Soft Power and People-Centered Asian Integration

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March 2012

Topics

• What is “soft power”?  
• How is it relevant to Asian integration?  
• China’s soft power  
• Japan’s soft power  
• Korea’s soft power  
• Conclusion

What is soft power?

• Not hard power (military, coercive nature)
• Persuasive power, ability to shape preferences; attraction, admiration, reputation
• E.H. Carr (1939): Power over opinion
• Joseph Nye (2004): 1) culture  
  2) values  
  3) diplomacy
  Overlapped, e.g. cultural diplomacy
• Resources / tools
• Realist connotation

How is relevant to Asian integration?

• Sources for cooperation, e.g. cultural diplomacy, aid
• Tools for promoting shared culture and values
• Most pronounced in East Asia, esp. Southeast Asia
• Cultural receptivity
  * Positive aspect of soft power

Comparison: China, Japan, Korea

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3. China’s soft power: Culture

• Ethnic Chinese as cultural agents → more in every day life
• Chinese new year, Chinese medicine, Fangshui, Taichi etc.
• Confucian Institute (CI): 13 in Thailand
• Learning Chinese language
China’s Pop Culture

• China is not inclined to promote liberal pop culture. (Propaganda Dept.)
• Movies filled w political agenda, e.g. Confucius, The Founding of the Republic → not much popular

* China: strong on traditional culture but weak on contemporary pop culture

China’s Values/Ideas/Concepts

• “Peaceful Rise”
• “Beijing Consensus”
• “harmonious world”
• “factory of the world”: from low-tech to hi-tech products (including high-speed train)

China’s Diplomacy

• “peaceful rise”
• “good neighbor policy”
• Economic assistance

Limitations:
- support/indifferent to authoritarian regimes
- recently, more assertive China
- inconsistent, preoccupied w/ domestic development
- needs to be more responsive to people

Japan’s Culture

• Strong on both traditional and pop culture
  - tea ceremony, flower arrangement, Zen Buddhism/philosophy, judo, etc.
  - Manga, anime, games, karaoke, fashion, celebrities, food, green tea, “kawaii”, etc.
  * “liberal pop culture” e.g. otaku, gay cartoon

Japan’s Values/Ideas/Concepts

• innovative and resilient
  - 80s developmental state, J management (kaizen, JIT, TQC, 5S), lean production
  - 2000s: human security: ODA-GGP;
    Environment: “Cool Earth 50”, “Cool Biz”

Japan’s Diplomacy

• Japan’s cultural diplomacy since the “heart-to-heart” Fukuda Doctrine
• Japan Foundation, Nipponmaru, exchange programs
• ODA, FDI, PKO
• Non-traditional security (e.g. anti-piracy in Malacca Strait)
Korea’s Culture

- Strong on pop culture, but increasingly adding traditional elements
- Korean Wave: drama, movies, music, fashion, cosmetics, tourism
  -> business profits + really boosting Korea’s reputation

Korea’s Values/Ideas/Concepts

- ?
- Only recent efforts
  - ODA
  - development model (successful modernization + democratization)
  - Yeosu Expo 2012: marine environment

Korea’s Soft Power

- Late comer
- “from business interests to international contribution and high-profile roles”
- Preoccupied w post-crisis recovery -> pop culture exports (also for tourism) “Korean Wave”

Korea’s Diplomacy

- Key positions in IOs (e.g. WHO, UN)
- Development experience: successful modernization and democratization
- Korea as “middle power”
- Joined OECD-DAC in 2009
- G20 (host and Presidential Committee)
- nuclear security

Conclusion 1

Comparison
- Tendency to overestimate China’s soft power and underestimate Japan’s soft power.
- Japan has an upper hand in terms of resources.
- Korea is slow but up and coming.

Conclusion 2

How to go from here
- Constructively utilizing soft power as a source for socializing/uniting people in East Asia
- Less realist soft power
- Reciprocity is needed (two-way soft power).