," "safeguarding freedom of navigation in and flight over the South China Sea," and, more generally, "peace and stability in the South China Sea."<sup>63</sup> Official Chinese media outlets and Chinese academics from state-linked institutes sing a similar refrain.

To back up its rhetoric, China has pointed to its support for ASEAN-China maritime cooperation, which includes a half-billion-dollar fund that it established in 2011, as well as its proposals for Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) and "hotlines" to better manage potential conflicts in the SCS. It has also reiterated its support for the implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), and continued consultation on the ASEAN-China SCS Code of Conduct (COC). These efforts in practical security cooperation serve to demonstrate China's commitment to making its "dual-track" approach work—resolution of disputes through bilateral negotiations between claimant states, supported by a multilateral ASEAN-China effort to maintain peace and stability in the SCS.

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<sup>63</sup> Jianguo Sun, "The Challenges of Conflict Resolution" (speech, IISS Shangri-La Dialogue 2016 Fourth Plenary Session, Singapore, June 5, 2016), accessed November 3, 2017, <http://www.iiss.org/en/events/shangri-la-dialogue/archive/shangri-la-dialogue-2016-4a4b/plenary4-6c15/jianguo-6391>.

China has also communicated its intent to maintain stability in the SCS through its willingness to work with the US. For example, China agreed to a Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES) at the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) in 2014.<sup>64</sup> It has since participated in bilateral CUES exercises with the US Navy, and employed CUES during its encounters with the US naval vessels in the SCS. To allay concerns over its construction of dual-use facilities on its islands in the SCS, China has couched these developments as a way for China to “better perform [its] international responsibilities and obligations.”<sup>65</sup>

#### Elevate China’s Role in the Region

China has taken steps to increase its value and links with member states of ASEAN and in regional structures, in order to increase its attractiveness as a regional partner. In terms of the regional security architecture, China has continued to increase its participation in “multilateral dialogues and cooperation mechanisms such as the ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Meeting Plus (ADMM+), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD), Jakarta International Defence Dialogue (JIDD) and Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS).”<sup>66</sup> It has also embarked on its own initiatives, such as the Xiangshan Forum—a track 1.5 regional security dialogue, which was inaugurated in

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<sup>64</sup> CUES “offers safety measures and a means to limit mutual interference, to limit uncertainty, and to facilitate communication when naval ships or naval aircraft encounter each other in an unplanned manner.”

<sup>65</sup> Sun, “Strengthening Regional Order in the Asia-Pacific.”

<sup>66</sup> The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, *China’s Military Strategy*.

2009 but has significantly expanded in recent years—and the establishment of the China-ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Informal Meeting in 2015. China has also stated that it “resolutely supports ASEAN exhibiting a leading role in cooperation in the East Asia region” and has taken on a series of projects to demonstrate this support in a concrete manner.<sup>67</sup> China is an active participant in the ARF and has led more than 40 cooperation projects, constituting one-third of the total number of projects, and the highest number among member states.<sup>68</sup>

Practical security cooperation has also featured as one of China’s soft power tools. China conducted HADR operations in support of the Philippines following Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, and in support of Malaysia following severe flooding in 2014. It also participated in the ARF Disaster Relief Exercise 2015 held in Malaysia. With Thailand, China has “numerous shared security interests, particularly regarding non-state threats in the Mekong River basin.”<sup>69</sup>

From an economic perspective, China’s value to the region has grown significantly. In addition to the large and growing volume of bilateral trade and investment with ASEAN member states, China’s institutional influence has been enhanced by its establishment of the AIIB. The China-ASEAN Investment Cooperation

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<sup>67</sup> Sun, “The Challenges of Conflict Resolution.”

<sup>68</sup> Xia Hua, “China Supports Development of ASEAN Regional Forum with Practical Actions: FM,” *Xinhua*, July 27, 2016, accessed March 11, 2017, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-07/27/c\\_135542397.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-07/27/c_135542397.htm).

<sup>69</sup> Stratfor, “The Limits of Soft Power in the South China Sea.”

Fund, which began its operations in 2010, serves as another symbol of China's commitment to economic development in SEA.

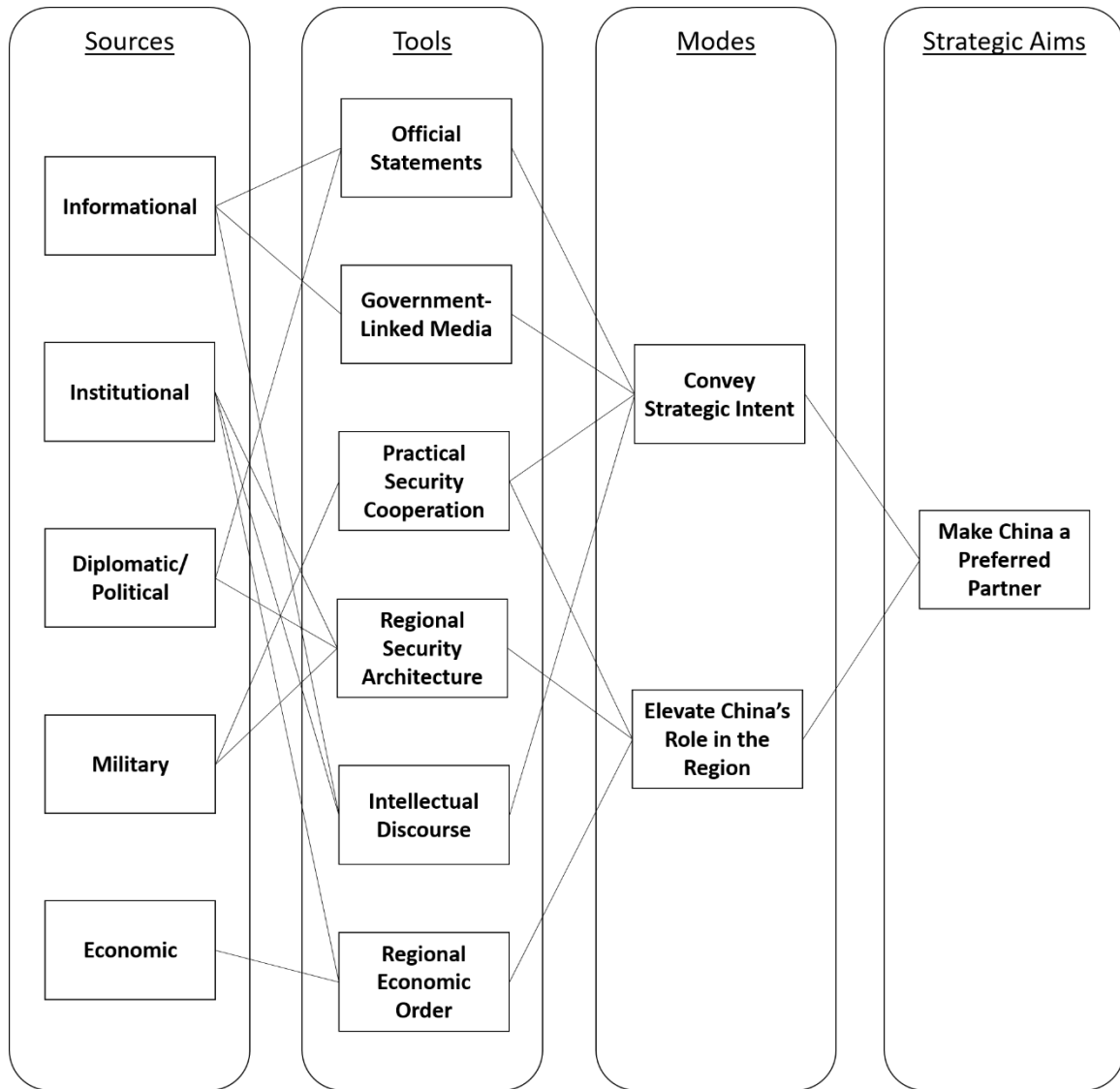


Figure 3. Strategic Aim 2: Make China a Preferred Partner

Source: Created by author.

### Soft Power Strategic Aim 3: Prevent Interference

China's third strategic aim is to prevent interference from non-claimant states, particularly the US, and by doing so maintain its freedom of action in the SCS and increase its leverage in bilaterally negotiated dispute settlements. This strategic aim draws on informational, institutional, diplomatic, and economic sources of power to delegitimize extra-regional actors (see figure 4).

#### Delegitimize Extra-Regional Actors

Unlike the first two strategic aims, which serve to enhance China's soft power, this third strategic aim focuses on reducing the soft power of extra-regional actors that pose a threat to China's achievement of its goals in the SCS. Statements by Chinese officials and the state-run media have sought to "[malign] the [US'] role in initiating and escalating tensions."<sup>70</sup> China's line of argument is that the militaristic nature of US involvement has introduced destabilizing elements in the SCS, and points to "freedom-of-navigation operations in the South China Sea, flaunting its military force, and . . . pulling in help from cliques, supporting their allies in antagonizing China."<sup>71</sup> China has also sought to draw attention to what it perceives as a history of "power politics and bullying by Western Powers."<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Blanchard and Lu, 574.

<sup>71</sup> Sun, "The Challenges of Conflict Resolution."

<sup>72</sup> Dai.

China argues that states in the region should be allowed to collectively develop their own approach to achieving peace and stability in the SCS without unwanted external interference. It has proposed the idea of a “security-governance method in keeping with the special characteristics of this region” or an “Asian way of comfort” that focuses on “non-aligned relationship routes,” with the goal of excluding extra-regional actors.<sup>73</sup> China’s extensive efforts in developing ASEAN-China initiatives also serve to limit the influence of actors like the US and Japan by reducing their role in the regional security architecture.

From an economic perspective, China has sought “to undermine U.S. dominance in established trade blocs while touting the benefits of a China-led order through its own initiatives.”<sup>74</sup> Much like the AIIB, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) offers the region an economic structure that has little in the way of a role for the US. The recent withdrawal of the US from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which would have been an alternative, has only increased the attractiveness of realizing the RCEP. This regional economic framework, along with the AIIB and the various funds operated by China for ASEAN and its member states, reinforce the perception of the US’ waning economic relevance in the region. This undercuts the US’ soft power in the region and weakens its ability to maintain a grouping of countries, both claimants and non-claimants, that are willing to work with the US to block China from achieving its designs for the SCS.

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Stratfor, “The Limits of Soft Power in the South China Sea.”

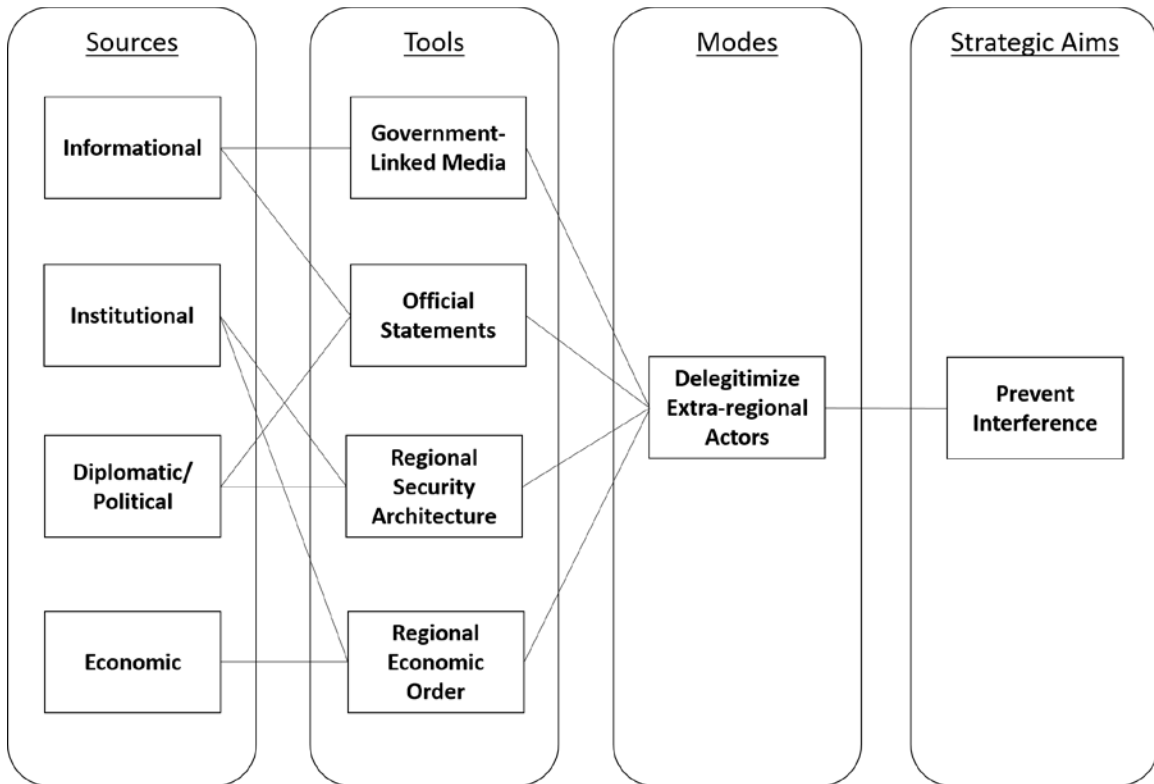


Figure 4. Strategic Aim 3: Prevent Interference

Source: Created by author.

### The Interplay of Hard and Soft Power

Overall, China’s soft power strategy appears to work hand-in-hand with its hard power goals in the SCS in order to “safeguard [China’s] maritime rights and interests.”<sup>75</sup> By controlling the terms of discussion, China is able to reshape not just the physical state of play in the SCS, but also the legal and historical aspects of the disputes. It also

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<sup>75</sup> The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, *China’s Military Strategy*.

increases the likelihood that its preferred method of resolving the disputes—bilateral negotiations—will eventually be agreed to by other claimant states. China’s hard power goal of countering and fragmenting opposition to its claims is supported by soft power efforts to make China a preferred partner in the region and prevent interference by extra-regional actors. As the de facto leader of the loose grouping of countries opposed to China’s actions in the SCS, the US will find itself hard-pressed to maintain the commitment of other states in resisting China, particularly as its soft power in the region is diminished. China, on the other hand, will benefit from the growing desire of other states in the region to work with it as its status as a preferred partner rises.

## CHAPTER 5

### ANALYSIS: CASE 2—TAIWAN

No matter how much difficulty we have gone through, no power can separate us because we are closely-knit kinsmen, and blood is thicker than water.  
— Xi Jinping, Opening Remarks at 2015 Xi-Ma Meeting

#### Background to Cross-Strait Relations

In 1949, China's Nationalist government, the Kuomintang (KMT), was defeated by the CPC and fled to the island of Taiwan, marking the end of the Chinese Civil War. Since then, China and Taiwan have existed in a political standoff, with the two entities both claiming to be the legitimate government of the territory of China. In the intervening decades, the state of affairs between China and Taiwan, commonly referred to as Cross-Strait relations, has vacillated between stable cooperation and military crisis. China's fundamental position has remained essentially unchanged—it sees Taiwan as a rogue province that must eventually be reunified with China under the control of the CPC. Up until 2000, Taiwan's government also maintained the position that the territories of China and Taiwan would eventually be reunified, albeit under its control. The combination of these two political end-states was captured in the 1992 Consensus that developed out of a meeting between representatives of the CPC and KMT, and is the basis for the current interpretation of the "One China principle."<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> The "One China principle," under the 1992 Consensus, is that both China and Taiwan are part of a single sovereign state, but there is disagreement over which political entity is the legitimate government of this state.

The election of Chen Shui-bian from the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) as President of Taiwan in 2000 marked the beginning of a period of increased turbulence in Cross-Strait relations. Unlike the KMT, the DPP has not publicly accepted the 1992 Consensus, and while it has not attempted to make a formal declaration of Taiwanese independence, it is a strong proponent of a distinct Taiwanese identity. From 2000 to 2008, the Chinese government employed a host of coercive measures to dissuade the DPP from putting Taiwan on a path to independence, including the suspension of high-level interactions with the Taiwanese government, the passing of the Anti-Secession Law, and intensified diplomatic isolation of Taiwan.<sup>77</sup> During this eight-year period, no agreements were signed between China's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS) and Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF), nor were there any formal interactions between the two organizations.<sup>78</sup>

The return to a KMT-led Taiwanese government in 2008 resulted in an immediate improvement in Cross-Strait relations and steadily increasing levels of cooperation between China and Taiwan in a variety of areas. However, the relatively healthy political situation is at odds with social trends among the Taiwanese population. "Since the 1992 consensus, the proportion of people on the island who identify themselves simply as Taiwanese has more than tripled to almost 60%; the share of those who call themselves

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<sup>77</sup> Article eight of the Anti-Secession Law authorizes China to use non-peaceful means to prevent Taiwan's secession from China.

<sup>78</sup> Chien-Kai Chen, "China-Taiwan Relations Through the Lens of the Interaction Between China's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits and Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation," *East Asia* 31, no. 3 (September 2014): 226.

Chinese has plunged to just 3%.”<sup>79</sup> This issue of identity is even more pronounced among Taiwanese youth, and most notably manifested as student-led protests in the 2014 Sunflower Student Movement.<sup>80</sup>

In the 2016 round of elections in Taiwan, the DPP gained control of both the executive and legislative branches for the first time in Taiwan’s history. While the current Taiwanese president, Tsai Ing-wen, has taken a more conciliatory approach to Cross-Strait relations than Chen so far, China remains wary about her political goals, and has made repeated calls for her to recognize the 1992 Consensus as a precursor to any further improvement in ties between China and Taiwan. The 2016 election also saw the emergence of the New Power Party, which has its roots in the Sunflower Student Movement and advocates independence for Taiwan. This points to trends in Taiwan’s political landscape that will likely have an increasingly deleterious impact on Cross-Strait relations.

#### An Overview of Chinese Hard Power in Cross-Strait Relations

Hard power features extensively in China’s management of Cross-Strait relations and spans the diplomatic, military, and economic realms. As China’s geopolitical weight has burgeoned, the hard power leverage that it has over Taiwan has increased correspondingly. In terms of diplomatic actions, China continues to lean on countries to

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<sup>79</sup> The Economist, “The Great Obfuscation of One-China,” March 11, 2017, accessed March 18, 2017, <http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21718499-polite-fiction-there-only-one-china-has-kept-peace-east-asiabut-now-it>.

<sup>80</sup> The Sunflower Student Movement was a protest by students and civic groups in 2014 against the establishment of a trade agreement between Taiwan and China.

sever diplomatic ties with Taiwan and recognize China instead. São Tomé and Príncipe was the latest country to do so, severing its diplomatic ties with Taiwan in 2016, leaving only 21 countries that still recognize Taiwan, in comparison with the 174 that recognize China. This diplomatic strangulation extends beyond state-to-state relations to include Taiwan's participation in regional and international organizations. In 2015, China denied Taiwan's application to join the AIIB as "China-Taipei," requiring instead that Taiwan apply through China's Ministry of Finance as Hong Kong had done.<sup>81</sup> China has also opposed Taiwan's bid to join the International Civil Aviation Organization. In 2016, China insisted for the first time that Taiwan attend the World Health Organization's annual assembly as part of China, unlike in past years where Taiwan had participated as an independent observer.

China has also used diplomatic actions to signal to the Taiwanese population that it is far more willing to work with the KMT than the DPP in the hope of influencing how the Taiwanese vote. In the lead up to the 2016 Taiwan elections, Xi Jinping and Ma Ying-jeou, then-President of Taiwan, met in Singapore. This was the first-ever meeting between the heads of government of China and Taiwan—a clear signal to the Taiwanese public that their support for the KMT would translate into Cross-Strait stability.

Following the DPP's win in 2016 and Tsai's subsequent refusal to accept the 1992 Consensus, China made its displeasure clear through the suspension of high-level

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<sup>81</sup> Lawrence Chung, "Taiwan Says it Will Not Join Beijing-led AIIB After Rejecting Condition that 'Violates Dignity'," *South China Morning Post*, April 12, 2016, accessed March 29, 2017, <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/1935492/taiwan-says-it-will-not-join-beijing-led-aiib-after>.

interactions between ARATS and SEF, as well as the China's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) and Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council (MAC). Unsurprisingly, official exchanges between representatives of the CPC and KMT have continued unabated.

Other actions by China contribute to the undermining of Taiwanese sovereignty in general. In recent years, there have been a number of instances of Taiwanese citizens who have been apprehended in third countries for illegal activities being deported to China for prosecution. In addition to the implied message that China considers the Taiwanese people a part of China, it serves as a reminder that China is in a position to deny Taiwan the rights that are afforded to sovereign states.

Military hard power has long been a major element of China's approach to Cross-Strait relations. On top of the large military force postured in Taiwan's direction, China has conducted a variety of aggressive military actions that warn Taiwan against a move towards independence. In 2015, CCTV aired footage of a People's Liberation Army (PLA) exercise that showed Chinese troops conducting "a raid on a building that [looked] strikingly like the Presidential Office Building in Taipei."<sup>82</sup> More recently, China has flown and sailed bombers, fighters and its aircraft carrier in the vicinity of Taiwan.<sup>83</sup> "There have also been reports that China is considering amending its 'anti-secession' law

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<sup>82</sup> Nikhil Sonnad, "Video: A Chinese Military Drill Simulates an Attack on Taiwan's Presidential Office," Quartz, July 23, 2015, accessed March 30, 2017, <https://qz.com/461110/video-a-chinese-military-drill-simulates-an-attack-on-taiwans-presidential-office/>.

<sup>83</sup> The flights occurred in November and December 2016 and consisted of bombers and fighter aircraft circling Taiwan. In January 2017, China's aircraft carrier sailed through the Taiwan Strait.

... to say it could invade if Taiwan's leader refuses to endorse the 1992 consensus."<sup>84</sup>

Whether or not an amendment is actually passed, it sends the message that China's tolerance for pro-independence groups in Taiwan is running low.

China has also employed economic hard power against Taiwan, though less extensively than military or diplomatic hard power. An example of this is China's apparent regulation of the number of Chinese tourists visiting Taiwan.<sup>85</sup> Following Tsai's inauguration as president, the number of Chinese tourists that visited Taiwan fell significantly, affecting Taiwan's tourism industry.<sup>86</sup> China points to other causes for the drop in tourist numbers, but the timing and magnitude suggest government intervention.

Overall, China's employment of hard power in its handling of Cross-Strait relations is indicative of two components in its overarching strategy: (1) delegitimizing Taiwan as a sovereign entity through diplomatic isolation; and (2) providing the Taiwanese government with disincentives for pursuing a path towards independence.

#### Chinese Soft Power in Cross-Strait Relations

The research indicates that China's use of soft power in its handling of Cross-Strait relations has two strategic aims:

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<sup>84</sup> The Economist, "The Great Obfuscation of One-China."

<sup>85</sup> Chinese citizens require approval from the Chinese government to travel to Taiwan.

<sup>86</sup> Nicole Smith, "China is Using Tourism to Hit Taiwan Where it Really Hurts," *Time*, November 16, 2016, accessed March 17, 2017, <http://time.com/4574290/china-taiwan-tourism-tourists/>.

1. Build robust social ties. China's goal is to undercut the emergence of a strong Taiwanese identity that is entirely separate from China. This is done by playing up the common historical identity that Taiwan shares with China, and by creating an environment that promotes social re-integration between the Chinese and Taiwanese after decades of isolation from each other. Deep social ties serve as an anchor to prevent Taiwan drifting away from China towards independence.
2. Engender a sense of shared prosperity. China seeks to convince the Taiwanese population that a close relationship is essential for Taiwan's continued prosperity. This involves developing a high level of economic interdependence between China and Taiwan, as well as creating the perception that China is committed to supporting Taiwan's interests. By portraying China as a guarantor of Taiwan's continued prosperity, the Taiwanese will be less likely to support a political agenda that puts the stability of Cross-Strait relations at risk.

These strategic aims are inferred based on the observed application of sources, tools, and modes by China in its handling of Cross-Strait relations. The subsequent sections present the components of soft power that support each strategic aim, as well as the links between the various components.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> See appendix B for a graphical depiction of China's overall soft power strategy in Cross-Strait Relations.

## Soft Power Strategic Aim 1: Build Robust Social Ties

China's first strategic aim is to build robust social ties, and by doing so provide a counter to the emergence of a Taiwanese identity that is entirely separate from China. This strategic aim draws on cultural, political, and informational sources of power to achieve two effects: (1) promote social integration, and (2) reinforce a common identity (see figure 5).

### Promote Social Integration

China seeks to promote the integration of the Taiwanese population into Chinese society through a combination of tools. The first of these has been to grow the number of people-to-people exchanges, "especially among ordinary citizens."<sup>88</sup> Cross-Strait tourism appears to be one of the ways that this being achieved, and is generally viewed as "a peace-building mechanism."<sup>89</sup> Beyond the rising number of direct air routes and flights between China and Taiwan, entry requirements for Taiwanese to enter China have been eased. In 2015, per-visit entry permits were replaced with electronic travel passes that allow for multiple trips within a fixed duration.<sup>90</sup> China is also specifically targeting

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<sup>88</sup> Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC, "More Efforts Urged in Cross-Strait Grassroots Communication," June 28, 2014, accessed March 31, 2017, [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/201406/t20140630\\_6427961.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/201406/t20140630_6427961.htm).2014.

<sup>89</sup> Min-Hua Chiang, "Tourism Development Across the Taiwan Strait," *East Asia* 29, no. 3 (September 2012): 236.

<sup>90</sup> Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC, "Chinese Mainland to Issue Electronic Travel Passes to Taiwan Visitors," September 15, 2015, accessed March 29,

Taiwanese youth, as this segment of the Taiwanese population identifies very weakly with China and, consequently, serves as a strong base of support for the pro-independence agenda. Chinese officials have declared their intention to “boost the loyalty of young people from Taiwan . . . by organizing ‘study trips’ and exchanges for them to visit the mainland.”<sup>91</sup> This proliferation of people-to-people exchanges also extends to the realm of academia. The number of Taiwanese students in Chinese universities has increased significantly over the past few years, from 928 in 2011 to 2,734 in 2014.<sup>92</sup> In 2016, a Cross-Strait think tank forum involving academics and experts was included for the first time in the annually-held Cross-Strait Forum, adding to a growing number of opportunities for exchanges between Chinese and Taiwanese academics.<sup>93</sup>

As evidenced by the suspension of high-level TAO-MAC and ARATS-SEF interactions in May 2016, the DPP’s control of the Taiwanese government may appear to constitute a major dampener on people-to-people exchanges between China and Taiwan. However, the reality is that this is largely political theater and only affects interactions

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2017, [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/201604/t20160408\\_11429457.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/201604/t20160408_11429457.htm).

<sup>91</sup> Jason Lee, “China to Target Young of Taiwan, Hong Kong to Boost Loyalty,” *Reuters*, March 3, 2017, accessed March 25, 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-parliament-taiwan-hongkong-idUSKBN16A0ZU>.

<sup>92</sup> Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC, “Student Exchanges Double in Five Years,” November 8, 2015, accessed March 28, 2017, [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/201604/t20160408\\_11429652.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/201604/t20160408_11429652.htm).

<sup>93</sup> Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC, “Eighth Cross-Strait Forum Sees Deepened Exchange,” June 17, 2016, accessed March 31, 2017, [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/201606/t20160623\\_11490003.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/201606/t20160623_11490003.htm).

between the top tiers of the two governments. In contrast, exchanges between city governments, professional associations, academic groups, etc. have not been affected.

Policy measures have also been taken by the Chinese government to support the social integration of the Taiwanese into China. This includes preferential policies that “cover employment, social insurance and living needs” and “facilitate Taiwanese to live and work on the mainland.”<sup>94</sup> China has made it easier for Taiwanese professionals to work in China. For example, Taiwanese law firms have been allowed to establish representative offices in China since 2011, and a sizeable number of Taiwanese are now qualified to practice law in China.<sup>95</sup> In 2012, the Chinese government established an association specifically to provide assistance to these Cross-Strait couples across “a wide spectrum of social services such as employment, social security, medical care, education and child bearing and raising.”<sup>96</sup> The number of inter-marriages between Chinese and Taiwanese people has also grown significantly over time, increasing by more than 10,000 couples annually.

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<sup>94</sup> Rui Zhang, “Chinese Mainland to Issue Preferential Policies for Taiwan compatriots,” *Xinhua*, September 2, 2017, accessed February 9, 2017, <http://english.cctv.com/2017/02/09/ARTI4xXaowdbbQcchJdL0Htb170209.shtml>. As of 2016, there are an estimated one million expatriate Taiwanese living in China.

<sup>95</sup> Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC, “201 Taiwanese Qualified to Practice Law on Mainland,” September 25, 2013, accessed April 1, 2017, [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/SpokespersonRemarks/201309/t20130926\\_4938025.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/SpokespersonRemarks/201309/t20130926_4938025.htm).

<sup>96</sup> Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC, “Association Established to Serve Cross-Strait Couples,” August 28, 2012, accessed March 31, 2017, [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/201208/t20120829\\_3003246.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/201208/t20120829_3003246.htm).

### Reinforce a Common Identity

China has sought to reinforce the common historical identity that it shares with Taiwan. In their remarks, Chinese officials consistently refer to the Taiwanese in some form or other as “our own flesh and blood.”<sup>97</sup> At the historic 2015 Xi-Ma meeting, Xi remarked that “we [Taiwanese and Chinese] are closely-knit kinsmen, and blood is thicker than water.”<sup>98</sup> China has also couched this common identity in the form of a shared future by referencing the “Chinese dream” and the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese people” in the context of Cross-Strait relations.<sup>99</sup> Chinese officials have even gone as far as appealing to a sense of shared duty or national obligation by framing the disputes in the SCS and ECS as a responsibility to be borne by both Taiwan and China collectively.<sup>100</sup>

China has also leveraged historical symbols to emphasize the common identity between China and Taiwan. In 2011, a joint forum on Sun Yat-sen—the founder of the KMT—was held in Guangzhou, and included high-level representation from the CPC. The forum coincided with the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1911 Revolution and focused on

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<sup>97</sup> Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC, “Mainland Welcomes all Taiwan Compatriots,” February 28, 2014, accessed April 1, 2017, [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/SpokespersonRemarks/201402/t20140228\\_5749151.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/SpokespersonRemarks/201402/t20140228_5749151.htm).

<sup>98</sup> Today, “Xi-Ma Meeting: Transcript of China President Xi Jinping’s Opening Remarks,” November 7, 2015, accessed February 1, 2017, <http://www.todayonline.com/singapore/transcript-china-president-xi-jinpings-speech-he-meets-taiwans-ma-jing-yeou>.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC, “Mainland, Taiwan responsible for S. China Sea sovereignty: spokeswoman.”

the “philosophy and ideas of Sun,” “the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation,” and Sun’s role in the overthrowing of the Qing Dynasty.<sup>101</sup> In 2015, China commemorated the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Second World War, which included a series of Cross-Strait events that drew attention to the contributions of the Communists and Nationalists in defeating the Japanese, with victory “only possible through the efforts of the entire nation.”<sup>102</sup> Both KMT and CPC veterans were included at the front of the internationally televised and widely attended 2015 China Victory Day Parade. China’s willingness to acknowledge and publicize the involvement of the Nationalists in modern Chinese history points to the increased emphasis it has placed on reinforcing a common Chinese identity among the Taiwanese.

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<sup>101</sup> Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC, “Chinese Mainland, Taiwan to Hold Joint Forum on Sun Yat-Sen,” December 15, 2011, accessed April 1, 2017, [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/SpokespersonRemarks/201103/t20110316\\_1788618.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/SpokespersonRemarks/201103/t20110316_1788618.htm).

<sup>102</sup> Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC, “Commemoration of WWII Victory Promotes Cross-Strait Relations,” September 3, 2015, accessed March 28, 2017, [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/201604/t20160408\\_11429435.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/201604/t20160408_11429435.htm).

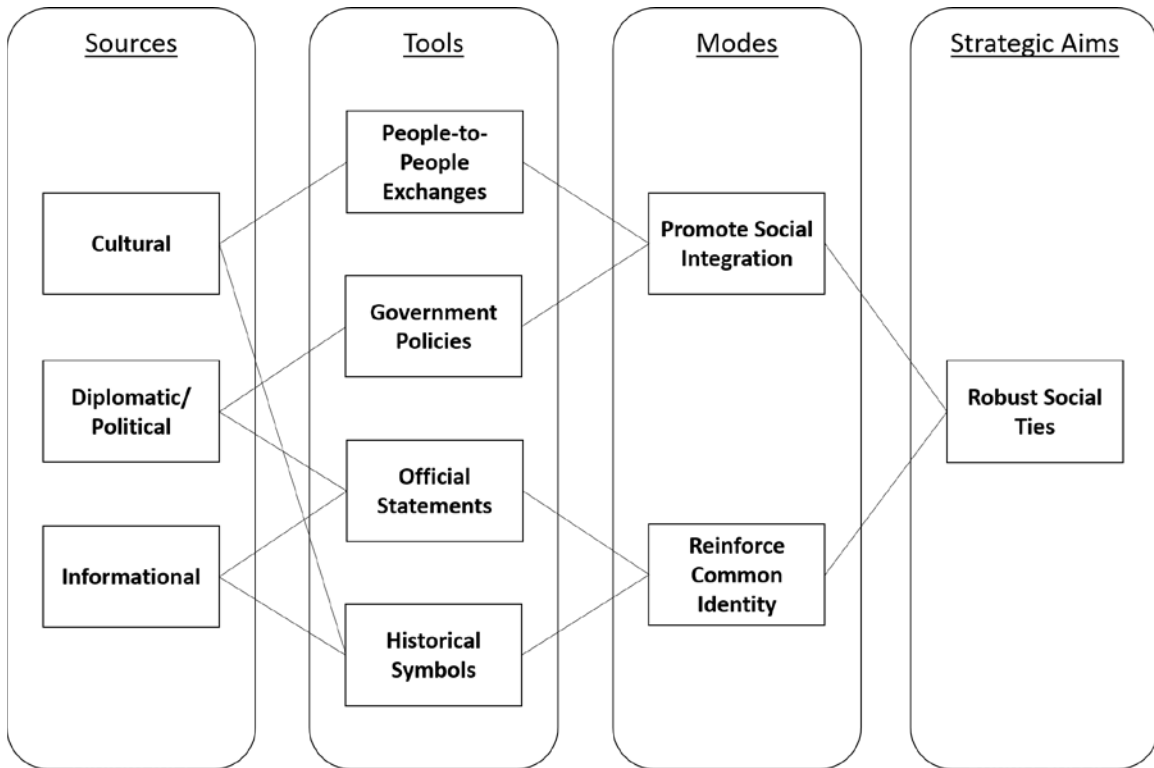


Figure 5. Strategic Aim 1: Build Robust Social Ties

Source: Created by author.

### Soft Power Strategic Aim 2: Engender a Sense of Shared Prosperity

China's second strategic aim is to engender a sense of shared prosperity, and use this to encourage Taiwan to pursue a political future where it remains hitched to China. This strategic aim draws on economic, political, informational, and institutional sources of power to achieve two effects: (1) deepen economic interdependence between China and Taiwan, and (2) show China's support for Taiwan's interests (see figure 6).

### Deepen Economic Interdependence

China's goal is to develop a sufficiently deep level of economic integration with Taiwan such that the Taiwanese will consider a stable relationship with China essential to a prosperous future. Developing Cross-Strait economic links has long been a component of China's "embedded reunification" strategy; however, its potential has increased as China's economy has surged and Taiwan's has slowed.<sup>103</sup> China has pushed this economic integration through a combination of government policies and increased institutional links.

In terms of government policies, China and Taiwan signed the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) in 2010—the first ever Cross-Strait trade agreement. The economic benefits of the agreement are generally tilted in Taiwan's favor. For example, "China eliminates tariffs on almost twice as many goods as Taiwan," and "opens up more of its service sector for Taiwanese entrepreneurs to invest in on the mainland."<sup>104</sup> This suggests that China's motivations for establishing the agreement lie beyond the apparent economic benefits. Since then, China and Taiwan have established a plethora of additional economic agreements, covering areas like taxation, finance, aviation, shipping, and services. This has continued even in Tsai's first term as president,

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<sup>103</sup> Christopher M. Dent, "Taiwan and the New Regional Political Economy of East Asia," *The China Quarterly* 182 (June 2005): 400.

<sup>104</sup> Min-Hua Chiang, "Cross-Strait Economic Integration in the Regional Political Economy," *International Journal of China Studies* 2, no. 3 (December 2011): 682.

with the launch of a preferential customs clearance program in the second-half of 2016.<sup>105</sup>

In general, Chinese officials have made clear their intention to pursue economic policies that are preferential towards the Taiwanese.<sup>106</sup> For example, a comprehensive economic zone was established on Pingtan Island, in Fujian, China, as a pilot area for Cross-Strait cooperation. Businesses in the area can conduct banking in both Chinese and Taiwanese currency and benefit from tax reductions. There are also preferential policies that make it easier for Taiwanese professionals to be employed within the zone.<sup>107</sup> More broadly, Chinese companies have invested approximately USD 1.7 billion in Taiwan since being given the green light to do so in 2009, creating 11,400 Taiwanese jobs in the process.<sup>108</sup>

China has also increased its institutional links with Taiwan, which in turn support the growth of economic ties. In terms of financial institutions, Taiwan-based banks have

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<sup>105</sup> Straits Exchange Foundation, “Taiwan and Mainland Launch Preferential Customs Clearance Program,” October 1, 2016, accessed April 1, 2017, <http://www.sef.org.tw/fp.asp?xItem=1010713&ctNode=4633&mp=300>.

<sup>106</sup> The Economist, “China’s Bottom Line,” March 17, 2015, accessed February 9, 2017, <http://www.economist.com/news/china/21646571-chinese-leaders-send-warnings-taiwans-opposition-party-ahead-elections-next-year-chinas-bottom>.

<sup>107</sup> Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC, “Chinese Mainland Island Seeks Taiwan Professionals,” February 14, 2012, accessed April 1, 2017, [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/201202/t20120215\\_2292610.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/201202/t20120215_2292610.htm).

<sup>108</sup> Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC, “Mainland, Taiwan Acknowledge Progress of Cross-Strait Talk,” November 30, 2015, accessed March 31, 2017, [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/201604/t20160408\\_11429690.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/201604/t20160408_11429690.htm).

been allowed to open branches in China since 2011, and a growing number of Taiwanese securities firms now have a presence in China.<sup>109</sup> A Cross-Strait Industrial Cooperation Forum has been established to “[strengthen] cooperation in hi-tech and new industries.”<sup>110</sup> This is in addition to numerous other economic forums that have for years been promoting cooperation across a wide variety of industries. China has also expressed a desire to have ARATS and SEF establish “cross-Strait offices” in Taiwan and China respectively, though this has yet to come to fruition.<sup>111</sup>

### Show Support for Taiwan’s Interests

Simply establishing strong economic ties is unlikely to be sufficient to convince the Taiwanese that China is deeply invested in Taiwan’s long-term future. To this end, China has made an effort to demonstrate its support for Taiwan’s interests through its rhetoric and actions. Beyond references to the shared realization of the “Chinese dream” and the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese people,” Chinese officials have explicitly stated that “the Chinese mainland will continue to strengthen the protection of the rights

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<sup>109</sup> Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC, “6 Taiwan Banks Approved to Open Mainland Branches: Spokesman,” December 29, 2010, accessed April 1, 2017, [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/SpokespersonRemarks/201103/t20110316\\_1788623.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/SpokespersonRemarks/201103/t20110316_1788623.htm).

<sup>110</sup> Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC, “Mainland, Taiwan to Strengthen Hi-Tech Cooperation,” November 21, 2012, accessed March 31, 2017, [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/201211/t20121123\\_3386684.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/201211/t20121123_3386684.htm).

<sup>111</sup> Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC, “Mainland Spokesman on ARATS, SEF Establishing Cross-Strait Offices,” January 16, 2013, accessed April 1, 2017, [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/SpokespersonRemarks/201301/t20130117\\_3554951.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/SpokespersonRemarks/201301/t20130117_3554951.htm).

and interests of Taiwan compatriots.”<sup>112</sup> In 2014, the TAO established an office specifically tasked to “manage public petitions related to Taiwan affairs” and “listen to the complaints and demands of Taiwan compatriots and Taiwanese spouses in the mainland and try to solve their problems.”<sup>113</sup>

In terms of practical cooperation and assistance, China has offered humanitarian relief to Taiwan on a number of occasions. In 2012, China donated USD 100,000 to Taiwan to assist with rainstorm-relief efforts.<sup>114</sup> In the aftermath of the 2015 earthquake in Nepal, China offered its assistance to Taiwanese in Nepal, saying that “both sides are of one family.”<sup>115</sup> China has also cooperated with Taiwan on issues of cross-border crime since a mechanism for mutual assistance was established in 2009. In 2012, a joint China-Taiwan police operation resulted in a successful raid against a human-trafficking ring.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC, “Chinese Mainland to Strengthen Protection of Taiwanese Rights, Interests,” January 12, 2011, accessed April 1, 2017, [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/SpokespersonRemarks/201103/t20110316\\_1788626.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/SpokespersonRemarks/201103/t20110316_1788626.htm).

<sup>113</sup> Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC, “Mainland Opens Office to Handle Taiwan-Related Petitions,” August 15, 2014, accessed March 31, 2017, [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/201408/t20140819\\_7026283.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/201408/t20140819_7026283.htm).

<sup>114</sup> Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC, “Mainland Sends Disaster-Relief Fund to Taiwan,” June 17, 2012, accessed April 1, 2017, [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/201206/t20120618\\_2749193.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/201206/t20120618_2749193.htm).

<sup>115</sup> Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC, “Mainland Helping Taiwanese in Nepal,” April 29, 2015, accessed March 31, 2017, [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/201505/t20150514\\_9801140.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/201505/t20150514_9801140.htm).

<sup>116</sup> Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC, “Mainland, Taiwan Jointly Bust Human-Trafficking Rings,” August 6, 2012, accessed April 1, 2017, [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/201208/t20120809\\_2896898.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/201208/t20120809_2896898.htm).

These actions are intended to convince the Taiwanese public that China's support for Taiwan extends beyond pure economic interest.

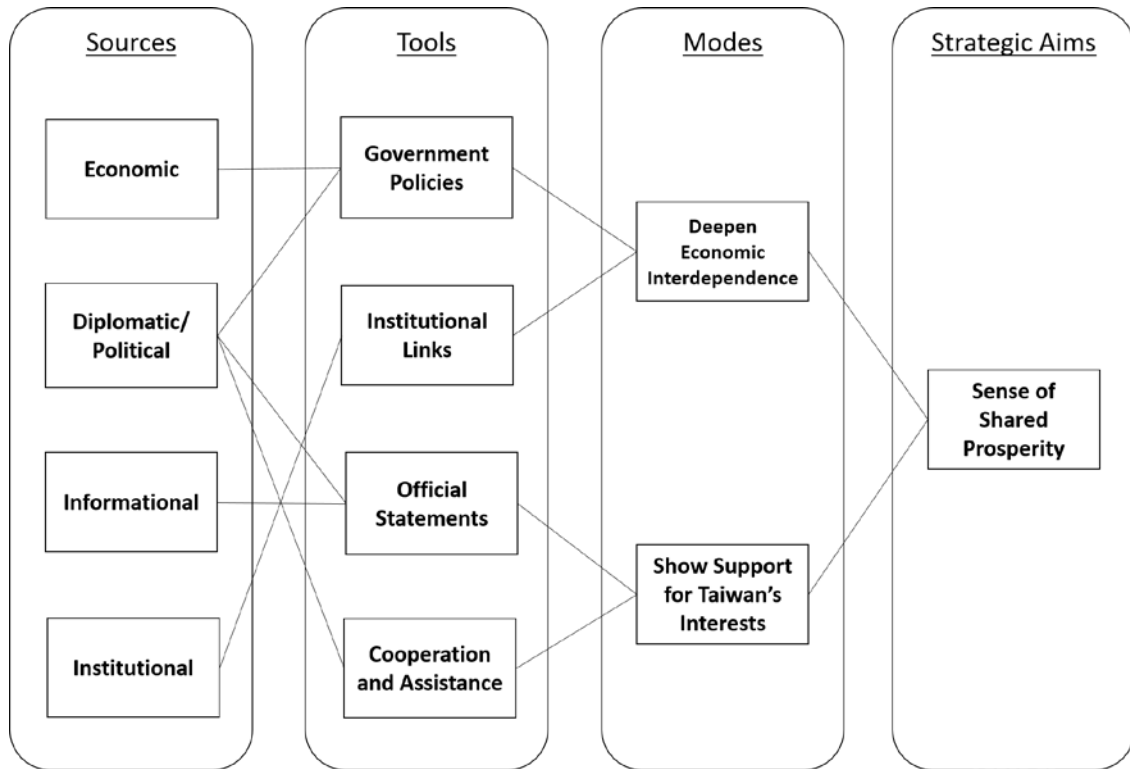


Figure 6. Strategic Aim 2: Engender a Sense of Shared Prosperity

Source: Created by author.

### The Interplay of Hard and Soft Power

While the ultimate aim of all Chinese actions in regards to Cross-Strait relations is to prevent Taiwan from seeking independence and steer it towards eventual reunification, it appears that China's hard and soft power strategies are directed at different audiences. On the one hand, hard power has been primarily applied in a political context to influence

the policies of the Taiwanese government—a combination of diplomatic strangulation as well as political tit-for-tat. On the other hand, soft power has focused on maintaining a favorable perception of China among the Taiwanese population—“to place hopes in the Taiwanese people” as the “slogan frequently uttered by Chinese leaders” goes.<sup>117</sup> This distinction in the aims of China’s hard and soft power strategies comports with the Taiwanese perception of “relatively low ‘people-targeted’ hostility” and comparably higher “‘government-targeted’ hostility” from China.<sup>118</sup>

Having successfully identified the various components and strategic aims of Chinese soft power in the two cases that were studied, the thesis will next present possible generalizations about the role of soft power in China’s security strategy.

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<sup>117</sup> Jing Sun, *Japan and China as Charm Rivals: Soft Power in Regional Diplomacy* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 124.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For it is in the creative combination of both hard and soft power that true strategy emerges.

— Robert D. Kaplan, *Geography Rules*

The purpose of this study was to determine the role of soft power in China's security strategy. Based on a "soft use" conception of soft power, two cases involving China's external security interests were studied—the territorial disputes in the SCS and China's handling of Cross-Strait relations. Data on China's actions and intentions were coded into matrices of sources, tools, and modes of power, allowing inferences to be made about the overarching strategic aims in each case.

China's soft power strategic aims in the SCS disputes were identified as: (1) controlling the terms of discussion, (2) making China a preferred partner of SEA countries, and (3) preventing interference from extra-regional powers such as the US and Japan. Here, soft power was assessed as primarily reinforcing hard power—targeting the same audiences and directed towards the same general objectives. In the case of Cross-Strait relations, China's soft power strategic aims were identified as: (1) building robust social ties between the Chinese and Taiwanese, and (2) engendering a sense of shared prosperity. It was observed that soft power and hard power were being employed to achieve separate objectives and were targeted at different audiences—hard power was used at the political-level to maintain the status quo in the short-term, whereas soft power was being applied to create a favorable disposition towards China among the Taiwanese in the long-term.

The final chapter of this thesis will draw on the results of the research to comment on three issues. First, do the results point to a generalizable role of Chinese soft power in security strategy writ-large? Second, what are the immediate and potential future implications of the results for policymakers dealing with security issues involving China? Third, based on the results, what areas merit further research and how might this research be carried out?

### Towards a Generalized Theory of Chinese Soft Power

While small-N studies are inherently limited in their generalizability, a series of meaningful observations can still be made based on the results of the case studies. First, the fundamental question of whether soft power has a distinct role in China's security strategy is answered in the affirmative. As was demonstrated in both case studies, varied combinations of sources, tools, and modes are employed by China to support a series of strategic aims. Consequently, any analysis of Chinese security strategy that deals with hard power alone or merely offers a superficial treatment of soft power should be questioned for its completeness.

Second, Chinese soft power draws on a wide range of sources—from commonly recognized sources of soft power such as culture and institutions to the traditionally “hard” domains of economic and military power. That being said, not every source of soft power is present across all cases. The common social roots that the Chinese and Taiwanese share is unique to Cross-Strait relations, making culture a natural source of soft power. This is hardly applicable in the SCS disputes given the diverse range of players. On the other hand, the historical and political dynamics between China and

Taiwan preclude the use of the military as a source of soft power. This differs markedly from the SCS disputes where militaries can simultaneously compete and cooperate with one another, enabling the PLA to be employed as hard and soft power.

Third, the relationship between soft and hard power varies depending on the specific issue that is being dealt with. As highlighted in the analyses of the two cases, soft power and hard power are mutually reinforcing components of China's strategy in the SCS disputes. In the case of Cross-Strait relations, the purpose of exercising soft power is fundamentally different than that of hard power. It differs in time horizon (long-term rather than short-term), objective (promoting reunification rather than preventing independence), and target audience (people rather than politics). This suggests that the role of soft power is not limited to enhancing the effects of hard power; under certain circumstances, soft power may be employed to achieve aims that hard power simply cannot.

If one considers China's dynastic history as an indicator for how China might approach strategy in the modern world, the appearance of soft power in China's security strategy should come as little surprise. For two thousand years, Chinese emperors used the diverse cultural and economic products of the "middle kingdom" as a means to maintain the Imperial Chinese tributary system across Asia. During periods of dynastic weakness, when China was unable to secure its borders against foreign invaders, the Chinese strategy was to control the invading regime from within, through the institutional influence of the mandarins. Over time, the manner in which the invaders ruled would become effectively indistinguishable from that of the Chinese rulers they had sought to displace. In a sense, soft power has long been a major part of the Chinese security

strategy—as China’s most famous military strategist remarked, “to win without fighting is the acme of skill.”<sup>119</sup> A modern corollary of this can be found in the well-known PLA publication *Unrestricted Warfare*: “Spaces in nature including the ground, the seas, the air, and outer space are battlefields, but social spaces such as the military, politics, economics, culture, and the psyche are also battlefields.”<sup>120</sup>

### Implications for Policymakers

The immediate implication for policymakers is self-evident: any strategy for dealing with Chinese actions that hopes to be effective must account for both the hard and soft power strategies employed by China. As an example, if the US’ withdrawal from the TPP is considered solely from the perspective of hard power, it would appear to have little direct impact on the SCS disputes. Ostensibly, the withdrawal has implications for US influence in the Asia-Pacific in general, but it is difficult to identify how it might relate to China’s strategy in the SCS disputes specifically. If, however, we consider the soft power strategic aim of “making China a preferred partner,” then it becomes apparent that the withdrawal provides China with a strategic opportunity to advance this aim through a competing agreement like the RCEP, which advances China’s agenda of substituting US leadership of the regional economic order with its own.

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<sup>119</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1963), 77.

<sup>120</sup> Liang Qiao and Xiangsui Wang, *Unrestricted warfare* (Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House Arts, 1999), 206.

By understanding China's soft power strategy, policymakers can more accurately and comprehensively assess the impact of their decisions. With the SCS disputes, ignoring Chinese soft power may lead policymakers to underestimate the extent to which China can influence the various actors involved and shape the situation to its advantage. That being said, while a hard power-centric counter-strategy may fall short to some degree, it would not be misdirected in this particular case. With Cross-Strait relations, however, a lack of attention given to Chinese soft power is likely to have more serious consequences. A hard power analysis would fail to identify an entire aspect of China's strategy—Chinese actions directed at the people of Taiwan, rather than just the politics of Taiwan.

A second set of implications concerns the growth of China's soft power. As was highlighted in the introductory chapter of this thesis, many major powers currently have more soft power at their disposal than China does. If this differential in soft power narrows, or even flips in favor of China, these states may find that their existing strategies for managing China's rise are no longer as effective. Simply put, policymakers dealing with security issues involving China will need to pay careful attention to changes in Chinese soft power, and be prepared to adjust their national strategies accordingly.

As was shown in the research, China's security strategy leverages multiple sources of power, presenting China with many avenues to enhance its soft power. China's economic power is huge and still growing; its effects are particularly pronounced in Asia. Of all the sources of power, this is the one that policymakers are probably most cognizant of and prepared to deal with. In terms of military power, China's growth potential is significant, and involves more than just sheer size. The PLA is currently engaged in a

massive modernization effort under Xi's leadership, shedding much of its antiquated doctrine and organization. As the PLA takes on new missions that involve it maintaining a greater external presence, China's ability to wield soft power through its military will grow both quantitatively and qualitatively. Considering the PLA held its first ever exercise with a foreign military only as recently as in 2002, one can only assume that its untapped potential is significant<sup>121</sup>. The advancement of Chinese military technology is a possible game-changer. Achieving parity with the US in military technology will have considerable hard power benefits for China, but the effect on Chinese soft power could be as large, if not greater. If countries are presented with a compelling reason to consider China as their primary technology partner, they may also be encouraged to fundamentally reconsider the centrality of their security relationships with the US.

China's institutional soft power deserves added attention. Compared with economic and military heft, institutional power takes time to cultivate. As China produces ever more scientists, academics, and professionals who operate at the cutting-edge of their fields, increasing numbers of these individuals will take on positions of influence in institutions around the world and even create institutions of their own. China's ability to influence the regional and global discourse on a wide range of issues will increase correspondingly. In areas like cyber and space, where international norms have yet to be settled upon, this growth in institutional soft power will be particularly valuable.

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<sup>121</sup> John W. Garver, "China's Influence in Central and South Asia," in *Power Shift: China and Asia's New Dynamics*, ed. David Shambaugh (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), 213.

One additional aspect of China's soft power growth that policymakers should watch is the evolving role of Chinese non-governmental entities—individuals, businesses, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), etc. Unlike hard power, governments do not hold a monopoly on soft power. The UK's *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015* states explicitly that “much of the UK's soft power is completely independent of government, and this is what gives it its strength.”<sup>122</sup> As was highlighted in the literature review, a common critique of China is that it is over-reliant on the government as a generator of soft power. A change in China's soft power strategy, if it were to occur, that elevates the role of non-governmental entities could catapult China up the global soft power standings. Admittedly, there are serious structural impediments to this, one example being “the absence of Chinese NGOs on the international stage.”<sup>123</sup> At the same time, the sheer scale of China's economic growth has inadvertently thrust some of its citizens onto the world stage. Jack Ma, the billionaire founder and executive chairman of the Alibaba Group, regularly holds court with global audiences, helping to project a softer and more appealing image of China. This serves to highlight a secondary effect that a shift towards non-governmental soft power would have: an enhancement of informational power through the higher credibility of non-governmental entities.

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<sup>122</sup> UK Government, 49.

<sup>123</sup> Yiyi Lu, “Blind Spots in China's Soft Power,” *The Straits Times*, July 15, 2007.

### Recommendations for Further Research

The considerable evidence of Chinese soft power strategies in the two case studies suggests that this is a subject that merits further study. One immediate goal should be to improve on the generalizability of the observations from this research through additional case studies using a similar methodology. China's strategy in the Indian Ocean, its approach to the Korean peninsula, and its handling of border disputes with India are examples of potential cases. China's strategies for space and cyber, while quite different from the traditional territorial and political issues, are also suitable cases. As more cases are studied, it may be possible to identify common tools or modes of power that are present in all or most cases. This would facilitate the application of large-N methodologies, using a selected set of common tools and modes as metrics. Doing so would greatly enhance the generalizability of conclusions borne out of the case study methodology, and may also allow for conclusions on gradation—not just *whether* soft power has a role in China's security strategy, but *how much* of a role soft power plays.

A second area of research, which was deliberately excluded from this study's objectives for resource reasons, is the issue of effectiveness. It is more than likely that certain Chinese soft power strategies are more effective than others. Determining which strategies are the least or most effective will have significant implications for counter-strategy. However, distinguishing the effects of hard power from that of soft power will be challenging, particularly in situations where the hard power and soft power strategic aims are mutually reinforcing. As a case in point, surveys conducted by the Pew Global Attitudes Project in 2014 “revealed widespread concern across the region that China's

territorial disputes could trigger conflict.”<sup>124</sup> This could be used to support either one of two contradictory conclusions: (1) that Chinese soft power, if present, is ineffective, or (2) that the level of concern among the countries surveyed would be even higher without a soft power strategy.

This study represents a single snapshot in time of China’s soft power strategy. As a third and final recommendation for further research, it would be prudent to revisit these cases after a few years have elapsed to establish a second snapshot of China’s soft power strategy. Comparisons of the two may be useful in elucidating how the role of soft power in China’s security strategy has evolved over time, particularly in the context of changing relative levels of soft power among China and other major powers, as well as changes in the sophistication with which China employs soft power.

Independent of whether further research is carried out, this study has demonstrated that soft power does indeed play an identifiable role in China’s security strategy. The sources, tools, and modes of power involved in the employment of soft power are diverse, and the interplay between hard power and soft power can vary widely depending on the particular issue and the strategic aims involved. Policymakers and academics who wish to achieve a holistic understanding of China’s security strategy would do well to pay attention to the role of soft power, in addition to that of hard power. Going forward, policymakers should remain alert to the growth of any of China’s sources of soft power, as this will translate into greater leverage for China in the execution of its security strategy.

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<sup>124</sup> Shambaugh, 144.

## GLOSSARY

**Axial coding.** A process of reassembling or disaggregating data in a way that draws attention to the relationships between and within categories.

**Case.** An instance of a class of events.

**Conceptual validity.** The degree to which a test measures what it claims, or purports, to be measuring.

**Freedom of Navigation Operation.** A military operation involving one or more naval units sailing through an area in order to assert that the international community does not accept the claim(s) made by one or more states over that area.

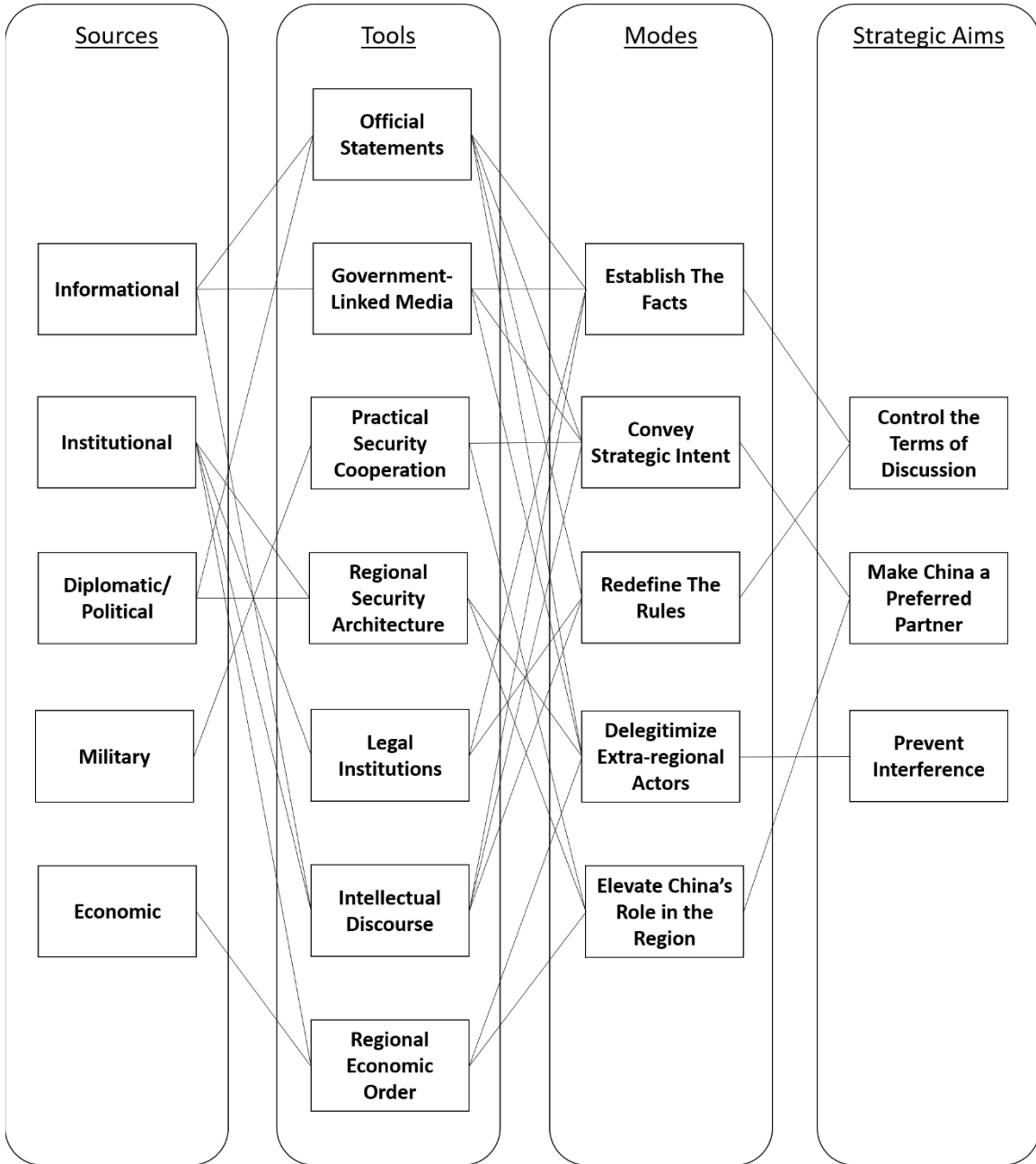
**Open coding.** The initial interpretive process by which raw research data is first systematically analyzed and categorized.

**Selective coding.** The stage in data analysis where core concepts are identified, and then abstracted, yet empirically grounded theory is generated.

**Soft power.** The soft use of power to increase a state's attraction, persuasiveness, and appeal. The characteristic feature of soft power is that it enables a country to structure a situation so that other countries develop preferences or define their interests in ways consistent with its own.

APPENDIX A

DEPICTION OF SOFT POWER STRATEGY—THE SCS DISPUTES

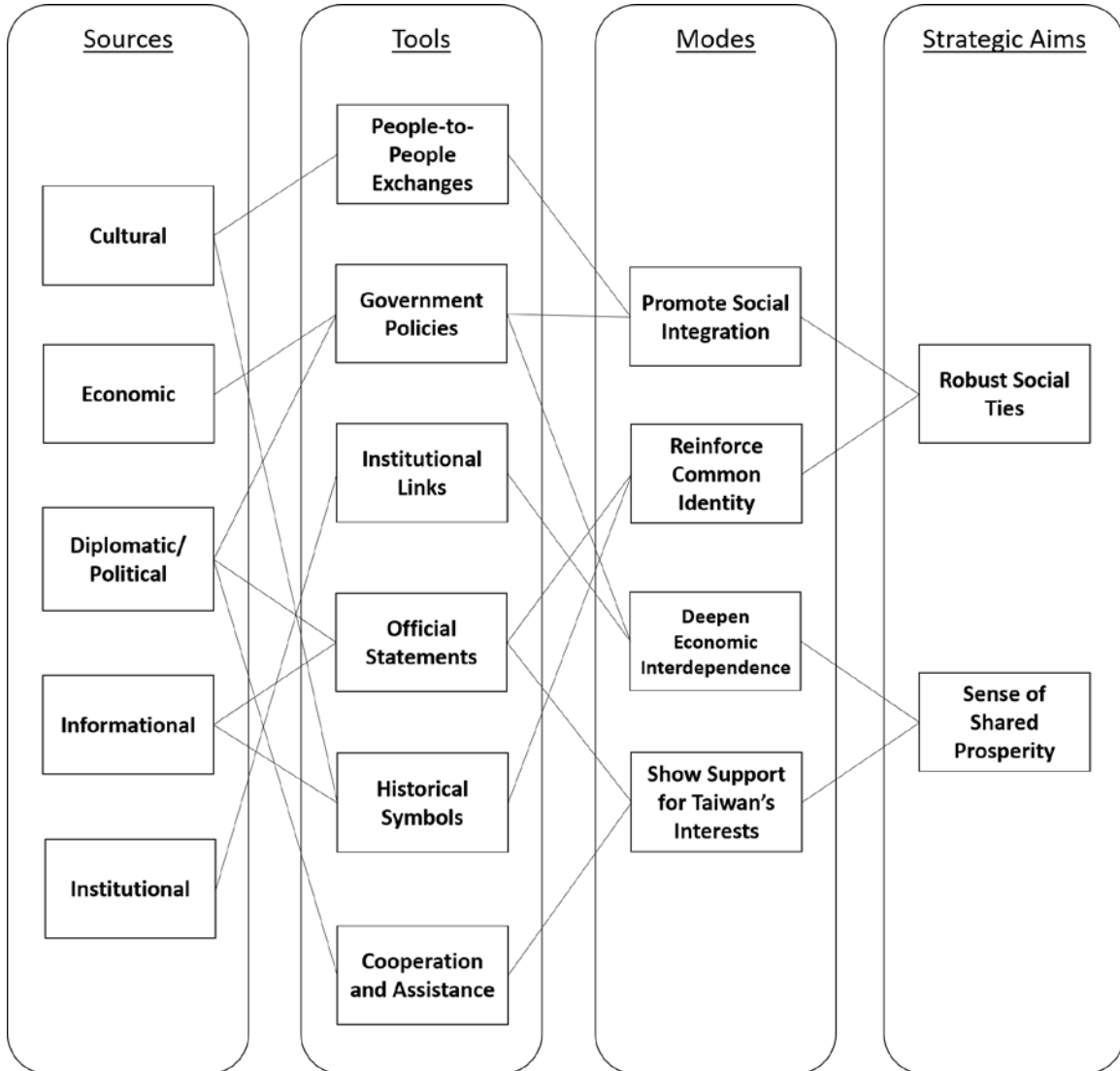


China's Soft Power Strategy in the SCS

Source: Created by author.

APPENDIX B

DEPICTION OF SOFT POWER STRATEGY—TAIWAN



China's Soft Power Strategy in Cross-Strait Relations

Source: Created by author.

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