CHARM OFFENSIVE: GAUGING GLOBAL PUBLIC OPINION ON CHINA’S RISE

A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Georgetown University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Master of Public Policy
in the Georgetown Public Policy Institute

By

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Washington, DC
April 15, 2010
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ABSTRACT

Despite the increasing debates on whether to see China’s rise as threat or peaceful development, surprisingly little empirical analysis has been done to understand the factors influencing how the world views China. Recent international polls have tracked a significant public concern about China's growing prominence on the world stage, as its economy has expanded to become the second largest in the world. By wielding its hard and soft power, China also successfully cultivates an increasingly favorable national image to exert its political influence on international affairs. Facing China’s challenge and the America’s fading influence in the economic downturn, U.S. policy makers need to allocate the country’s diplomatic resources more effectively and efficiently.

Using the 2008 Global Attitudes Project of 24-nation survey from the Pew Research Center, this study identifies the trends of global favorability towards China. The quantitative estimates show that the perceptions of China’s hard power, the perceptions of China’s soft power, home-country nationalism and certain demographics have a significant effect on enhancing favorable global public opinion on China’s rise. The policy implications of findings provide foreign affairs practitioners with much needed guidance to generate proactive initiatives to engage China’s rising power and shore up U.S. global leadership.
I dedicate this thesis to my parents,
Dr. Chris Toppe, Assistant Dean Kerry Pace, Dr. Donna Morrison,
and friends who devote themselves to Taiwan’s democracy.

With profound gratitude,
Iris S.W. Shaw
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Introduction

For nearly a half-century the United States and the former Soviet Union were the sole duo superpowers, comparable in all aspects of military force, political influence and economic prowess. The rise and decline of the world’s leading powers are constantly in flux, chronicling the evolution of international relations. Since the Cold War ended, the structure and power components of the major players in the international system have undergone dramatic changes. In alignment with those changes, China’s increasing importance for both economic and strategic outcomes is among the most prominent. China’s rapid growth on regional and global influence has so exceeded all modest or hedged expectations that the rest of the world begins to ask what this fast accumulation of China’s comprehensive power means for the others’ competitiveness and security, and what opportunities and hazards might be embedded in China’s rise.

In this milieu, academics and practitioners in foreign policy have wrestled with whether Chinese rising power portends threats to international stability or opportunities for sharing interests and co-prosperity. Many scholars have also observed that China has increasingly relied on “soft power”—diplomacy, trade incentives, cultural and educational exchange opportunities, and other techniques—to project a benign national image, position itself as a model of social and economic success, and develop stronger international alliances.

As historical trajectories have depicted, traditional notions of “hard power” suggest that a rising nation-state’s bid for military and economic expansion would provoke other existing powers’ containment. Hard power is defined as getting what you want through sticks than carrots. Conversely, soft power is the ability to attracting people to your side without coercion. To what extent China’s growing influence level on its hard and soft power deserve more attention from foreign policy researchers and analysts. This analysis will explore the
characteristics and activities associated with favorable international attitudes towards China’s rise, drawing from the latest publicly available data by the Pew 2008 Global Attitudes Project survey.

**Background and Literature Review**

The extensive literature on the factors influencing global attitudes towards China’s rise is divided. The “China hands” (i.e. scholars and diplomats with expertise on Sino affairs) reported China’s growing influence since 1980s, before it caught the global public’s attention. Since its market reform and opening in 1978, China has been the fastest growing economy on earth (Dittmer 2009). If the staggering GDP growth rates continue, China will to rival the United States as the key driver of the world economy (Dittmer 2009). The grand sweep of China’s economic prospects; its foreign policy and its nationalist tendencies are the nuts-and-bolts of what makes the country tick (Hagt 2008). As an emerging superpower to challenge the existing established powers, China sparks applause as well as fears.

The world views China’s economic and political successes with caveats and aflutter: the Chinese government receives severe criticism on the abuse of human rights, border disputes, democratic institutions and environmental issues from the Western-elite led global public sphere. Many studies also track the build up of China’s national power and China’s global engagement to understand the implications of the ideas and value system China might offer to the world as it grows into great power status (Hagt 2008).

Since mid 2003, in order to sustain its economic growth and trade relations, the Chinese government has been struggling to refute the flare-up argument about “China threat” with the concept of “China’s peaceful rise” (*Zhongguo de heping jueqi*) (Ding 2008, 34).
Analysts prone to the China threat theory predict that China’s determination to thrive will be greeted by existing powers with apprehension and violent resistance, rendering the international system to considerable turmoil (Bernstein and Munro 1998; Mearsheimer 2001; Carpenter 2005; Copper 2006). China’s growing interest in importing oil and other natural resources for its rapid industrial development have also led it to tap markets in the countries that have been avoided by the West due to human rights violations, government corruption and other problems. China threat theorists point out that China’s commercial interests have led to “the strategic assemblage of a coalition of outcasts” (Dittmer 2009). In recent years, the perception of China as a threat has been the main obstacle to China’s international image (Y. Wang 2008). To many Chinese strategic thinkers, the PRC is confronted with the problem of a “nervous hegemony” dedicated to maintaining superiority against a tide of rising contenders (Dittmer 2009, 337).

Some analysts identified the trends for those rising contenders who favor China’s rise as an alternative development model called “Beijing Consensus,” which they see as the antithesis of the “Washington Consensus” (Gill and Huang 2006). Journalist Joshua Cooper Ramo (2004) first coined this political lexicon in his article asserting that China’s economic miracle presents the developing world such as Latin America and Southeast Asia a roadmap to success without adopting the Western model of democratic political system and free market economy. The Chinese approach to modernization has become an inspiration for “a new global order founded on economic relationships, but which also recognizes political and cultural difference as well as differences in regional and national practices within a common global framework” (Dirlik 2006). Unlike the Washington Consensus, which sought a universal standard, the Beijing Consensus emphasizes the fundamental link between geo-politics and geo-economics.
By summarizing the main findings of recent studies of the perceptions of China’s rise, this literature review underscores the factors shaping the global public opinion towards China that may affect the power landscape in the international arena. These characteristics include the theoretical foundation of hard and soft power, and other individual and country level elements revolving around China’s perceived rising power.

**Paradigm Shift: Wielding Soft Power in a New Global Era**

“Politics in an information age is not only about whose military wins but whose story wins.” --Joseph S. Nye Jr., 2005

The term “soft power” was first coined by Joseph Nye in the late 1980s when he saw the decline of the United States as a great power as a result of rising costs and diminishing military utility. The idea of soft power, as a mainstream political lexicon widely used by contemporary international relations theorists, was originally developed by the political scientists Hans J. Morgenthau, Klaus Knorr, Ray Chine, and summarized by Joseph Nye as “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments through a country's culture, political ideas and policies” (Nye 2004, 5).

In international politics, having “power” over the other entity in order to enforce national interests is the ability to influence the target to act in ways that it would not have acted otherwise. The soft power, in contrast to the hard power, is usually associated with persuasion and attraction, rather than hard, tangible resources like military intervention, coercive diplomacy and economic sanctions (Art 1996; Campbell and O’Hanlon 2006, Cooper 2004; Wagner 2005). Soft power has major advantages over hard power. If a state can make its power legitimate in the eyes of others, it will encounter less resistance to its wishes (Cox 1987).
According to Nye (2004), soft power grows out of culture, domestic values as well as foreign policies. Soft power can be measured in behavioral outcomes and the extent to which a country defines its national interests in ways congruent with others, which improves a country’s ratio of admiration to resentment (Nye 2003). The nature of politics is changing, Nye said, and with the rise of new technologies, messages and images are communicated in real time and more powerfully than before. The changing landscape of this century brings about a change in power structures with images and messages transmitted across continents at lightning speed (Nye 2004). Nye (1990) also recognized that theorists often suffer from writing in the midst of events, rather than viewing them from a distance and thus powerful theories are rare. Yet political leaders and those who seek to explain behavior must generalize in order to chart a path through the apparent chaos of changing events (Nye 1990).

One attempt at numerical quantification of soft power is by Yoshiyuki Sodekawa who created a metric for global influence called the Soft Power Index (SPI). Sodekawa (2004) tries to apply Nye's concept in a socio-economic context. He argues that while hard power can be measured by the size of military power, financial power, oil power, etc., soft power is measured along three axes: markets and institutions, information/ education/ intellectual power, and the quality of life vis-à-vis a nation’s cultural attractiveness.

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs (2008) has conducted a multinational survey gauging the perceived soft power in four major Asian countries in comparisons to the SPI of United States. Drawing on Nye’s soft power theory, the survey measured the elements of soft power such as the attractiveness of different national cultures and values, the effectiveness of nations as regional leaders and problem-solvers, their attractiveness as trade partners, their levels of human capital, the emergence of regional identities, perceptions of growing economic and
political integration in East Asia and the impact this has on underlying regional tensions. The survey found that the U.S. SPI is still ranked the first in Asia but was weaker in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia and Vietnam. The survey also found that China’s role in Asia has become more important owing to its economic interactions with its neighbors, which also translates into other dimensions of China’s soft power (Bouton 2008).

**Charm Offensive: China’s Changing Image and the Transformation of World Order**

The rise of China’s soft power generates the world’s concern. Some scholars suggest that the rise of China's soft power, at America's expense, is a critical issue that needs to be addressed by the Sino-America diplomacy (Wei 2009; Yi 2010).

China’s charm offensive began in the early 20th century. Beijing’s leadership constantly emphasized that China desires for stability and peace with all countries to thrive (Kurlantzick 2007). Chinese scholars eventually come up with the term “peaceful rise” to describe the advantages of its new economic and development policy in Chinese grand strategy that has sought to integrate its hard power and soft power to create a soft rise for the country (Wang 2008).

In his report *Brand China*, Joshua Cooper Ramo (2007) declared, “China’s greatest strategic threat today is its national image.” Chinese mainstream media also frequently discuss the need to improve China’s global image and offset the China threat theory (Wang 2008). Beijing has also found its global strategy on “peaceful rise” a leverage to articulate with Western political concept of soft power. The soft power conveniently translates into ancient Chinese philosophy from Confucius and Mencius (Bell 2008) where China sees its culture fundamentally as a world culture (Goodman 2005). China’s global role as “good neighbor” and its strategy in
building a “harmonious world” have been heavily and openly expressed in the Chinese foreign policies since President Hu Jingtao’s speech in 2005.

The 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics was a classic illustration of how China continues its struggle to harmonize perception with reality. Regardless of China’s attempt to put its best foot forward for the Games, spending lavishly and making significant compromises with its critics (Hagt 2008), China’s close economic and military ties with the Sudanese government were associated with the Darfur “genocide” by American celebrities and NGOs with their successful lobbying (J. Wang 2008, 30). In sum, a potential hindrance to China’s realization of a “harmonious world” strategy is the stance of other great powers, and particularly the United States, taking caution of the implications of China’s rise for their continued influence (Blanchard and Guo 2008). Therefore, my research aims to further bridge the existing literature gap by capturing the factors impacting global public opinion towards China’s rise.

**Factors Potentially Impacting Global Public Opinion towards China**

Globalization and technological advancement have fostered the interactive engagement and interdependence of the international public, and the global public opinion of a country’s image is a growing force in public diplomacy. In the extensive literature on the factors that influence international public opinion, some key themes emerge. Tuggle (2005) employed a statistical modeling technique on data from a large global opinion survey to identify trends in opinions, and he summarized four categories of factors commonly thought to influence international opinion significant: media, misdirected anger, policy disagreement, and cultural value.
In geopolitics, proximity and perceptions of threat also affect the way in which balancing of power is played out (Walt 1985). Fan (2008) also argues that the international relations are shaped by many complex factors, and ultimately decided by the geopolitics and strategic interests of nations, in which soft power may play only a limited role.

The complexity of a country’s image in the world’s view, as contemporary literature shows, may also involve factors relating to respondents’ home country and personal lives. For example, Hollander (2004) argues that people with anti-American views might blame the United States for problems in their own lives or countries. People from repressive regimes might also transfer their personal discontent with the lack of political freedom and economic distress in their own countries to the United States (Friedman 2002; Zakaria 2001; Tuggle 2005). Conversely, those with higher socio-economic status are more likely to favor the United States (Heiman 2007; Carlson & Nelson 2008). Gender and other structural factors also play a role in global public opinion. For instance, using a median regression model, Heiman and Orzer (2009) found several factors positively associated with a country’s image success, including income and women's roles in government, whereas two other factors weakly predict a country’s failure on national branding: government institutional credibility and PD spending.

To decipher global opinion on China threat or peaceful rise, my research builds on current theories of national branding, international power, and public diplomacy measurements. This study posits that the global public opinion towards China has to do with four sets of factors: the perceived hard and soft power practices of China, home countries nationalistic factors, and demographic features.
Conceptual Framework

Extensive studies have shown that China is determined to demonstrate its commitment to a peaceful foreign policy in order to contribute to its further economic development and regional leadership. Despite its Communist ideology, the Chinese leadership has not overlooked Joseph Nye's description of soft power that includes "attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideas and policies."

Many polls have found a growing symmetry in global perceptions of the United States and China. On the eve of the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics, the Pew Global Attitudes Project conducted a 24-nation survey asking whether China would replace (or had already replaced) the United States as the world's leading superpower. Majorities in seven countries and pluralities in six more answered yes. America and China share evenly in favorability ratings, unilateralist approach and their influence on other countries.

The Pew assessment takes the measure of what is arguably the most important geopolitical change in today's world: the growth of China's power. Facing the rapid expansion of China's hard and soft power, it is important for the public diplomacy practitioners and policy makers to understand how China’s international image has grown to compete with the image of the United States, and to understand China’s efforts to woo the world in light of the 2008 elections in the United States and China's hosting of the Olympic Games. Although a variety of factors may have an effect on the world’s favorable opinion towards China’s rising power, my study will focus on factors that seem particularly relevant to China’s efforts on growing its hard and soft power, and are therefore plausible reasons for the world’s favorability respectively.

A diagram of my conceptual framework, Figure 1, illustrates how different categories of factors might contribute to the world’s favorable views towards China. Adding on the theorists’
interpretation for China’s perceived hard and soft power, I posit that pertinent demographic factors such as gender, marital status, education level, employment status might affect one’s favorable opinion towards China. Based on the literature review, I assume that some other factors might also affect the perceptions of China: the geopolitical aspects of Western democracies, countries in China’s peripheral/neighboring states, and other less-developed countries. Drawing on previous studies on anti-Americanism, I also suspect that one’s perception of the strength of own country (i.e. nationalism) might affect his/her favorability to China’s rise.
Hypotheses

My first hypothesis tests if the world’s perception on China’s hard and soft power has a significant effect on whether China’s rise is favored or not. The model will hold constant respondents’ demographic and nationalistic control characteristics to examine two perceptions:

H₀: There is no significant difference between the likelihood of favoring China and China’s perceived hard and soft power, holding all else constant.

H₁: People who acknowledge China’s growing hard and soft power are more likely to favor China’s rise, holding all else constant.

My second hypothesis test will determine if nationalism (i.e. the strong belief in one’s own country) has a significant effect on one’s favorability towards China, holding all else constant:
H₀: There is no significant difference between the likelihood of favoring China and nationalism, holding all else constant.

H₁: People who have faith in home country’s strength are more likely to favor China’s rise, holding all else constant.

My third hypothesis test will determine if pertinent demographic characteristics have a significant effect on one’s favorability towards China, holding all else constant. Based on the existing literature, I hypothesize that Western elites (with higher education and superior socio-economic status) are more worried than other people in the world about China’s growing threat to the current balance of international power. Therefore, I posit that those who are more likely to favor China’s rise have the demographic characteristics opposite to those of Western elites.

H₀: There is no significant difference between the likelihood of favoring China and demographics, holding all else constant.

H₁: People with inferior socio-economic inclinations (i.e. female who are single, unemployed, less educated, and from non-Western democracies) are more likely to favor China’s rise, holding all else constant.

Data and Methods

This study uses the data from 2008 Pew Global Attitudes Project. In the original dataset, there are 382 variables, and the total number of observations is 24,717 from the nationally representative of 24 countries across the regions of the Americas (Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, United States), Europe (Britain, France, Germany, Poland, Russia, Spain), the Middle East (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey), the Asia-Pacific region (Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Pakistan, South Korea), and Africa (Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania).
According to the survey report (2008) on detailed methods, the polls were conducted by telephone and in face-to-face interviews under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. Results based on the full sample in a given country are predicted at the 95% confidence level.

Analysis Plan

I select the variables of interest based on my research goal, which is to identify people’s perceptions of the hard and soft power of China, and inclined characteristics of individuals who have greater likelihood to favor China. The 3,212 respondents from China are not asked the views of their own country, and thus were dropped from the estimation. The small percentages of “don’t know” and “refused” responses are also dropped, not assigned as an inferred opinion. The potential bias of the omitted values does not cause a considerable impact on my study, given the small frequencies (no more than 20%) that fall in this category.

Variables

My dependent variable is defined as the world’s favorability towards China. Favorability is an ordinal measure with binary indicators of whether China is favored or not. Many of the independent variables are drawn from the Pew polling questions that pertain to my categories of “China’s perceived hard power” and “China’s perceived soft power.” Adding to that, I am also interested in examining the control factors at the individual or “demographic” level, and country or “nationalistic” level. All variables of interests are presented in Table 1 in the results section below.

I created many sets of indicator variables. As a result, there are 407 variables in my dataset. A logistic regression model is developed to examine the association between the world’s favorability and the perceived hard and soft power, as well as the individual characteristics, and
their perception of home country as in nationalism. Since the interactions across the four categories of independent variables are irrelevant to the policy discussion, I report the regression results in separate tables (Table 2 to 6).

**Regression Model**

My empirical model is designed to estimate relationships between the global public’s favorability towards China and the four categories of possible determining factors, as explained in the section of conceptual framework. A logistic distribution was chosen because it captures dichotomous outcomes of favorability (i.e. favorability or non-favorability), whereas a linear OLS model cannot reflect the clustering responses of the binary category.

I ran three separated logistic regression models. Considering the highly correlated interactions between the nationalism and demographics, I separate these factors in two independent regressions. The results are proved to be statistically significant. The mechanics of the binary logistic regression and its likelihood estimates are modeled as follows:

\[
\text{Logit } (p) = \ln \left( \frac{p}{1-p} \right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \ldots + \beta_k X_k + \mu
\]

where \( p \) is the probability of the outcome of favorability towards China (1) or non-favorability towards China (0) bounded between 0 and 1. The logit is defined as the natural log of the odds of the favorability outcome or \( \ln[p/(1-p)] \), and \( k \) is the categories of China’s perceived hard power, soft power, home country nationalism, and demographics, respectively. The estimated coefficient (\( \beta_k \)) is the change in the natural logarithm of the odds ratio of the favorability outcome associated with a one-unit increase in the independent variable (\( X_k \)).
Results

Descriptive Results

After collapsing the variables into a series of indicators, the descriptive statistics show a normal distribution of favorability of opinion towards China as well as general demographic trends, such as gender, marital status, education, employment and geo-political population.

Provided different education systems among the 24 countries in the sample, I recoded the education variable to three groups: less than high school (or secondary school) which represents the subpopulation with the least mandatory schooling, people with a high school diploma, and those who attain higher education with an university degree or above. The majority of educational level falls under high school (41.9%), followed by the least educated (38.23%) and the highest educated (19.87%). A cross-tabulation shows that, compared to others, people with more education tend to give China a benefit of doubt in respect to favorable opinion.

The frequency distribution of geo-political mapping is consistent with the distribution of the world’s population. The Western democracies including the United States and Western European countries (13.99%) have less weight than China’s peripheral countries (i.e. Asia, Russia and all the other neighbors) and Others, but their relatively negative opinion towards China dominates the traditional channels of diplomacy and transnational mainstream media.

The variables in the categories of “China’s perceived hard power” and “China’s perceived soft power” reveal a diversified favorability when respondents are asked to assess China’s global presence in various approaches. All of the variables are presented in Table 1.
### Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Variables (Observations: 21,505)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Variable</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Variable Value</th>
<th>Frequency &amp; Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependent</strong></td>
<td>Favorability towards China</td>
<td>=1 if favorable</td>
<td>12911 (58.91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>=0 if unfavorable</td>
<td>9006 (41.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Replace U.S.A. as leading superpower</td>
<td>=1 if Yes</td>
<td>10896 (53.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>=0 if No</td>
<td>9658 (46.99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>China has significant influence to own country</td>
<td>=1 if Yes</td>
<td>11309 (57.74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>=0 if No</td>
<td>8277 (42.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>China’s growing military power</td>
<td>=1 if Good</td>
<td>4797 (27.88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>=0 if Bad</td>
<td>12408 (72.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>China as the world’s leading economic power</td>
<td>=1 if Yes</td>
<td>4817 (21.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>=0 if No</td>
<td>17883 (78.78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent</strong></td>
<td>PRC respects personal freedom or “human rights”</td>
<td>=1 if Yes</td>
<td>7325 (41.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Hard Power)</td>
<td></td>
<td>=0 if No</td>
<td>10540 (59.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Soft Power)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Yes (%)</td>
<td>No (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China does right on environmental protection or “Climate Change”</td>
<td>=1 if Yes</td>
<td>3044</td>
<td>15.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>=0 if No</td>
<td>16862</td>
<td>84.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good decision to host 2008 Summer Olympics in China</td>
<td>=1 if Yes</td>
<td>12468</td>
<td>71.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>=0 if No</td>
<td>5048</td>
<td>28.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China is diplomatic and engage in other countries’ interests</td>
<td>=1 if Yes</td>
<td>8188</td>
<td>42.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>=0 if No</td>
<td>10998</td>
<td>57.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese product is relatively safe</td>
<td>=1 if Yes</td>
<td>6767</td>
<td>33.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>=0 if No</td>
<td>13613</td>
<td>66.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent (Nationalistic)</strong> Satisfied with own country</td>
<td>=1 if Yes</td>
<td>9750</td>
<td>40.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>=0 if No</td>
<td>14165</td>
<td>59.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent (Nationalistic)</strong> Proud of own nationality</td>
<td>=1 if Yes</td>
<td>22676</td>
<td>93.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>=0 if No</td>
<td>1627</td>
<td>6.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prone to international trade</td>
<td>=1 if Yes</td>
<td>19471</td>
<td>83.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent (Demographic)</td>
<td>=0 if No</td>
<td>3923</td>
<td>16.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy is good</td>
<td>=1 if Yes</td>
<td>10586</td>
<td>43.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=0 if No</td>
<td>13605</td>
<td>56.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic future will be improved</td>
<td>=1 if Yes</td>
<td>16938</td>
<td>71.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=0 if No</td>
<td>6671</td>
<td>28.26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>=1 if Female</td>
<td>13033</td>
<td>52.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=0 if Male</td>
<td>11684</td>
<td>47.27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>=1 if Married</td>
<td>16757</td>
<td>68.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=0 if Not Married</td>
<td>7869</td>
<td>31.95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Less than High School Diploma</td>
<td>8193</td>
<td>38.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS Diploma</td>
<td>8980</td>
<td>41.90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Degree and Above</td>
<td>4258</td>
<td>19.87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>=1 if Yes</td>
<td>13456</td>
<td>58.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regression Results

The results found that with the three logistic models, the magnitudes and directions of statistical significance at the 99% or 95% confidence level are consistent with the concurrent academic and media discussions on China’s rising power.

Table 2 to 6 present the coefficients, standard errors and odds ratio estimates from the ordered logistics regression. The marginal effects of each of the four categories-Hard Power, Soft Power, Nationalism, and Demographics are interpreted based on their significance to my research question.
The “Hard Power” Effect

Table 2: Effects of perceptions of China’s hard power on global views of China.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Replace U.S.A.</td>
<td>0.2230***</td>
<td>0.0383</td>
<td>1.250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China’s Influence</td>
<td>-0.0701**</td>
<td>0.0369</td>
<td>0.932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Growth</td>
<td>1.2588***</td>
<td>0.0420</td>
<td>3.521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading Economy</td>
<td>0.0849*</td>
<td>0.0457</td>
<td>1.089</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level: *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01

China’s rising influence generates concerns as well as favorable global opinion. People who think China will replace the U.S. as the world’s leading superpower are 25% more likely to favor China than those whose attitudes towards China are unfavorable, holding other factors in this category constant. This difference is statistically significant at the 99% confidence level. Also, among the 24 surveyed countries, for every unit increase in people’s preference of China’s military growth, the odds of China’s global favorability are 3.5 times higher, with all the other variables are held constant. Those who recognize China as the world’s leading economy are about 9% more likely to have favorable opinion towards China.

However, the respondents are 6% less likely to favor China if they see China with growing influence over their own country. The result suggests that there is a NIMBY effect in the perceptions of China’s “charm offensive. That said, people’s perceptions change from a generally good impression of a rising power to an approaching threat of one’s own country.
The “Soft Power” Effect

Table 3: Effects of perceptions of China’s soft power on global views of China.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Rights</td>
<td>0.9437***</td>
<td>0.0456</td>
<td>2.570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate Change</td>
<td>0.5437***</td>
<td>0.0822</td>
<td>1.722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olympics</td>
<td>0.7347***</td>
<td>0.0463</td>
<td>2.085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diplomacy</td>
<td>0.4855***</td>
<td>0.0440</td>
<td>1.625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Safety</td>
<td>0.8091***</td>
<td>0.0501</td>
<td>2.246</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level: *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01

There’s no surprise that people who support China’s international operations intend to favor China. People who trust that China takes other countries’ interests into account are 62% more favor China’s diplomatic endeavors. Favorability ratings double when they think China would be a good host of 2008 Summer Olympics Game or that the People’s Republic of China respects personal freedom. People who are convinced that China is taking the right direction in tackling climate change, or that China’s products are relatively safe are 2 times more likely to have a favorable opinion of China.

These results show a strong global buy-in of China’s international appeal of soft power charm offensive. On its handling of dissent, however, China shows no sign of compromise. The issue of human rights continues to be a contested and skewed attitude worldwide.
The “Nationalistic” Effect

Table 4: Effects on perceptions of nationalism on global views of China.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Nationalistic&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>0.2830***</td>
<td>0.0348</td>
<td>1.327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proud</td>
<td>0.2372***</td>
<td>0.0578</td>
<td>1.268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>0.3508***</td>
<td>0.0401</td>
<td>1.420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Situation</td>
<td>0.3049***</td>
<td>0.0350</td>
<td>1.356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Future</td>
<td>0.3908***</td>
<td>0.0345</td>
<td>1.478</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level: *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01

While facing a newly risen global power, the self-confidence and confidence in one’s home country will protect one from feeling threatened by the new hegemony. The result on Table 4 shows that people who are satisfied with their lives, who are proud of their own countries, who support open trade and increasing business ties, and who are optimistic about their country’s economy are more likely to favor China.

The odd ratios for these nationalistic sentiments are on average similar to one another. Relatively “nationalist” respondents who feel good about their own countries are 30%-40% more likely to answer a favorable opinion towards China. Overall, the nationalism at one’s home country is positively correlated with favorability towards China. The implication for international reality in clear: how the PRC government will reconcile its traditional low-key approach to international affairs with growing nationalism at home does not seem to bother people who have confidence in their own countries’ competitive strength.
The “Demographic” Effect

Table 5: Effects of demographic trends on global views of China.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Demographic”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.0829**</td>
<td>0.0328</td>
<td>0.920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>-0.1489***</td>
<td>0.0328</td>
<td>0.862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>0.1091**</td>
<td>0.0336</td>
<td>1.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than High School</td>
<td>0.2364***</td>
<td>0.0347</td>
<td>1.267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Degree</td>
<td>-0.0997*</td>
<td>0.0424</td>
<td>0.905</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level: *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01

The regression result for demographic characteristics does not completely match my hypothesis of socio-economic status, but the nuance is intriguing. Overall, one can say that the self-secured perception keeps the respondents in alliance with China’s growth. People who are currently employed (including farmers) in the global economic downturn starting from 2008 are 11.5% more likely to favor China. Therefore, findings in demographics show that married female respondents are about 90% less to favor China, in respective.

Education plays a major role in favorability. Holding other demographic variables constant, the result show people with less education than high school or secondary school are 26.7% more likely to favor China. Conversely, people with university or advanced degree are 10% less likely to favor China.
The Clash of Civilization

Table 6: Effects on the perceptions of geopolitics on global view of China.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Demographic”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.0829**</td>
<td>0.0328</td>
<td>0.920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>-0.1489***</td>
<td>0.0328</td>
<td>0.862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>0.1091**</td>
<td>0.0336</td>
<td>1.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>-0.7931***</td>
<td>0.0517</td>
<td>0.452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0.1362***</td>
<td>0.0330</td>
<td>1.146</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level: *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01

As China has been seen as a contradictory global norm than Western democracies, the research discovers evidence from the point estimates that people from the Western democracies are as high as 60% less likely to favor China, given all the other demographic factors are held constant. Using the peripheral countries as baseline reference, the result shows the other non-Western and non-peripheral regions are 14.6% more likely to favor China, which is at 99% significance level.

The geopolitical aspects are proved to continue taking effect on China’s favorable image. Although Chinese government has been eager not to antagonize the Western world, the result in Table 6 shows that there’s still a long way for the PRC to chafe at its foot-dragging on human rights and other democratization issues in order to gain favorable opinion from the Western democracies.
Discussion

Previous studies on international politics indicate that China’s rise is viewed by the world with divided sentiments. However, much of the research focuses on whether people see China as a threat or as a peaceful rise. Moreover, given the nature of soft power is less tangible and more tactical, the existing quantitative reports of gauging China’s soft power level are limited to its regional or bilateral impact. Using a large and established 2008 Pew Global Attitudes Survey, my statistical analyses of global public opinion towards China’s rise are largely consistent with most of the international theorists. Therefore, they also offer a quantitative framework for international policy makers to gauge perceptions of China’s growing influence to the world with the factors previously unnoticed.

The findings of this study addresses significant global trends in China’s favorable image, with several implications for U.S. diplomatic initiatives to hold China accountable as it rises:

1. China’s hard power is globally recognized, but its influence on respondents’ home countries might not necessary generate favorable opinion.

2. China’s soft power is effective in most of its attempts and global initiatives to win hearts and minds.

3. Stronger nationalism at home causes individuals more likely to favor China’s rise.

4. Individual factors such as gender, marital and employment status play a role in affecting the world’s favorable views of China.

5. China has not successfully influence Western world and highly educated elites to favor its rise, but the demographics are the opinion leaders in world affairs.

Notably, my results support the U.S. policy of China. For example, married female who are more likely to seek stability and be sensitive to external threats, are less likely to favor China.
The fact resonates with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’ consistent foreign policy focus that “women’s rights are human rights” since her famous speech in Beijing in 2005. With respect to the changing dynamics of global political landscape, the leaderships in each country ought to focus on improving employment, international trade, economic prospects and national strength so that citizens will gain confidence, and thus support policy efforts to cultivate a positive and constructive bilateral relationship with a rising power like China.

**Analysis Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

My analysis introduced a framework for paying greater attention to global public opinion towards China’s rise. It identified certain trends and showed significant directions for global leadership to engage China’s rising hard and soft power with poise. Due to the limitations of available data, my research did not explore the change in global attitudes towards China over time.

To overcome the limitations of my analysis, further research on global public opinion towards China should explore more pertinent demographic factors such as income level, age, and cultural values that are difficult to sort out in my data. As China continues to wield soft power in the global south and its desired regions to compete with the United States’ national interests, further research needs to keep track on its policy priorities associated with a favorable image in the long run time series.
**Policy Implications**

This study answers the question of the extent to which China has successfully wielded its hard and soft power in the world. It also explores the relevant nationalistic and demographic factors that are significant in shaping global public opinion. The implications of its findings provide foreign policymakers with much needed guidance as they allocate resources to engage China’s rising power and to develop a healthy multilateral relationships for the sake of international security. The study offers three important lessons for today’s policy makers:

1. Given that China has successfully changed global perceptions with its hard and soft power, its policy priorities and strategies as identified in this research should provide empirical reference for other countries to thrive or to follow a similar path with “Chinese characteristics.”

2. Leaders should foster domestic confidence in their home countries, such as improving the economy and trade and increasing civil rights and life satisfaction in order to help ease the fear of China’s growing challenges. Most importantly, while policy makers strengthen domestic confidence may help the international community develop positive attitudes towards rising superpowers.

3. To compete with China’s rising power and to stay on top of global leadership, the U.S. foreign policy should address critical demographics that are inclining to favor China, fragile societies with repressive regimes, and strengthen its attractive values such as human rights and education prospects to woo the global public.

Considering the recent global economic downturn and the rising tensions over natural resources and security issues, the U.S. should continue to leading the world and hold China
accountable for its global initiatives. By encouraging profound statistical analysis to evaluate
global public opinion on other countries (i.e. China) foreign affairs funding can be more
efficiently allocated, and public diplomacy for soft power can work effectively. Reaching out to
the global public with the greatest insights for their needs will generate the highest return on
investment and contribute to international peace and prosperity in days to come.
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